

US rejects 'stingy' tag put up by UN official

By Chidanand Rajghatta/TNN

Washington: The United States on Tuesday increased its aid for tsunami-struck countries to \$35 million from the initial announcement of \$15 million even as a top UN official who obliquely called Washington 'stingy' backed down from his remarks.

After three days of public silence on the matter, while he remained on holiday at his ranch in Crawford, Texas, President George Bush appeared on Wednesday to reject the charge that the US was stingy and told reporters that he had spoken to the leaders of Sri Lanka, India and other affected countries to offer American aid and succour.

"Well, I felt like the person who made that statement was very misguided and ill-informed. In the year 2004, our government provided \$2.4 billion in food, cash and humanitarian relief. That means 40% of all the relief aid given in the world last year was provided by us," Bush countered.

"We're a very generous, kindheart-

ed nation," he added, even as angry and worried US officials scrambled to rebuff critics who charged the Bush administration with a sloppy and uncaring first response, including a President who remained on vacation at his ranch even as 21st century's biggest disaster unfolded in Asia.

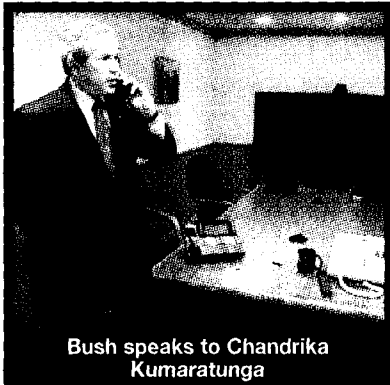
Officials also reiterated that the \$35

million aid was for the moment and it could go up as the needs were reassessed. Secretary of State Colin Powell appeared on television shows throughout the morning to counter criticism of American tightfistedness, saying, "The US is not stingy."

Questions about

the modest US commitment began surfacing even as Powell announced the \$15 million aid on Monday, despite his urging "to see this not just as a one-time thing".

But the clarification did not stop some US journalists from asking uncomfortable questions. NBC's Matt Lauer wondered if the US should not be thinking of aid in the billion-dollar range given the scale of the disaster.



Bush speaks to Chandrika Kumaratunga

31 DEC 2004

THE TIMES OF INDIA

Iraq poll panel rejects US plan

Baghdad, Dec. 26 (Reuters): Iraq's election body rejected a suggestion in Washington it adjust the results of next month's vote to benefit the Sunni minority if low turnout in Sunni areas means Shias have an exaggerated majority in the new assembly.

Speaking of "unacceptable" interference, Electoral Commission spokesperson Farid Ayar said: "Who wins, wins. That is the way it is. That is the way it will be in the election."

US diplomats in Baghdad, at pains to keep their role in the election discreet, declined comment on a *New York Times* report from Washington which said Sunnis might be granted extra seats if the community's vote was judged to have been too low.

US officials have expressed concern that if the ballot on January 30 fails to reflect Iraq's sectarian and ethnic mix due to violence and boycotts in Sunni areas, then the assembly will lack legitimacy.

But any attempt to fix the proportion of seats going to the main groups in advance could have the same effect.

"The Americans are expressing their views and those aren't always the same as the commission's," Ayar said.

"But the commission is absolutely independent. It is not acceptable for anyone to interfere in our business."

Some leaders among Sunni Arabs, a 20-per cent minority who dominated the country under Saddam Hussein and before, have called for the election to be put off because violence in the north and west will make it hard for Sunnis to vote.

26 DEC 2004

THE TELEGRAPH

US had no Iraq plan: Study

THOMAS E. RICKS

Washington, Dec. 25: The US military invaded Iraq without a formal plan for occupying and stabilising the country and this high-level failure continues to undercut what has been a "mediocre" army effort there, an army historian and strategist has concluded.

"There was no Phase IV plan" for occupying Iraq after the combat phase, writes Major Isaiah Wilson III, who served as an official historian of the campaign and later as a war planner in Iraq. While a variety of government offices had considered the possible situations that would follow a US victory, Wilson writes, none produced an actual document laying out a strategy to consolidate the victory after major combat operations ended.

"While there may have been 'plans' at the national level, and even within various agencies within the war zone, none of these 'plans' operationalised the problem beyond regime collapse" — that is, laid out how US forces would be moved and structured, Wilson writes in an essay that has been delivered at several academic conferences but not published.

"There was no adequate operational plan for stability operations and support operations."

Similar criticisms have been made before, but until now they have not been stated so authoritatively and publicly by a military insider positioned to be familiar with top-secret planning. During the period in question, from April to June 2003, Wilson was a researcher for the army's Opera-

tion Iraqi Freedom Study Group. Then, from July 2003 to March 2004, he was the chief war planner for the 101st Airborne Division, which was stationed in northern Iraq.

A copy of Wilson's study as presented at Cornell University in October was obtained by *The Washington Post*.

As a result of the failure to produce a plan, Wilson asserts, the US military lost the dominant position in Iraq in the summer of 2003 and has been scrambling to recover ever since. "In the two to three months of ambiguous transition, US forces slowly lost the momentum and the initiative ... gained over an off-balanced enemy," he writes. "The US, its army and its coalition of the willing have been playing catch-up ever since."

It was only in November, 2003, seven months after the

fall of Baghdad, that US occupation authorities produced a formal "Phase IV" plan for stability operations, Wilson reports. Phase I covers preparation for combat, followed by initial operations, Phase II, and combat, Phase III. Post-combat operations are called Phase IV.

Many in the army have blamed defence secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld and other top Pentagon civilians for the unexpectedly difficult occupation of Iraq, but Wilson reserves his toughest criticism for army commanders who, he concludes, failed to grasp the strategic situation in Iraq and so not did not plan properly for victory.

He concludes that those who planned the war suffered from "stunted learning and a reluctance to adapt."

Army commanders still

misunderstand the strategic problem they face and therefore are still pursuing a flawed approach, writes Wilson, who is scheduled to teach at the US military academy at West Point next year. "Plainly stated, the 'western coalition' failed, and continues to fail, to see Operation Iraqi Freedom in its fullness," he asserts.

"Reluctance in even defining the situation... is perhaps the most telling indicator of a collective cognitive dissonance on part of the US army to recognise a war of rebellion, a people's war, even when they were fighting it," he comments.

Because of this failure, Wilson concludes, the US military remains "perhaps in peril of losing the 'war,' even after supposedly winning it."

LOS ANGELES TIMES- WASHINGTON POST NEWS SERVICE

US sweeps through Mosul after attack

Associated Press
Baghdad, December 22

THE US military deployed armoured vehicles in Mosul and infantrymen swept through the northern city on Wednesday a day after an insurgent strike on a nearby base killed 22 people and injured 72 in one of the deadliest attacks on American troops since the war began.

The military was investigating whether a bomb was planted at the mess tent in Forward Operating Base Marez, where the blast sprayed shrapnel as US soldiers sat down to lunch on Tuesday. Initial reports said a 122 mm rocket ripped through the tent's ceiling.

ABC news reported that the explosion was the work of a suicide bomber and the attacker's torso and a suicide vest have been recovered. It reported that investigators found remnants of a torso and a suicide pack — probably a backpack — meant to carry explosives.

A radical Sunni Muslim group, the Ansar al-Sunnah Army, which claimed responsibility for the attack, said it was a "martyrdom operation" — a reference to a suicide bomber.

Metz said that experts had flown from Baghdad to Mosul to "do a very detailed explosive forensics investigation and they will be able to tell us the type of weapon (and) the size of weapon" that was used. He also said the military was looking at better ways of protecting dining areas, gyms and other places where troops gather in large numbers on US bases. Mortar attacks on US



People walk past shuttered stores in Mosul on Wednesday. The city was almost locked out after Tuesday's attacks on a US camp. AFP

A safer bunker was being built

WORRIED ABOUT recent artillery attacks on American mess halls in Iraq, the US military had nearly completed a reinforced dining area near the mess tent where an insurgent attack killed 22 people. Iraqi insurgents have attacked several US military dining hall tents with mortars or rockets over the past few months. On Tuesday, before the hardened dining hall at Forward Operating Base Marez could be completed, an explosion ripped through a tent where hundreds of troops were sitting down to lunch. The military was building a bunker-like mess hall at the Marez base as part of continuing efforts to make the base safer. Lt. Gen. Thomas Metz, commander of the multinational force in Iraq, said the new facility was due to be completed in February.

AP, Washington

Defence contractor Haliburton Co. said four of its employees and three subcontractors were killed, but it did not provide names or nationalities, and the US military did not provide a further breakdown of the identities of the dead.

At the military hospital near Mosul airfield, doctors and orderlies treated dozens of soldiers for burns, shrapnel wounds and damage to their eyes. "This is the worst we have seen in the 11 months since we have been here," said Master Sgt. David Scott, chief ward master for the hospital.

Sgt. Kyle Wright of Richards, recovering from wounds to his leg and back, said he was in the tent about to take a bite of chocolate cake when he was blown into the air. "When I came to, I looked up and saw open sky," said Wright, a member of the 276th Engineer Battalion.

It was the latest in a week of deadly strikes across Iraq that highlighted the growing power of the insurgents in the run-up to the January 30 national elections.

"We are not going to be intimidated. We will help the Iraqi people and their security forces not to be intimidated and we are pushing on toward the elections in January," Metz said.

Mosul was relatively peaceful in the immediate aftermath of the fall of Saddam Hussein's regime last year. But rebel attacks in the largely Sunni area have increased dramatically in the past year — particularly since the US-led military offensive in November to retake Fallujah from the militants.

major intersections as usual.

The dead included 18 Americans — 14 service members and four US civilian contractors — and four Iraqis, the US military command in Baghdad said Wednesday. Of the 72 wounded, 51 are US military personnel and the remainder are American civilians, Iraqi troops, and other foreigners.

US soldiers conducted sweeps through the eastern neighbourhoods of Muthanna, Wahda and Hadabaa.

In a sign of the of the simmering tensions, most schools in the city were closed and few cars and people could be seen on the streets, although a formal curfew was not declared. Even traffic policemen were not at major

Metz said that in previous attacks on Marez were "rather random". "The enemy cannot stay in one place long to attack us, therefore his accuracy is pretty poor," Metz said.

Early on Wednesday, US troops blocked Mosul's five bridges over the Tigris River that link the western and eastern sectors of the city.

Mosul's streets were deserted on Wednesday as hundreds of troops spread out across several neighbourhoods backed up by Bradley fighting vehicles and armoured Humvees. An AP reporter in Mosul saw helicopter gunships clattering overhead and jets flying high above the city, located 225 miles north of Baghdad.

bases, particularly on the huge white tents that serve as dining halls, have been frequent in Iraq for more than a year. Bill Nimitz, a columnist with the *Portland (Maine) Press Herald* who was embedded with the troops in Mosul, said that he heard "a lot of discussion" among troops about the vulnerability of the tent.

WS
W Arin

22 killed in attack on U.S. army base in Iraq

22/12
By Atul Aneja HD-1

MANAMA, DEC. 21. Twenty-two persons were killed and 50 wounded in an attack on an American military base in the northern Iraqi city of Mosul. It coincided with the British Prime Minister, Tony Blair's surprise visit to Iraq.

CNN, quoting U.S. officials, said the dead included American military personnel, members of the Iraqi National Guard and Iraqi civilians. At least three rockets reportedly landed inside the dining hall of a U.S. military base during lunchtime, when it was presumably crowded. Witnesses heard two or three explosions and saw smoke rising from Camp Merez, which is close to an airfield in the southwest part of the city.

The U.S. military, in a statement earlier, said: "At 12 p.m. today an explosion occurred at a U.S. military installation in Mosul causing multiple casualties."

Al-Qaeda hand

The Al-Qaeda linked Army of Ansar al-Sunna group has claimed responsibility for the attack. "One of the mujahideen of the Army of Ansar al-Sunna carried out a martyrdom-seeking [suicide] operation in a restaurant of the infidel occupation forces at the Gha-

zani camp in Mosul," said the statement. The message added that after the attack, "two helicopters were on the scene to airlift the killed and the wounded." The group said it had shot a video of the operation, indicating that the strike was well planned.

Mosul has witnessed a spurt in violence in recent weeks, following the fullscale U.S. attack on the resistance stronghold of Fallujah on November 8. Analysts say that many top guerilla leaders may have left Fallujah in the wake of the U.S. attack and regrouped in and around Mosul.

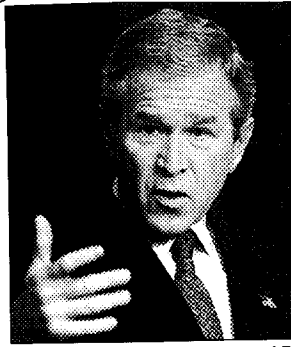
A day of violence

In a day marked by violence, U.S. planes bombed the town of Hiyt, west of Baghdad, killing six Iraqi civilians and injuring nine. Al Jazeera television reported that the bombing, which continued till the early hours of today, destroyed houses, shops and civilian vehicles.

On Tuesday, there was yet another explosion in Karbala, the city where 13 persons were killed on Sunday during a car bombing at its bus terminus. There has been no word on casualties so far.

Karbala and its sister city of Najaf are well-known Shia pilgrimage centres.

See also Page 15



AP
President George W. Bush speaks to reporters in Washington on Monday.

Iraqi troops not ready to take over yet, says Bush

21/12/04
PRESIDENT BUSH pointedly acknowledged on Monday that US-trained Iraqi troops are not ready to take over their country's security, and cautioned that next month's elections there are only the beginning of a long process toward democracy.

"I certainly don't expect the process to be trouble-free," Bush said as he addressed next year's agenda ranging from overhauling Social Security to the January 30 elections in Iraq.

In the 17th news conference of his presidency, Bush accused insurgents in Iraq of trying to "disrupt the democratic process" and urged the American people to remain patient well beyond the elections. "The elections in January are the beginning of a process and it is important for the American people to understand that," he said.

On a tough issue at home, a growing number of lawmakers, including Republicans, voicing no confidence in Defence Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld. But Bush defended his Pentagon chief. "He's doing a very fine job," Bush said.

Critics have raised questions about whether enough US troops are in Iraq to bring security for the elections. More than 1,300 American troops have died since the war began in March 2003. Also, soldiers have complained about long deployments and a lack of armored vehicles and other equipment.

Rumsfeld agreed to Bush's request this month to stay in the Cabinet during the president's second term and has won repeated votes of confidence from the White House since.

Bush defended his close ties to Russian President Vladimir Putin, with whom he has had disagreements over the war on terror and, more recently, over the disputed elections in Ukraine. US and Soviet officials said on Monday that Bush and Putin would meet in Slovakia on February 24 as part of an effort to improve US relations with European nations.

AP, Washington

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

21 DEC 2004

Target El Baradei

2012 WJ 518
Washington's campaign may backfire on itself

The Bush administration's latest target is Mohammed El Baradei, head of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), who has done a commendable and even-handed job in the two terms he has been in charge. He has indicated interest in a third term starting next summer, and he is so popular that no serious rival candidate has emerged. Yet the Bush administration is trying to prop up one, and *The Washington Post* has revealed that it is spying on El Baradei in an attempt to find incriminating material. Washington approached Australian foreign minister Alexander Downer to challenge El Baradei when he comes up for reelection, but Downer is unwilling to play along. The reasons for Washington's pique with El Baradei appear to be twofold. One, he did not go along with Washington's assessment that President Saddam Hussein was reviving a nuclear weapons programme in Iraq. Hindsight has shown El Baradei's assessment to be correct, and Washington is wrong. Second, history seems to be repeating itself in relation to Iran. Although he has been tough on the Iranians, criticising them many times for hiding nuclear activities, he hasn't clearly held the Iranians guilty of developing a bomb.

Given his position as neutral adjudicator of such issues it is wise for him to await conclusive evidence. But declaring Iran in breach is precisely what Washington appears to want him to do, as a prelude to slapping sanctions on Iran. Bull in a china shop tactics against El Baradei may cause other nations to rally round him, when the position is that Washington needs at least 12 votes from the 35 nation IAEA board to oust him. The IAEA stands or falls by its reputation as a neutral arbitrator, and non-proliferation would suffer if it was believed that IAEA took its orders from Washington. Even Australia, a close ally of the United States, is in favour of El Baradei. Perhaps he is simply being made a scapegoat for the failure of hardliners in Washington to isolate Iran on the nuclear issue, after that country made it to President Bush's notorious "axis of evil" list.

20 DEC 2004

THE STATES

US missile defence test fails

Reuters

Washington, December 15

THE FIRST test in nearly two years of a multibillion-dollar US anti-missile shield failed on Wednesday when the interceptor missile shut down as it prepared to launch in the central Pacific, the Pentagon said.

About 16 minutes earlier, a target missile carrying a mock warhead had been successfully fired from Kodiak Island, Alaska, according to a statement from the Missile Defence Agency.

The aborted \$85 million test appeared likely to set back plans for activation of a rudimentary bulwark against long-range ballistic missiles that could be fired by countries like North Korea.

In 2002, President George W. Bush pledged to have initial elements of the program up and running by the end of this year while testing and development continued.

An "anomaly" of unknown origin caused the interceptor to shut down automatically in its silo at the Kwajalein Test Range in the Marshall Islands, said Richard Lehner, a spokesman for the Pentagon's missile agency.

The test followed a week of delays caused by weather and technical glitches, including malfunction of an internal battery aboard the target missile on Tuesday, he said.

"This is a serious setback for a programme that had not attempted a flight intercept test for two years," Philip Coyle, the Pentagon's chief weapons tester under late President Ronald Reagan, said in an e-mail exchange.

The system is a scaled-down version of a ballistic missile shield first outlined in March 1983 by Reagan and derided by critics as "Star Wars."

16 DEC 2004

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

US consulate in Jeddah attacked

At least 12 killed ■ Al-Qaida hand suspected ■ Missions in Riyadh, Dhahran closed

Associated Press
Jeddah, December 6

ISLAMIC MILITANTS threw explosives at the gate of the heavily guarded US consulate in Jeddah, then forced their way into the building, prompting a gun-battle in a bold assault in which at least 12 people, including five local staff, were reported killed before the three-hour long crisis was brought under control.

Saudi security officials said four of its forces died in the clash and the Interior Ministry said three of the five attackers were killed. The other two were injured and captured in the first militant assault since May. Five members of the consulate's non-American staff died, according to the US Embassy.

Several Americans were slightly injured, according to a State Department official in Washington.

In Riyadh, US Embassy spokeswoman Carol Kalin said two local staff members were injured, but all American staff were safe.

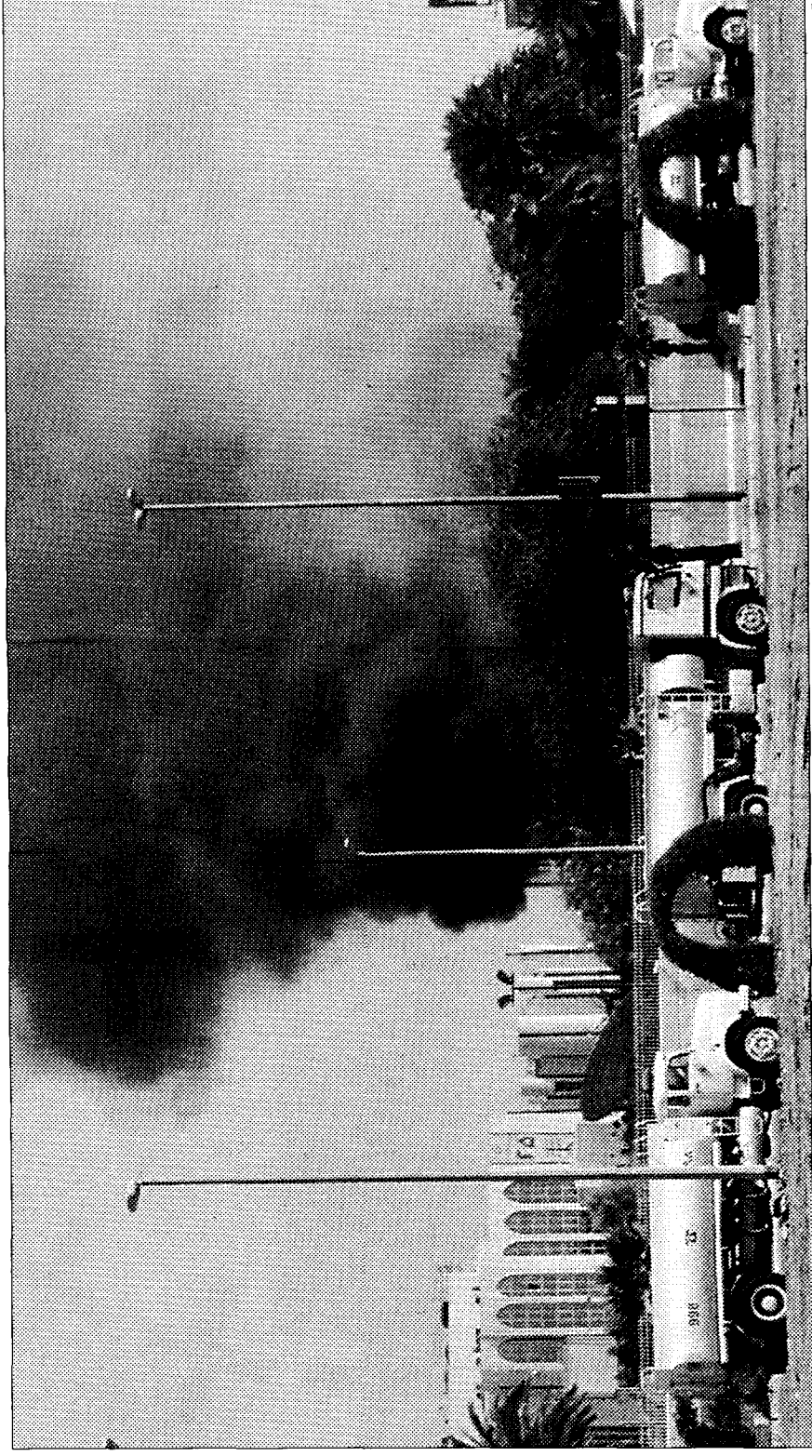
"We have accounted for all Americans on the compound in Jeddah and none of them are being held hostage," Kalin said. "We have a local work force that was on duty and we are still in the process of accounting for (them)."

Kalin said it was unclear if any of the US Marine guards inside the consulate were involved in the gunbattle. As a precaution, she said, the US Embassy in Riyadh and consulate in Dhahran were closed to the public.

The attackers apparently made their way past Saudi security personnel into the interior of the diplomatic compound, the State Department official said, speaking on condition of anonymity.

"All the Americans at the consulate were able to reach secure locations" at the compound, he said, describing the injuries to the Americans as minor.

Saudi security forces, including snipers, could be



AP

Smoke rises after an explosion following an attack by Islamic militants on the US consulate in Jeddah on Monday.

seen on the rooftops of buildings around the consulate compound. Thick smoke rose from the compound and helicopters hovered overhead.

The statement by a Saudi Interior Ministry spokesman, carried by the official Saudi Press Agency, said a "stray bunch" — a reference to Islamic militants — threw explosives at the gate of the consulate, then entered. Saudi security forces engaged the attackers, "killing three aggressors, and two were captured after they were hit", the statement said.

"The situation was brought under control," the statement said. It gave no further details.

The White House closely monitored the situation in Jeddah as President Bush prepared to meet with two West Asian leaders — Ghazi

re some negotiations, but Saudi security forces stormed the attackers when threats were made.

There was a brief firefight that ended with the three being killed and two captured, the Saudi official said. Security forces freed the hostages, the official said.

Area residents spoke of seeing Saudi forces enter the consulate shortly before a fierce gunbattle was heard inside. A short time later, the gunfire stopped.

Saudi security officials said two security guards at the gate of consulate were wounded, one of them seriously, after the attackers opened fire on them before entering the mission.

A Saudi health official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said several people were injured and taken to a hospital. Witnesses ini-

tially said they saw the attackers' car explode outside the consulate, located in the city's heart near the Red Sea coast, but it was not immediately clear if a car bomb had been used or if the attackers had thrown explosives after driving the car up to the consulate.

Saudi security officials said the assailants shot at security guards at the consulate's gate, set off an explosion — using either a car bomb or grenades — and got into the compound. There, they said Saudi security guards engaged the attackers, but the attackers managed to seize hostages.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility. But Saudi officials have blamed al-Qaida operatives for the string of attacks that have hit the kingdom in the past two years.

US Prez links attack to Iraq polls

PRESIDENT GEORGE W. Bush said on Monday that the Jeddah attack showed that "the terrorists are still on the move" and intent on derailing Iraqi elections. "They want us to leave Saudi Arabia, they want us to leave Iraq, they want us to grow timid and weary in the face of their willingness to kill randomly kill innocent people. That's why these elections in Iraq are very important," Bush said. Bush,

Reuters, Washington

said the attackers took several hostages, mostly Sudanese and Indian, but the Americans were evacuated. During the hostage standoff, the official said, there we-

al-Yawar, the interim President of Iraq, and Jordan's King Abdullah II.

A senior Saudi official in Washington, speaking on the condition of anonymity,

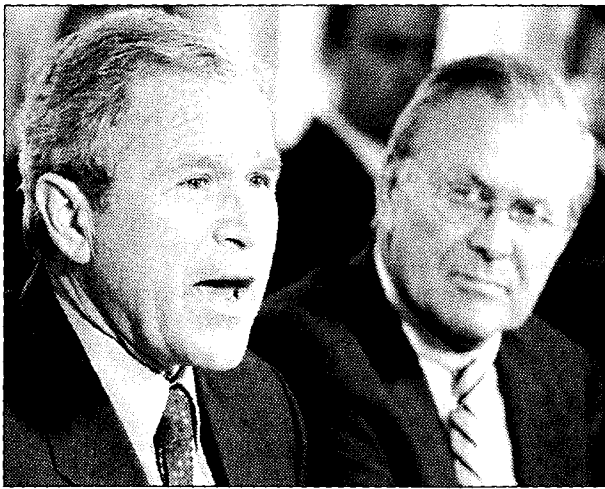
Bush urges Rumsfeld to stay, run Iraq war

Washington, Dec. 4 (Reuters): President George W. Bush has asked defence secretary Donald Rumsfeld to stay on in Bush's second term to keep running the Iraq war and adapting the US military to face post-Cold War threats like terrorism, a senior Bush administration official said today.

As part of a broad overhaul of his second-term Cabinet, Bush nominated former New York police commissioner Bernard Kerik to head the US homeland security department and accepted the resignation of health and human services secretary Tommy Thompson yesterday.

Rumsfeld, 72, faced calls for his resignation last summer over the prisoner abuse scandal at Iraq's Abu Ghraib prison, and some lawmakers have accused him of not sending enough troops to control Iraq after Saddam Hussein was toppled.

But the White House decided it was better to stick with Rumsfeld at a time when the



George W. Bush (left) and Donald Rumsfeld. (AFP)

US is at war in Iraq, with more troops being sent to help the country get ready for the January 30 elections.

Rumsfeld is also overseeing a major post-Cold War transformation of the US military to make the force more mobile and responsive to new threats such as terrorism.

Bush met Rumsfeld on

Monday and "asked secretary Rumsfeld to stay in his post, and he has agreed," the senior official said, calling Rumsfeld "the right person" for the job.

"Secretary Rumsfeld is a proven leader during challenging times. We're fighting a different kind of war and it's crucial that we win this war," the official said.

Rumsfeld had made clear his preference to stay on in the job at least for a while.

Baghdad blasts

Twin suicide car bombs blew up outside a police station near Baghdad's Green Zone today, killing seven people and wounding 57 in the latest deadly strike against Iraq's shaky security forces. The blasts also destroyed 35 vehicles.

05 DEC 2004

THE HINDU

Ho-12-11-04

Probe into more Iraqi abuse photos

CORONADO (CALIFORNIA), DEC. 4. The U.S. military has launched a criminal investigation into photographs that appear to show Navy SEALs in Iraq sitting on hooded and handcuffed detainees, and photos of what appear to be bloodied prisoners, one with a gun to his head.

Some of the photos have date stamps suggesting they were taken in May 2003, which could make them the earliest evidence of possible abuse of prisoners in Iraq.

Aftermath of raids

The far more brutal practices photographed in Abu Ghraib prison occurred months later.

An AP reporter found more than 40 of the pictures among hundreds in an album posted on a commercial photo-sharing Web site by a woman who said her husband brought them from Iraq after his tour of duty. It is unclear who took the pictures, which the Navy said it

was investigating after the AP furnished copies to get comment for this story.

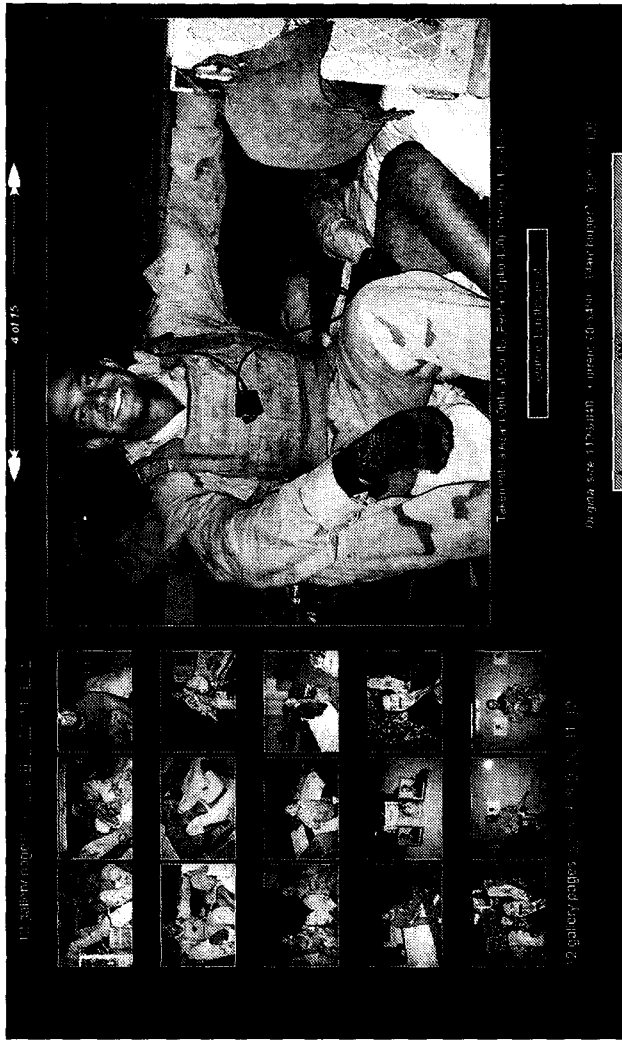
These and other photos found by the AP appear to show the immediate aftermath of raids on civilian homes.

One man is lying on his back with a boot on his chest.

A mug shot shows a man with an automatic weapon pointed at his head and a gloved thumb jabbed into his throat.

"These photographs raise a number of important questions regarding the treatment of prisoners of war (POWs) and detainees," Navy Cmdr. Jeff Bender, a spokesman for the Naval Special Warfare Command in Coronado, said in a written response to questions.

The photos were turned over to the Naval Criminal Investigative Service, which instructed the SEAL command to determine whether they show any serious crimes, Cmdr. Bender said yesterday. — AP



HEAVING ABUSE: Photos that appear to show commandos in Iraq sitting on hooded and handcuffed detainees are seen on a commercial photo-sharing Web site. The site was operated by a woman who said her husband brought the photos from Iraq after his tour of duty. — AP

WS (W) West Asia

Powell wins Israel pledge

13 22/11
Jerusalem, Nov. 22 (Reuters):
Reviving a long-dormant US
peacemaking role, secretary of
state Colin Powell won an Is-
raeli pledge today to allow
Palestinians enough freedom
of movement to hold an elec-
tion for Yasser Arafat's succe-
sor.

WFO W Am
Powell told Israeli and
Palestinian leaders that Wash-
ington was determined to
seize opportunities created by
Arafat's death and help Pales-
tinians hold a January 9 vote
to choose a new president.

All Powell appeared to
have gained from Israel was a
promise to loosen restrictions
on Palestinians' travel to per-
mit them to campaign and cast
ballots, effectively easing Is-
rael's military grip on the
West Bank. However, Israel
has stopped short of any com-
mitment to pull back forces in
and around West Bank cities.

2 NOV 2004 THE TELEGRAPH

205 (10) 14/10

Bush's agent clashes with Chileans

27/11 10:51 11-13



Bush reaches into the crowd to pull his Secret Service agent from the crowd after he was blocked from entering the official dinner hosted by the Chilean President

Santiago: President Bush stepped into the middle of a confrontation and pulled his lead Secret Service agent away from Chilean security officials who barred his bodyguards from entering an elegant dinner for 21 world leaders Saturday night.

Several Chilean and American agents got into a pushing and shoving match outside the cultural centre where the dinner was held. Bush noticed the fracas after posing for pictures on a red carpet with the summit host, Chilean President Ricardo Lagos and

his wife and first lady Laura Bush.

Abandoning the other three, Bush walked over to the agents, reached through the dispute and pulled his agent from the scrum. The president, looking irritated, walked away with the agent. The incident was shown on APEC television.

"Chilean security tried to stop the president's Secret Service from accompanying him," said White House deputy press secretary Claire Buchan. "He told them they were with him and the issue was resolved."

NOV 2004 THE TIMES OF INDIA

Israel shadow in Powell exit

CHARLES LAURENCE
AND PHILIP SHERWELL

New York, Nov. 21: Colin Powell, the outgoing US secretary of state, was given his marching orders after telling President George W. Bush that he wanted greater power to confront Israel over the stalled West Asia peace process.

Although Powell's departure was announced on November 15, his letter of resignation was dated November 11, the day he had a meeting with Bush.

According to White House officials, at the meeting Powell was not asked to stay on and gave no hints that he would do so. Briefing reporters later, he referred to "fulsome discus-

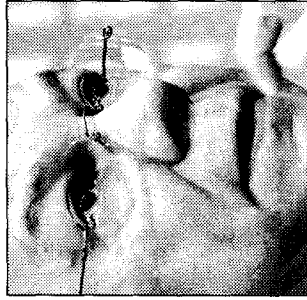
sions" — diplomatic code for disagreements.

"The clincher came over the West Asian peace process," said a recently-retired state department official.

"Powell thought he could use the credit he had banked as the President's 'good cop' in foreign policy to rein in Ariel Sharon (Israel's Prime Minister) and get the peace process going. He was wrong."

Bob Woodward, the veteran Washington reporter who was granted unprecedented access to the first Bush administration for his books *Bush At War* and *Plan Of Attack*, said last week that Powell had been "dreaming" if he thought that he could stay on.

Vice-President Dick Ch-



Colin Powell

eney and his fellow hardliner, John Bolton, an under-secretary of state to Powell, are both understood to have lobbied Bush to replace him.

They wanted to make Iraq's alleged nuclear bomb aspirations and support for Islam-

ic terror groups the foreign policy priority for the new administration and believed that Powell would back away from a confrontational approach.

The two are frustrated that Britain, France and Germany are still seeking a diplomatic deal with Tehran rather than backing a UN Security Council resolution condemning Iran and threatening sanctions.

Powell's final pitch to remain in office for at least another year was made during Tony Blair's visit to Washington nine days ago. *The Daily Telegraph* has learned. Earlier indications had been that he intended to step down after ending four years of clashes with the office of Cheney and the Pentagon under Donald

Rumsfeld. Friends of Powell later briefed journalists that he changed his mind because he wanted to see through the Iraqi elections.

Israel visit

Powell today arrived in Tel Aviv on his first visit to Israel and the Palestinian territories in 18 months, signalling a new push for peace in West Asia following the death of Yasser Arafat, adds Reuters.

Powell will meet Israeli leaders in Jerusalem and top Palestinians in the West Bank tomorrow for talks on a Palestinian presidential election scheduled for January 9 and a stalled peace plan known as the "road map".

THE DAILY TELEGRAPH

22 NOV 2004

THE TELEGRAPH

SP-2 Powell resigns

Couldn't live up to his own doctrine

For those reading tea-leaves of resignations and re-appointments from President Bush's cabinet in his second term, the omens aren't good if one is looking for a shift in emphasis from hardline policies of the first term. The most significant of these portents is that secretary of state Colin Powell has handed in his resignation, while defence secretary Donald Rumsfeld, who oversaw the Iraq fiasco, is staying on. Suave, articulate and internationalist, Powell became the diplomatic *mukhauta* (to paraphrase Govindacharya on Vajpayee) for neo-conservative Bush administration, as he lost almost all internal foreign policy battles to the Cheney-Rumsfeld duo, the main architects of Bush's aggressive unilateralism. As a serving general Powell articulated what is known as the "Powell doctrine". In essence, America should never get into a quagmire by keeping an exit option open. This fundamental tenet was violated in Iraq, in favour of the Bush doctrine of pre-emptive unilateral strikes. Ever the loyal soldier Powell toed the Bush line nevertheless.

In what was hardly his finest hour he was forced to make a fictitious case for Iraq's possession of WMD in front of the UN General Assembly, as part of Bush's drive to war. Sad comedown for a man hugely popular both in the US and the rest of the world, once thought to be odds-on favourite for the presidency. To replace Powell, Bush has turned to Condoleezza Rice, who has no profile of her own. It indicates that Bush isn't looking for independent thinking. For those who see a ray of hope in the resignation of John Ashcroft, crusading Attorney-General whose Patriot Act curbed civil liberties, Alberto Gonzales, his replacement, is very cold comfort — Gonzales spent much of the first term thinking up justifications for Guantanamo-style detentions and torture. From the look of it, Bush will be heading another hardline Cabinet, minus the presence of a Hamlet-like character like Powell.

19 NOV 2004

THE STATESMAN

Shooting of unarmed Iraqi by Marine to be probed

Washington: The US military has begun an investigation into possible war crimes after a television pool report by NBC showed a Marine shooting dead a wounded and unarmed Iraqi in a Falluja mosque.

The Iraqi was one of five wounded left in the mosque after Marines fought their way in on Friday and Saturday. The US military has accused insurgents in Iraq of using mosques to launch attacks against American forces.

US forces, along with Iraqi government troops, launched an offensive one week ago on Falluja, and have gained overall control of the former-

MORE ON PAGE 12

- ▶ **Former GIs fight call-up order**
- ▶ **Brace for new battles: Zarqawi**

ly rebel-held city, although scattered resistance remains.

Major Douglas Powell, a Marine Corps spokesman at the Pentagon, said the investigation, being conducted by the Naval Criminal Investigative Service, focused on "possible law of war violations" by US Marines.

The pool report by NBC correspondent Kevin Sites said the mosque had been used by insurgents to attack US forces, who stormed it and an adjacent building, killing 10 militants.

Sites said the wounded had been left in the mosque for others to pick up and move to the rear for treatment. No reason was given why that had not happened. A second group of Marines entered the mosque on Saturday after reports it had been reoccupied. Footage from the embedded television crew showed the five still in the mosque, although several appeared to be already close to death, Sites said. Reuters

US, IRAQI TROOPS OCCUPY CITY

Battle for Fallujah nears end

15/11

Associated Press

Woman's body found

FALLUJAH, Nov. 14. — The US military has said American troops had now "occupied" the entire city of Fallujah and there were no more major concentrations of insurgents still fighting after nearly a week of intense urban combat.

The drive against remaining insurgent hold-outs in southern Fallujah was aimed to eradicate the last major concentration of fighters at the end of nearly a week of air and ground assaults.

A US officer, speaking on condition of anonymity, said yesterday that Fallujah was "occupied but not subdued". Artillery and airstrikes halted after nightfall to prevent mistaken attacks on US and Iraqi forces who had taken up positions throughout the volatile city.

Iraqi officers declared the operation to free Fallujah of militants was "accomplished" but acknowledged the two of the most wanted figures in the city — Jordanian terror mastermind Abu Musab al-Zarqawi and Sheik Abdullah al-Janabi — had escaped.

US officers, however, said resistance had not been entirely subdued and that it still could take several days of fighting to clear the final pockets.

Today, Marines reopened the bridge where two of the four American contractors killed by militants were strung up on 31 March, sparking the earlier siege of Fallujah by US forces. "This is a big event for us," said Major Todd Des Grosseilliers. "It's symbolic because the insurgents closed the bridge and we reopened it."

Overnight, US planes fired at rebel fighting posi-

FALLUJAH, Nov. 14. — The body of a blonde-haired woman with her legs and arms cut off and throat slit was found today lying on the street in Fallujah, a notorious enclave for hostage-takers, US Marines said.

"It is definitely a Caucasian woman with long blonde hair," said a military officer, who cut open a cover that had covered the corpse.

The gruesome discovery was made as the Marines moved through the south of Fallujah, hunting out the remaining die-hard rebels after a week of fierce fighting to regain control of the city. — AFP

tions inside Fallujah as well as in nearby Amiriyah, where up to a dozen men were seen in trenches, preparing for attack. The men went into a nearby house, which US forces destroyed with two laser-guided bombs. A live video feed showed people swarming around the area to dig them out.

The offensive in Fallujah has killed at least 31 American troops and an estimated 1,000 insurgents, and rebel attacks elsewhere — especially in the northern city of Mosul — have forced the Americans to shift troops away from Fallujah.

Clashes in Beiji

Insurgents clashed with US troops today, after blowing up a railroad overpass a day earlier in the northern Iraqi town of Beiji, the US military said. A gunbattle erupted between militants and US troops in Beiji's central market late this evening, killing at least six people and wounding 20 in the town located 250 km north of Baghdad.

15 NOV 2004

THE STATESMAN

২০০৯-এ

প্যালেস্তাইনের

আশ্বাস বশের

সীমা সিরোহি ● ওয়াশিংটন

১৩ নভেম্বর: ইয়াসের আরাফতের অবর্তমানে স্বাধীন প্যালেস্তাইনি রাষ্ট্র নিয়ে আন্দোলন কোন পথে যাবে, সে বিষয়ে রাজনৈতিক মহলে সংশয় রয়েছে। মার্কিন প্রেসিডেন্ট জর্জ বুশ আশ্বাস দিয়েছেন, ২০০৯ সালের মধ্যে স্বাধীন প্যালেস্তাইনি রাষ্ট্রের স্বপ্ন যাতে বাস্তবায়িত হয় তার জন্য তিনি চেষ্টা করবেন। সংবাদ সংস্থা জানাচ্ছে, প্যালেস্তাইনি প্রধানমন্ত্রী আহমেদ কুরেই রামাল্লায় বলেছেন, দু'মাসের মধ্যে প্রেসিডেন্ট নির্বাচন হয়ে যাবে।

কাল রামাল্লায় আরাফতকে সমাধি দেওয়ার কয়েক ঘণ্টার মধ্যেই বুশ বলেছিলেন, স্বাধীন প্যালেস্তাইনি রাষ্ট্র তৈরির “এক উজ্জ্বল সম্ভাবনা দেখা যাচ্ছে। আমি চাই, চার বছরের মধ্যে এই স্বপ্ন বাস্তবায়িত হোক। আমার ধারণা সেটা সম্ভব, সত্যিই সম্ভব।” আজ টনি ব্ল্যার তাঁর সঙ্গে ওয়াশিংটনে মিলিত হন। বুশ দ্বিতীয় বার প্রেসিডেন্ট হওয়ার পর ব্ল্যারই প্রথম বিদেশি অতিথি যিনি মার্কিন সফরে এলেন। ব্ল্যারের মতে, ইজরায়েল-প্যালেস্তাইনি সমস্যা মিটে গেলে বিশ্ব জুড়ে জেহাদিদের পালের হাওয়া কেড়ে নেওয়া যাবে। গাজা ভূখণ্ড ও ওয়েস্ট ব্যাঙ্কের একাংশ থেকে ইজরায়েলি সেনা প্রত্যাহারের বিষয়টিকে বুশ ও ব্ল্যার দু'জনেই যথেষ্ট গুরুত্ব দিচ্ছেন। তবে ইজরায়েলের উপর এখনই বাড়তি চাপ দিতে নারাজ বুশ। ব্ল্যারের প্রস্তাব, শান্তি প্রক্রিয়া চালিয়ে নিয়ে যাওয়ার লক্ষ্যে আগামী বছর ব্রিটেনে পশ্চিম এশিয়া বিষয়ে এক আলোচনা সভা হোক। স্বাধীন প্যালেস্তাইনি রাষ্ট্র গড়ায় ওয়াশিংটনের ভূমিকা থাকলে তিনি খুশি হবেন।

আরাফতের মৃত্যুর পর পশ্চিম এশিয়ায় শান্তি প্রক্রিয়া যে এক সন্ধিক্ষণে এসে দাঁড়িয়েছে, সে বিষয়ে সচেতন প্যালেস্তাইনি নেতারাও। শান্তি-প্রক্রিয়া চালিয়ে নিয়ে যেতে দৃঢ়প্রতিজ্ঞ প্রধানমন্ত্রী কুরেই বলেছেন, “বুশ প্রশাসন, প্রেসিডেন্ট বুশ, ইজরায়েল ও সারা পৃথিবীকে আমরা জানাতে চাই যে আমাদের এখন অনেক বেশি ভাবতে হবে।” শান্তি প্রক্রিয়া চালিয়ে নিয়ে যেতে বুশের আগ্রহকে স্বাগত জানিয়েছেন প্যালেস্তাইনের বিদেশমন্ত্রী নাবিল সাথও। নাবিল জানান, প্যালেস্তাইনি নেতাদের সঙ্গে আলোচনায় বসতে খুব শীঘ্রই এ দেশে আসছেন মার্কিন বিদেশসচিব কলিন পাওয়েল।

আরাফতের মৃত্যুর পর বৃহস্পতিবারই রাউহি ফাতুহকে প্যালেস্তাইনের অন্তর্বর্তীকালীন প্রেসিডেন্ট নির্বাচন করা হয়। আজ প্রধানমন্ত্রী কুরেই বলেছেন, “৯ জানুয়ারির মধ্যে প্রেসিডেন্ট নির্বাচন হয়ে যাবে।” বুশের মতে, “প্যালেস্তাইনিরা কোনও দৃঢ়চেতা নেতাকে নির্বাচন করতেই পারেন, তবে আমরা চাই সে দেশে সুস্থ ও গণতান্ত্রিক ভাবে নির্বাচন হোক।”

US Marines storm Fallujah

Prime Minister Allawi gives green light to rid the city of terrorists

Agencies

Fallujah, November 8

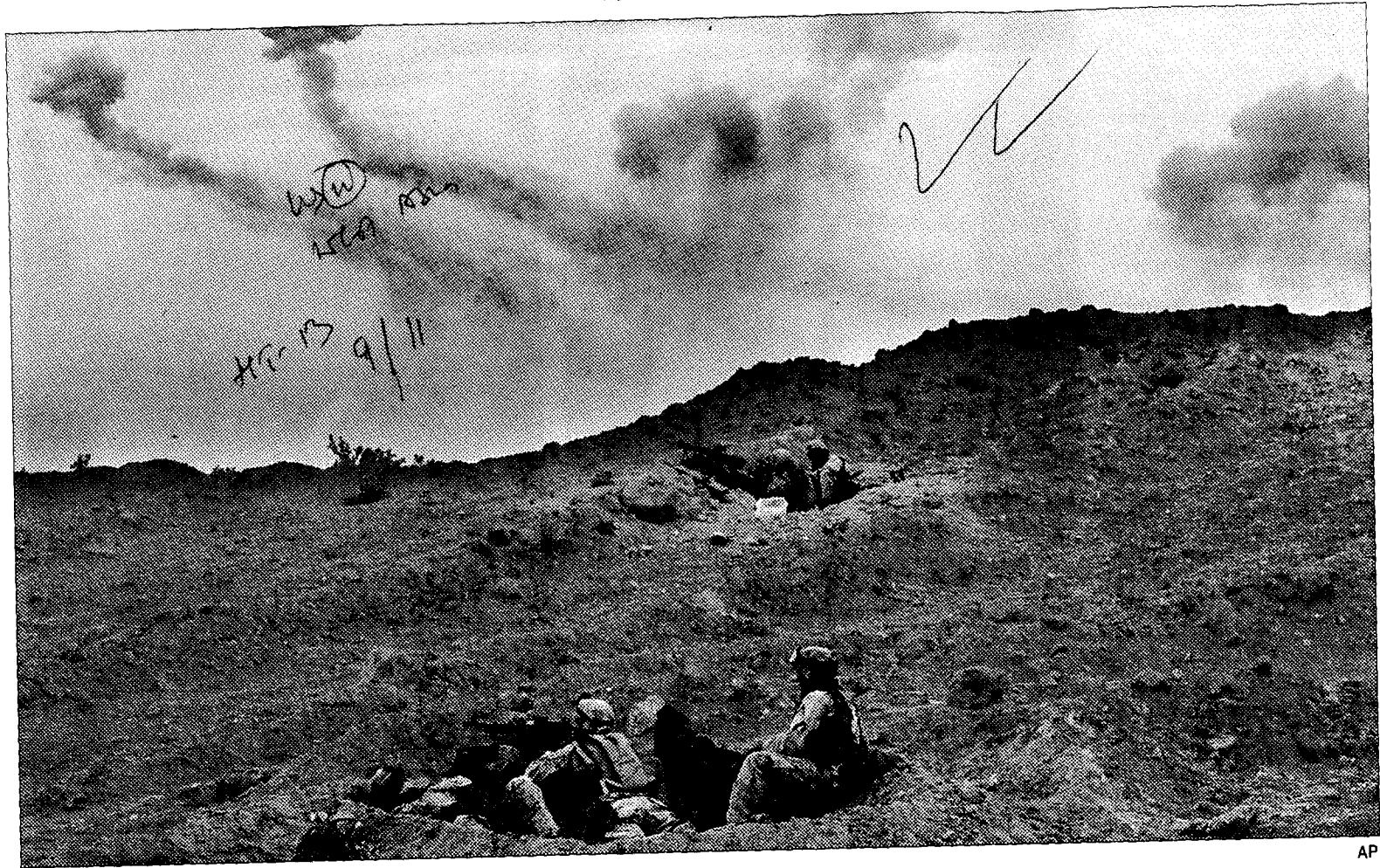
US AND Iraqi forces have begun a push into Fallujah as part of an all-out assault aimed at driving insurgents out of the city. US Marines have crossed "the line of departure into the northeast sector of Fallujah to secure a foothold in the city," military officials said. The US military is calling the assault Operation Phantom Fury.

Earlier in the day, US warplanes and artillery fire hammered insurgent targets in Fallujah as thousands of US and Iraqi troops massed in the nearby desert and braced for all-out urban combat.

Late on Sunday, Iraqi soldiers backed by US Marines seized the main hospital on the western outskirts of the Sunni triangle city. The seizure is seen as the first step in what is expected to be a major push to retake the city from as many as 5,000 insurgents.

US forces also secured the western ends of two key bridges over the Euphrates river. It's from one of those bridges that corpses of slain US security contractors were hung last spring.

Iraqi interim Prime Minister Ayad Allawi said on Monday he has given US and Iraqi forces the green light to rid the city of Fallujah of insurgents, and he promised to restore law and order. "We are determined to clean Fallujah from terrorists," Allawi said at a news confer-



US Marines take up positions on the outskirts of Fallujah on Monday. Two key bridges on the Euphrates were secured by the US forces from the insurgents. AP

ence in Baghdad. Allawi also imposed a curfew in Fallujah and Ramadi as part of a security law. He said that armed groups in Fallujah "do not want a peaceful settlement." He also closed

Iraq's borders with Syria and Jordan — allowing only food convoys — to keep insurgents from escaping to other countries.

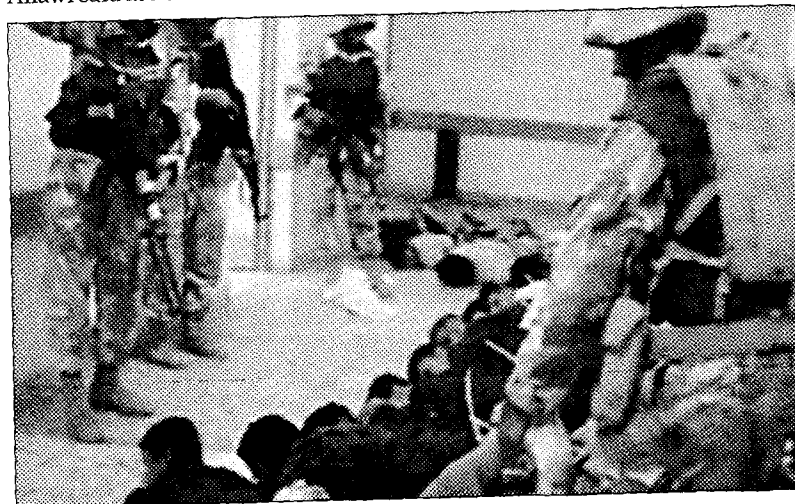
"Yesterday, we have seen more criminal acts commit-

ted by terrorists, who continue to use Fallujah as a base for their operations. I reach conviction (that there is) no other option but to take necessary measures to protect Iraq from killers, and so they

will go back and lead a normal life," Allawi said.

More than 10,000 forces — Marines, US soldiers and Iraqi forces — are expected to be involved in the assault. On Monday morning, tanks

and attack vehicles streamed through the desert, getting in position for the fight. The US and Iraqi forces hope to pacify Fallujah in time for elections in January.



REUTERS
Video grab show Iraqi soldiers lining up detainees on the floor of the main hospital in Fallujah on Sunday night. The soldiers seized the main hospital in Fallujah, blindfolding a number of people and kicking down doors but not firing a shot.

Samarra serial blasts kill 33

AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE

SAMARRA, Nov. 6. — At least 33 people were killed and 48 wounded today, including a local police chief, as four car bombs and clashes rocked the Iraqi city of Samarra, north of Baghdad.

The fourth car bomb exploded in the south of the city, killing 10 and wounding five, police Lieutenant Colonel Raed Mohammed Kazem said. "We have received 33 bodies and 48 wounded," Dr Nawfal Mohammed at Samarra's general hospital said.

The dead included 24 policemen, three national guards and six civilians. A third car bomb exploded half an hour later in front of a teachers' college in the city, leaving some people wounded, said Lieutenant Colonel Mahmud Ahmed. He also said attacks by gunmen on police stations in Samarra left at least four killed and 17 wounded, and that at least six people were killed in fighting between rebels and US troops.

US and Iraqi troops stormed the majority Sunni Muslim Samarra, 125 kms north of Baghdad, at the start of October to wrest control from rebels.

Fallujah infiltrators

American warplanes pounded Fallujah in what residents called the strongest attacks in months, AP adds from Fallujah. Over 10,000 American soldiers and Marines massed for an expected assault on the



A pedestrian shows the crater caused by an explosive device that detonated as an US army convoy was driving past. In Samarra on Saturday. — AFP

guerrilla stronghold. Iraq's Prime Minister warned the "window is closing" to avert an offensive.

In the early hours before dawn on Saturday, several US planes dropped five 500-pound bombs at sev-

eral targets in Fallujah, Lt Col David Staven said.

On Friday, residents said that US planes dropped leaflets urging women and children to leave the city, 40 miles west of Baghdad.

As pressure mounted on

Fallujah, the insurgents struck back, killing one US soldier and wounding five in a rocket attack. Clashes were reported at other checkpoints around the city and in the east and north of the city till late in the day.

Blackwill to quit

WASHINGTON, Nov. 6. — US Strategic Advisor to the National Security Council on Iraq and former Ambassador to India Mr Robert D Blackwill has resigned, putting to rest speculations about him being a successor to National Security Adviser Ms Condoleezza Rice.

Mr Blackwill, a former ambassador to India conveyed his decision in an e-mail on Friday. He had been mentioned prominently in speculation about President George Bush's second-term foreign policy team, with some observers pegging him as a possible successor to Ms Rice, if she quits, becomes defence secretary or assumes another key post.

Cofer Black resigns

The State Department's top counter-terrorism official Mr Cofer Black, has stepped down in what is believed to be the first resignation of a senior US official to become public since President Bush's re-election officials said.

Mr Black's decision was not announced till Friday, adds AFP. "He has decided to move on," deputy state department spokesman Mr Adam Ereli said. "He thought it would be a good time between administrations to go. He has a number of offers in the private sector and he's going to take some time to think about them." — Agencies

7 NOV 2004

THE STATESMAN

US assault on Falluja imminent

Air Strikes Ahead Of Attack Leave Three Dead, Four Injured

By Alistair Lyon

Baghdad: The US military sealed off Falluja on Friday and launched a night of air strikes on the rebel city ahead of an assault seen as critical to the interim government's attempt to pacify Iraq before January elections.

"We are making last-minute preparations. It will be soon. We are just awaiting orders from Prime Minister (Iyad) Allawi," Marine Colonel Michael Shupp said.

Troops have cut all roads in and out of the Sunni Muslim city of 300,000 people, many of whom have fled, residents said. US aircraft struck after midnight in the latest of what the military said were five strikes within seven hours that destroyed a command post, arms caches and rebel positions. Hospital officials in Falluja said the air strikes had killed three people and wounded four.



US rifleman Rick J Meyers during a tank integration exercise in Falluja's camp Bahana

Allawi was meeting European Union leaders in Brussels on Friday. He sought to calm European anger over his description of states that opposed the US-led war to oust Saddam Hussein as 'spectators'. Several EU leaders said his comment, made the day before they were due to offer him a \$21 million-aid package to support the elec-

tions and justice system, was unhelpful.

"What I said is that history is history, past is past... We definitely want to forge a positive alliance with Europe," Allawi said after meeting British Prime Minister Tony Blair. Allawi and Blair both ahead in January despite the relentless violence.

French President Jacques Chirac, an opponent of last year's war, said the polls must proceed and include all parts of Iraqi society. He was due to leave Brussels before the EU leaders' meeting with Allawi. His office denied it was a snub.

The EU support for Allawi was meant to heal rifts within the bloc over the Iraq war and turn a new page with the United States after President Bush's re-election on Tuesday.

Allawi says force must be used on die-hard rebels whose conflict with America has spread violence, chaos and kidnapping in Iraq. But even politicians within his government say a bloody offensive on Falluja could fuel tension and prompt Sunni Muslims to boycott the elections, nullifying their legitimacy.

Britain has now lost 70 troops in Iraq. Daily guerrilla attacks have pushed the

overall US death toll to 1,122. Vice President Ibrahim Al Jaafari said the vote for a national assembly that will choose a new government and draft a permanent constitution is tentatively set for January 27.

The timing may hang on the outcome of the Falluja offensive to crush Saddam loyalists and militants led by Al Qaida ally Abu Musab Al Zarqawi, who have claimed responsibility for hostage beatings and some of Iraq's bloodiest bombings.

Shupp said he did not know if Zarqawi was in the city, adding that Marines could face 1,000 to 6,000 fighters there.

The US military says the assault will succeed where an April one failed because this time it will be ordered by an Iraqi government and Iraqi forces will be involved.

In April, Iraqi units refused to fight for the US-led occupation. Reuters

Powell was kept in dark: Report

White House Officials Bypassed Federal Courts On Plans For War On Terror

New York: A plan drawn up by a small group of senior White House officials for dealing with terrorists the United States expected to be captured following September 11 attacks was considered so sensitive that its financial details were hidden from national security adviser Condoleezza Rice and secretary of state Colin Powell, a media report said on Sunday.



Declared on terrorism. Determined to deal aggressively with the terrorists they expected to capture, the officials bypassed the federal courts and their constitutional guarantees, giving the military the authority to detain foreign suspects indefinitely and prosecute them in tribunals not used since World War II, the report said.

The Times quoted White House officials as saying their use of extraordinary powers would allow the Pentagon to collect crucial intelligence and mete out swift, unmerciful justice. "We think it guarantees that we'll have the kind of treatment of these individuals that we believe they deserve," said vice-president Dick Cheney, who was a driving force behind the policy.

In a new revelation, The New York Times said that a small group of White House officials had worked in great secrecy in November, 2001 to devise a new system of justice for the new war they had de-

But three years later, the paper points out, not a single terrorist has been prosecuted. Of the roughly 560 men being held at the US naval base at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, only four have been formally charged. Preliminary hearings for those suspects brought such a barrage of procedural challenges and public criticism that verdicts could still be months away.

A supreme court decision in June has given the detainees the right to challenge their imprisonment in the Federal court. The Pentagon has also stepped up efforts to send home hundreds of them whom it once branded as dangerous terrorists.

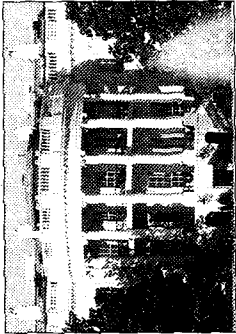
"We've cleared whole forests of paper developing procedures for these tribunals, and no one has ben

tried yet," Richard L. Shiffrin, who worked on the issue as the Pentagon's deputy general counsel for intelligence matters was quoted as saying. "They just ended up in this Kafkaesque sort of purgatory."

The story of how Guantanamo and the new military justice system became an intractable legacy of Sept 11 has been largely hidden from public view, the Times says.

The Times claimed that the legal strategy took shape as the amalgamation of a small core of conservative administration officials whose political influence and bureaucratic skill gave them remarkable power in the aftermath of the attacks.

The strategy became a source of sharp conflict within the Bush administration, eventually pitting the highest-profile cabinet secretaries—including rice and defense secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld—against one another over issues of due process. PTI



25 OCT 2004

US soldier
gets 8 yrs for
Abu Ghraib

WASHINGTON, Oct. 22. — US Army Staff Sergeant Ivan Fredrick, the highest-ranking official to be tried so far in the Abu Ghraib prison scandal, was sentenced to eight years in prison and reduced to the rank of a private for his role in abusing inmates at the Iraqi prison. 28/10

The 38-year-old Sergeant was also ordered to forfeit his pay and allowances and given a dishonourable discharge after he agreed to testify against others charged with abusing Iraqi prisoners, the US Central Command said here yesterday.

The court proceedings against Frederick ended at a US military base in Baghdad yesterday when Judge Colonel James Pohl delivered the terms of his sentence. As per a pre-trial agreement, the convicted Sergeant will have to serve only 8 years of his ten-year sentence. Frederick had pleaded guilty to conspiracy, dereliction of duty among other charges. — PTI

THE STATESMAN

23 OCT 2004

US convoy ambushed in Iraq

12/110 WSW W Agun
■ 2 killed and 18 injured in a suicide car bomb attack

AGENCIES
MOSUL, OCTOBER 11

9h-10
TWO Iraqis were killed and 18 others wounded in a suicide car bomb attack today against a US military convoy in the northern Iraqi city of Mosul, medical sources said.

Witnesses said they saw body parts scattered in the street after the blast, which occurred in Mosul's southern Yarmouk district on the main highway leading into the city from the South.

The US military said it was investigating what they termed as "a complex attack". The witnesses said civilians and soldiers had been hit. Four vehicles were destroyed, including one reduced to a charred wreck.

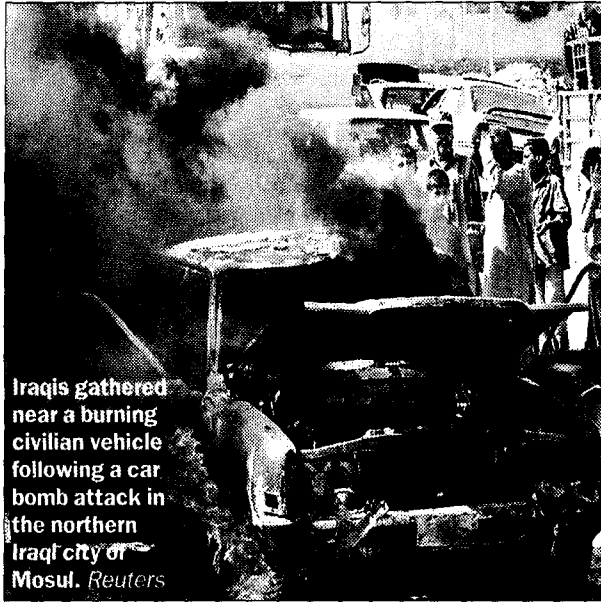
A pick-up truck sped up beside the US convoy and exploded, said Iraqi police officer Jarella Mohammed said.

The bomb gouged a crater two metres deep in the road. US soldiers opened fire after the attack, the witnesses said. Insurgents have frequently mounted attacks on US forces in Mosul.

Police said the beheaded bodies of two Mosul residents had been found in the city in the past 24 hours.

One was discovered on Monday in an Eastern district, the other in the South of the city the previous day.

There was no word on the motives for the killings of Iraqis and foreign hostages.



Iraqis gathered near a burning civilian vehicle following a car bomb attack in the northern Iraqi city of Mosul. Reuters

■ Sadr militia begins arms handover: Police



MARIAM KAROUNY
BAGHDAD, OCTOBER 11

SHIITE militiamen handed in some weapons in the first few hours of a five-day disarmament plan that the interim government hopes will defuse the major Baghdad flashpoint of Sadr City, police said on Monday.

Iraqi police at one of three designated arms collection points in the sprawling slum district said they had received only a handful of weapons from Sadr's Mehdi Army militia.

The display at Habibiya station included rocket-propelled grenades, rusty artillery shells, landmines and assault rifles.

A militia source said earlier that militiamen were awaiting orders from their leader Moqtada al-Sadr, based in Najaf, to start turning in their weapons.

The youthful cleric's ragtag fighters were due to hand in heavy weapons at three collection point under the deal.

Militiamen in Sadr City will have five days to hand in their weapons, National Security Adviser Kassim Daoud said on Sunday.

—Reuters

Bush to plans delay major attacks in Iraq

MARK MAZZETTI
WASHINGTON, OCTOBER 11

THE Bush administration plans to delay major assaults on rebel-held cities in Iraq until after US elections in November, say administration officials, mindful that large-scale military offensives could affect the US presidential race.

Pentagon officials say they will not try to retake cities such as Fallujah and Ramadi—where insurgents' grip is strongest and US military casualties could be the greatest. "When this elec-

tion's over, you'll see us move very vigorously," said one senior official involved in strategic planning. "Once you're past the election, it changes the political ramifications" of a large-scale offensive, the official said.

With only four months remaining, US commanders are scrambling to ensure voting in as many Iraqi cities for poll's legitimacy.

US officials point out that there have been no direct orders to commanders in the field to pause operations in the weeks before the Nov 2 election. —LAT-WP

INDIAN EXPRESS

12 OCT 2004

Will America heed the message?

By Hamid Ansari

DIPLOMACY COM-
MENCED when the first
human societies decided
it was better to hear the
message than eat the messenger.
Messages to rulers are rarely pur-
poseless; their timing and occasion
are carefully chosen and the content
crafted with care.

One such message was delivered
to the United States on September
28 by Prince Moulay Hashid, brother
of the King of Morocco. He is by
age and education in the category
President George W. Bush would
call modern and moderate Muslims.
The occasion was an address to the
Wharton Business School; the tim-
ing a month before the presidential
elections. Morocco is cited in Wash-
ington as an Arab state that has
gone ahead with a reform agenda.

Describing himself as "a frank
voice from the Middle East" the
Prince addressed the neocon agen-
da in blunt terms and said the in-
vasion of Iraq was neither about
weapons of mass destruction nor
about democratisation and oil.

"It is, and always was, a war about
re-making first Iraq, then the Middle
East, into a zone of compliance with
U.S. interests" and more generally
about demonstrating the U.S. will
and power to reshape the world in
the 21st century in its own interest
and on its own terms, forcibly if nec-
essary. He referred to the scenario
building for "World War IV" and
said the proponents of the invasion
were not disheartened by the turn of
events and instead were "enthused

by the prospect of wider and deeper
conflict in Iraq and in the region."
Their purpose was "nothing less
than breaking or taming the Arab-
Islamic world" and America "has the
stomach to impose a new political
culture on the defeated parties."

Temporary upsets do not, there-
fore, interfere with the strategic
goals of this approach. Comparing
the situation to a seething vortex of

incidentally, perhaps — Palestinian
rage will be aimed directly at Amer-
icans."

And so while the Iraqi war and
occupation was the urgent issue, the
central, underlying problem was the
Palestinian issue. "The plight of the
Palestinians is the egregious ongo-
ing injustice in the world. It is the
one complaint of Bin Laden's that
had resonance. It is now joined

complex and contradictory. "It will
require accepting that groups whose
agenda the U.S. will not like will be-
come significant actors in this proc-
ess." However "the political
leadership with the will for these
kind of changes does not seem to
exist in the United States today".

The Prince was specific in his
prognosis on Iraq. The one unifying
theme that cut across the insurgen-
cy was opposition to occupation.
Democratisation could thus lead to
"re-Baathification without the Tikrit
element." The U.S. army was the
prime source of instability. No mat-
ter what its exit brought, it must exit,
and quickly.

Moulay Hashid's speech, apart
from being valid in diagnostic
terms, was remarkable for its can-
dour in faulting U.S. policy, in iden-
tifying its causes, and its
implications. For a member of an
Arab ruling family to be so critical in
public is unusual if not unpreceden-
ted. The Prince could not have spo-
ken in, these terms without the
knowledge and approval of his
brother. Morocco has enjoyed a
privileged relationship with Wash-
ington. It has been the venue, and
the channel, for confidential parleys
with Israel. It is far removed from
the area of crisis and yet feels the
heat intensely enough to convey its
concerns publicly on the eve of an
election. Have Arab rulers given up
on Mr. Bush?

(The writer is a Distinguished Fel-
low at the Observer Research Foun-
dation, New Delhi.)

The brother of Morocco's King has publicly faulted the United States' policy on Iraq and the Middle East. Have Arab rulers given up on Mr. Bush?

with, and amplified by, the occupa-
tion of Iraq. This is the self-reinforc-
ing vortex of serious trouble." And
given the perceived identification of
interests that the neocons had suc-
ceeded in crafting between the U.S.
and Israel, it would lead to more
conflict. The prospects for the next
ten years were, therefore, not good.
As a result, the much-needed demo-
cratic reform in the Arab world
"must now take a back seat."

The only way to reverse the trend
was for the U.S. to "change its policy
and its direction, both in Iraq and in
the war on terror" and make a re-
newed commitment to internation-
al law and institutions. It would also
mean understanding that democra-
cy could only be built in partnership
with progressive forces in Arab so-
cieties in a process that would be

conflict, he said a parallel vortex ex-
isted in the shape of the *jihad* Islam
that advocated a similar generalised
confrontation. "It is the unavoidable
duty of Muslims to combat and de-
feat any such ideology, wherever it
appears and by any means neces-
sary. It is also the right of anyone
who is attacked by these forces to
combat and defeat them."

The third element of this turbu-
lent mix, said the Prince, was the
Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The
world has seen "the President of the
United States abandon decades of
international and U.S. policy to em-
brace the agenda of the Israeli
right... We now see the U.S. accom-
modating every Israeli project for
Palestinian politicide." This enraged
Arab and Muslim opinion and "at
some point, of course — and not so

NS(W) NCA ALU

America claims victory in Samarra

Samarra, Oct. 3 (Reuters): Waving white flags, Iraqis fled the city of Samarra on river boats today as US forces claimed victory over insurgents in the first step of an offensive aimed at taking control of rebel-held cities.

Iraq's US-backed interim government is hoping American and Iraqi forces will crush a bloody insurgency and take back all of the country before elections scheduled for January.

But the operation in Samarra, 100 km north of Baghdad, brought condemnation from residents about the cost in lives and suffering, and

guerrillas in the fiercest rebel-held city of Falluja are expected to put up a tougher fight.

The US strategy of "precision strikes" also came in for criticism from Iraqi President Ghazi Yawar who described the air assaults as collective punishment.

In a statement, the US military said warplanes had conducted "another precision strike" in Falluja today, the latest in a weeks-long campaign of strikes targeted at Jordanian militant Abu Musab al-Zarqawi and his followers.

"Air strikes on cities are a very annoying issue and not acceptable in any way. I con-

sider it collective punishment," Yawar told Al Arabiya television network.

In Samarra, aid organisations said they were concerned about a lack of water and power and the fate of hundreds of families forced to flee.

One man who said he escaped the city on Sunday said a number of civilians had been killed. The man who gave his name as Abu Qa'qa said in Baghdad he had seen stray dogs picking at corpses in the street. He said he had seen several incidents of civilians being killed. Death was not limited to Samarra.

A hospital near Baghdad

said it had received the bodies of a man and a woman, both believed to be Westerners, found by police yesterday. The man had been beheaded and the woman shot in the head. Neither carried any identification and doctors in the town of Mahmudiya said only that their features looked Western.

Around 3,000 US troops and 2,000 Iraqi soldiers stormed Samarra on Friday, determined to rid the city of its insurgent population.

"This has been a successful operation... We're very confident that the future of Samarra is good," Major-General John Batiste, the commander

of the US 1st Infantry Division, which led the assault on Samarra, told CNN. "It is over in Samarra," Iraqi defence minister Hazem Shaalan told Al Arabiya television. In 36 hours of fighting in the city, the US military said it killed 125 guerrillas and seized 88.

Residents said bodies were left in the streets, untended due to the fear of snipers.

Families tried to bury their dead today, but the road to the cemetery was blocked off by US troops, witnesses said.

Some people unable to flee the city by road travelled on small boats along a river holding up white flags as helicop-

ters hovered overhead.

"The situation is very bad. No one can move, even ambulances can't move the wounded. All roads are blocked. If one road was open half of Samarra would have fled," said Khalil al-Samiraei.

While the city was calmer, a Reuters photographer saw several burnt out cars and pools of dried blood on street corners. Dozens of houses were reduced to rubble.

The Iraqi Red Crescent Society, the Muslim equivalent of the Red Cross, said it was trying to deliver food, water and first aid to needy civilians, and said it feared for the fate of at

least 500 families forced to flee to areas north of Samarra.

Firdoos al-Ubadi, an Iraqi Red Crescent spokesperson, said her group and other aid organisations received a letter from Iraq's human rights ministry describing the situation in Samarra as a tragedy and calling for emergency assistance. The ministry was not available to confirm the letter.

Iraq's interior minister, who visited Samarra yesterday, said no civilians had been killed in the day-and-a-half blitz, a statement that angered residents who said they had lost family members, including children, in the fighting.

US forces hit Samarra, 94 rebels killed



A supporter of radical cleric Moqtada Al Sadr in Baghdad. Reuters

SABAH AL-BAZEE
SAMARRA, OCTOBER 1

US-LED forces stormed Samarra on Friday and said nearly 100 guerrillas were killed in air strikes and street-to-street combat during a major new American offensive to wrest control of the Iraqi town.

Doctors at Samarra's hospital said 47 bodies were brought in, including 11 women, five children and seven elderly men. They said ambulances could not reach many wounded as fighting, which lasted throughout the night, was still going on.

A spokesman for the US 1st Infantry Division said an estimated 94 insurgents were killed. Iraq's Interior Ministry said that by midday Iraqi police were in control of the centre of

98-7 WS(N) WAW
Samarra and most surrounding areas following a joint US and Iraqi operation to "remove the terrorists who have been holding the town hostage".

Before dawn, troops backed by tanks pushed through the streets as guerrillas unleashed mortar attacks and fired rocket-propelled grenades and rifles from the rooftops. Sporadic fighting was still being heard in the early afternoon and electricity and water were cut off in the town of more than 100,000 people, 100 km North of Baghdad.

The US military says it will retake guerrilla strongholds such as Samarra, the western cities of Falluja and Ramadi and the Baghdad districts of Sadr City and Haifa Street by the end of the year so elections can go ahead in January as planned.

The Samarra assault began shortly after midnight with air strikes and artillery barrages pounding the mainly Sunni Muslim town, which had been a no-go zone for US Forces for months. The US Military said three US soldiers were wounded during the operation. It said troops destroyed several mortar sites, rocket-propelled grenade teams and guerrilla vehicles. Overnight, guerrillas were seen unloading weapons and ammunition from two speedboats on the Tigris River in the town, the military said. Troops opened fire and destroyed the boats.

The Samarra offensive came after a day of bloodshed in Baghdad, in which 41 people, 34 of them children, were killed by car bombs. —Reuters

US pounds Fallujah

Third strike in 24 hours targets Zarqawi men

Reuters

Fallujah, September 26

US AIRCRAFT struck at the rebel Iraqi stronghold of Fallujah for a third time in 24 hours, targeting a meeting of suspected militants loyal to Jordanian mastermind Abu Musab al-Zarqawi.

Saturday night's strike was aimed at about 10 militants meeting in the city centre to plan operations, the US military said. Eight people were killed and 17 wounded, Anas Ahmed, a doctor at a nearby hospital, said.

It was the third US-described "precision strike" in 24 hours, raising to 15 the number of people killed and the number of wounded to 30, among them women and children, doctors said.

Fallujah is home to some of Iraq's most hardened Sunni Muslim militants and has become a focal point of the anti-American insurgency.

Zarqawi's group, known as Tawhid and Jihad, has claimed responsibility for kidnapping and beheading foreigners and for car bombings and other attacks in Iraq over the past year.

"Multiple secondary explosions following the strike indicate the site was used by terrorists to store explosives and weapons," a military statement said.

In the past, Fallujah residents have said the US military's precision bombing of suspected militants ended up killing innocent women and children. A child was pulled from the rubble of one building after Saturday morning's attack.

US forces tried to overrun



AFP

An American soldier inspects the site of a mortar attack which killed one person and injured four in Baghdad on Sunday.

Senior Iraqi commander held

A SENIOR member of the Iraqi National Guard is in custody after being arrested for suspected links with insurgents, the US military has said.

Gen Talib al-Lahibi, in charge of security for Diyala province north-east of Baghdad, was detained on Thursday. He was appointed to the post only a week ago. The Iraqi National Guard is recruited and trained by the US, which is attempting to

build up a local force able to ensure security in the country. "Lahibi was detained by multinational forces on 23 September for having associations with known insurgents," a US military statement said.

Gen Lahibi, who served in Saddam Hussein's army, is the most senior member of the new Iraqi security forces to be detained on suspicion of collaborating with militants. Agencies, Baghdad

Fallujah earlier this year, but withdrew after weeks of furious fighting. Since then, they say it has become a

magnet for foreign militants.

The US military believes Zarqawi, a Jordanian-born militant who is Washington's

No. 1 enemy in Iraq, with a \$25 million reward offered for his death or capture, is holed up in Fallujah and coordinating activities from there. His group seized two Americans and a Briton from their home in Baghdad 10 days ago and threatened to kill them unless women prisoners were released.

The two Americans - Eugene Armstrong and Jack Hensley - have been killed, with videos of their bloody executions posted on the Internet, and Briton Kenneth Bigley is threatened also with death, although no deadline has been set.

A two-man delegation of British Muslims arrived in Baghdad on Saturday to push for his release. They plan to meet senior Sunni Muslim clerics and other parties in the coming days. "Our religion is one of compassion and love," Musharraf Hussain, a member of the delegation from the Muslim Council of Britain, said.

In other developments:

■ There were reports of several deaths as an attack on a petrol convoy in Latifiya, south of Baghdad, destroys five out of 12 tankers.

■ A rocket attack in the centre of Baghdad reportedly killed one person.

■ An American soldier, Spc Federico Merida, was sentenced to 25 years in jail for the murder of an Iraqi national guard in May.

■ PM Tony Blair admitted mistakes were made in the run-up to the Iraq war but insists it was right to topple Saddam Hussein.

Police target of Baghdad blast

7-9
18/9

Suicide attack after US raids

Baghdad, Sept. 17 (Reuters): A suicide car bomber killed at least eight people in an attack on a police checkpoint in Baghdad today, after a night of US air strikes around rebel-held Falluja that killed scores.

A government spokesperson said the bomb had detonated beside a line of police vehicles set up to seal off routes to nearby Haifa Street, where US troops were continuing the battles they have been fighting all week to dislodge insurgents. A large crater was gouged into the road and several police cars were ablaze, sending thick smoke into the sky.

The interior ministry said five police had been killed and the health ministry said at least three civilians were also dead, and the toll could rise.

Earlier, a government spokesperson had put the toll at 13.

The US military said an air strike last night near Falluja had killed around 60 foreign fighters loyal to Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, a Jordanian with a \$25-million price on his head who is the Americans' number one foe in Iraq.

Early today, US warplanes destroyed a compound in south central Falluja that the US military said was also used by Zarqawi's militants.

Today's violence in Baghdad began before dawn near around the Haifa Street area. The US military said its troops had fired on a car packed with explosives that was driving towards a checkpoint, killing two men in the vehicle. Later, blasts and gunfire echoed from Haifa Street as US troops moved in.



An Iraqi boy, wounded by the car bomb explosion, in a Baghdad hospital on Friday. (Reuters)

Iran offers to ease nuke fears

Vienna, Sept. 17 (Reuters): Iran said today it might extend its partial freeze of uranium enrichment in order to ease Western fears about its nuclear ambitions but a US official dismissed this as a ploy to fend off tough UN action.

"I don't reject the possibility...of continuing the suspension for an additional one or two months, but this will be decided by the policymakers," Hossein Mousavian, Iran's chief delegate to the UN International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), said.

Mousavian, who earlier this week said Tehran would begin enriching uranium, was reacting to news that the US had compromised with France, Britain and Germany on a toughly-worded IAEA resolution that calls for an immediate halt to Iran's uranium enrichment programme. US undersecretary of state John Bolton said it was an obvious attempt to fend off sanctions.

January election prospects fade

London, Sept. 17 (Reuters): Iraq's chances of holding credible nationwide polls in January are fast fading as violence shreds the authority of the US-backed interim government.

Despite the daily fare of bombings, battles and abductions in Baghdad and large tracts of central and north-western Iraq, Interim Prime Minister Iyad Allawi and the US government insist most Iraqis will go to the polls as scheduled.

But UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan says elections will be impossible if the bloodshed goes on. No one sees it stopping.

The UN, which is charged with helping the interim government run the elections, has only about 35 staff in Iraq, hunkered down in the fortified zone that houses Allawi's offices and the US

and British embassies in Baghdad.

"If we are talking of holding elections equally all over the country, the prospects are pretty dismal," said British defence expert Timothy Garden. "There would have to be a real transformation in security between now and January."

President George W. Bush's spies appear to agree.

A secret National Intelligence Estimate prepared for him in late July says the best Iraq can hope for next year is tenuous security, the worst, civil war, the *New York Times* reported.

Interim President Ghazi al-Yawar said yesterday it would be "premature" to say the elections could definitely take place.

To meet the self-imposed January deadline for elections, the United States is

asking its generals to recapture towns in Iraq's rebellious Sunni Arab heartlands and pacify radical Shia strongholds such as Baghdad's Sadr City. Can they succeed now where they have failed before?

"If you mean drive tanks into the middle of town, raise the flag and drive out the next night, they can do that," said Tim Ripley, a defence expert at Britain's Lancaster University.

"But to turn everyone into loyal, steadfast citizens of the new Iraq, that's different."

"They can mount armoured raids into hostile territory, but the effect is not enduring."

Iraq analyst Toby Dodge, at Queen Mary University of London, said there were not enough US troops to control cities like Falluja and Rama-

di, while Iraqi forces lacked the capacity.

Instead, US generals were using artillery and aircraft to "kill the bad guys" rather than ground troops to hold territory. "But you can't fight an insurgency at one remove," Dodge said. "The political reality in Baghdad and the northwest is the insurgency, and in the rest of the country it is militias. In no place in Iraq does the government shape reality."

In such hostile circumstances, it might seem prudent to postpone elections, but this is also fraught with peril.

Powerful Shia cleric Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani has long demanded elections as the best way for Iraq's majority community to gain the power denied to Shias in Saddam's Sunni-dominated era.

After bowing to a UN rul-

ing earlier this year that early polls were impractical, Sistani might react to any further delay by unleashing the street power he has so far kept in check.

"It's a huge political problem. The risk is that Allawi and the Americans will chug towards elections until the last possible minute and then renege," Dodge said.

"Instead of underestimating or steamrolling Sistani, they should use public diplomacy and private negotiations to bring him along in the decision-making process... and convince him the security situation is not recoverable in the short term."

However, Bush and his British ally, Prime Minister Tony Blair, have invested so much political capital in the elections that it would be hard for them to roll back now.

Bush missed N Korea for Iraq, says Kerry

DAVID E. SANGER
WASHINGTON, SEPTEMBER 13

SENATOR John Kerry on Sunday accused the Bush administration of letting "a nuclear nightmare" develop by refusing to deal with North Korea when it assumed office.

In an interview, he argued that President Bush's preoccupation with Iraq let the North Korean crisis fester to the point that there were now indications that the country may be preparing to test a plutonium bomb.

Secretary of State Colin L. Powell said on Sunday that the explosion in the region of Ryanggang last week was "not any kind of nuclear event", but he confirmed a report in *The*



New York Times that "there is activity going on at a potential nuclear test site," adding that "we're monitoring this".

While intelligence analysts are still debating whether the activity is a harbinger of a test, Kerry insisted that the fact that

the North is threatening such an action is a sign of failed diplomacy. "I think that this is one of the most serious failures and challenges to the security of the US and it really underscores the way in which George Bush talks the game but doesn't deliver," said Kerry.

In the past, he has accused Bush of ignoring a far larger nuclear threat in North Korea because of his determination to oust Saddam Hussein.

"They have taken their eye off the real ball," he said. "They took it off in Afghanistan and shifted it to Iraq. They took it off in North Korea and shifted it to Iraq. They took it off in Russia, and nuclear materials there, and shifted it to Iraq." --NYT

'Blast was for hydro-electric dam'

SEoul: The explosion in North Korea last week was a deliberate blast to pave way for a hydro-electric dam, the BBC quoted the North's Foreign minister as telling a visiting British official on Monday.

"It was no nuclear explosion or an accident. It was a deliberate controlled detonation to demolish a mountain in the north of the country," a BBC correspondent in Pyongyang with British Foreign Office minister Bill Rammell quoted North Korean Foreign Minister Paek Nam-sun as saying.

Paek, who was giving the first North Korean word on the explosion, said it was part of a

construction project to build a hydro-electric dam in Ryanggang on the Chinese border.

North Korea will also let Western diplomats visit the explosion site, Rammell said. He told reporters: "Having asked the Vice-Foreign minister for our Ambassadors and other Ambassadors to be allowed to visit the scene of the explosion, I am very pleased the North Koreans have agreed."

Washington and Seoul have said the blast was unlikely to have been a nuclear test. South Korean media said an accident at an underground munitions depot or a weapons factory was a likely explanation.

মার্কিন হামলার

হত ৩৮ ইরাকি

বগদাদ, ৯ সেপ্টেম্বর: ফালুজা এবং তাল আফারে বৃহস্পতিবারে মার্কিন বিমান হানায় অন্তত ৩৮ জন ইরাকি মারা গিয়েছেন। জঙ্গি অধ্যুষিত ফালুজা শহরে এই নিয়ে পরপর তিন দিন বিমান হানা চালাল মার্কিন বাহিনী। মার্কিন সেনার দাবি, জর্ডানের জঙ্গি আবু মুসাব আল-জারকোয়াইয়ের ঘাঁটি লক্ষ্য করে হামলা চালানো হয়। সেনা সূত্রের খবর, ফালুজায় একটি বাড়িতে হামলা চালানো হয়। হামলার সময়ে বাড়িটিতে তিন জন ছিল। তারা জারকোয়াইয়ের সহযোগী। কিন্তু ডাক্তাররা জানান, অন্তত ১২ জন এই হামলায় মারা গিয়েছেন। তাঁদের মধ্যে চারটি শিশু ও দু'জন মহিলা রয়েছেন। আহত হয়েছেন ১৬ জন। তাঁদের মধ্যেও ৮টি শিশু রয়েছে। দু'টি বাড়ি ধ্বংস হয়ে গিয়েছে। ধ্বংসস্থলে কেউ চাপা পড়ে রয়েছেন কি না খুঁজে দেখছে উদ্ধারকারী দল। —রয়টার্স

US bodycount in Iraq crosses 1,000

Baghdad, Sept. 8 (Reuters): Guerrilla attacks that raised the official Pentagon death toll in Iraq above 1,000 highlight how American soldiers are still entangled on several explosive fronts nearly 18 months after the war was launched.

Six American soldiers have been killed in attacks around Baghdad alone in the past few days and insurgents have launched deadly operations elsewhere.

US troops still face attacks from both Sunni guerrillas and Shia rebels, unfinished business that threatens to claim more American lives as the November US presidential elections approach.

Everything from suicide bombers to roadside bombs are used in a guerrilla campaign that shows no signs of waning. "There has been no change in tactics. They are still using rocket-propelled

grenades, roadside bombs and mortars," US Rear Admiral Gregory Slavonic said.

Bloodshed has overshadowed Iraq's US-backed goal of fostering democracy after Saddam Hussein, with everyone from Iraqi ministers to translators for US troops targeted by guerrillas on the country's difficult road to elections.

Attacks on US troops have surged over the past few days and the variety of operations show that American soldiers still face elusive enemies that can strike at any time.

On Monday, a suspected suicide car bomber killed seven Marines just outside Falluja, a Sunni hotbed of anti-American resistance west of Baghdad under the control of insurgents.

The violence since Monday has included several roadside bombs — a simple but deadly guerrilla tactic which US officials say is responsible for 38

percent of US deaths.

US troops and Shia militiamen loyal to radical cleric Moqtada al-Sadr engaged in clashes again this week in Baghdad's Sadr City slum. A rocket-propelled grenade killed a US soldier in those clashes.

In west Baghdad, a soldier was killed by small arms fire.

High-tech American firepower in the form of artillery, combat helicopters and warplanes has failed to break the will of guerrillas with AK-47 assault rifles and grenades who are recruiting disillusioned Iraqis.

One soldier based in Baghdad, Specialist Shawn Buller said he was still committed to staying in Iraq despite the risks. But he said it would be unwise to underestimate the guerrillas.

"You can't play down the abilities of these guys. But I will stay in Iraq. You know I re-

ally enjoyed watching Iraq's soccer team compete in the Olympics, I mean that," said Buller, of Portland, Oregon.

As he spoke, a blast could be heard in the distance and a soldier standing beside him shook his head, a reminder that the insurgency is far from broken. Iraqis say the US death toll climbing over 1,000 will not encourage the Americans to leave. "The Americans will stay. It is not about deaths, it is about the strategy of controlling Iraq," said journalist Ali Hussein.

The Pentagon says at least 998 US troops have been killed in Iraq along with three civilian employees of the defence department. In addition, 6,916 US troops have been wounded.

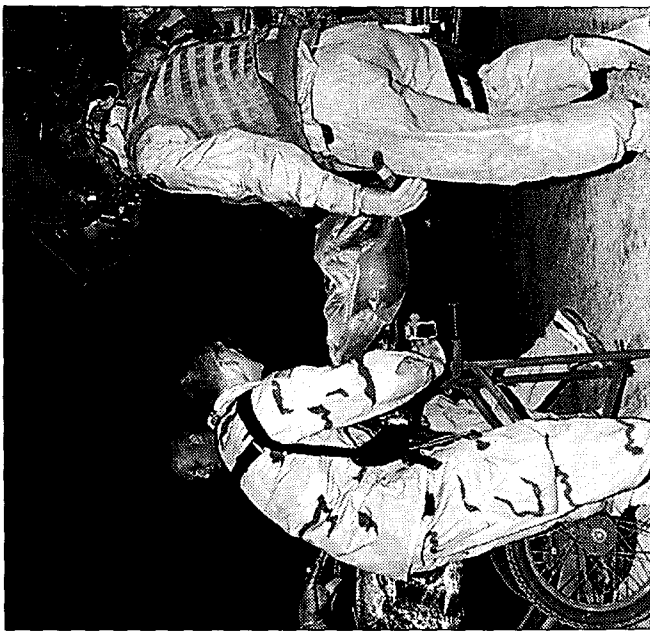
US deaths climbed in August when Sadr's Mehdi Army militia was locked in fierce fighting with American marines and troops in Najaf, a sacred city turned battle-

ground. Slavonic said Iraqi government officials were trying to end the conflict with Sadr through negotiations and the US military hopes investment in rebuilding will stabilise Najaf. But Falluja is another story. Some of Iraq's hardest guerrillas and militants rule the streets and the population has bitter memories of US attacks.

Italy shocked

Shocked by the kidnapping in Iraq of two women aid workers dedicated to helping child victims of war, Italian leaders called for national unity today to face what some of them called a war against the West.

Simona Pari and Simona Torretta, who worked with children for an Italian non-governmental organisation, were abducted when men armed with AK-47 assault rifles raided their offices in central Baghdad.



US army doctors deliver wounded Marines from a helicopter to a hospital in Baghdad. (AFP)

US air strike on Iraq kills 20

Agencies

Fallujah/Paris, September 2

TWENTY IRAQIS were killed and six wounded in a US air strike overnight on suspected Abu Mussab al-Zarqawi safe houses in Fallujah, medical officials and the US military said on Thursday.

Two buildings were destroyed when a US fighter jet fired a pair of missiles or a large bomb in the residential neighbourhood of Jebel in Fallujah, a hotspot of radical Sunni insurgency 50 km west of Baghdad, police and medical officials said.

"We now have 17 dead people and six wounded," Dr Seifeddin Taha of the Fallujah general hospital said late on Wednesday night.

Another three bodies were pulled from the rubble on Thursday as bulldozers cleared wreckage and a crowd of rescue workers dug through the debris and searched for body parts and

Militants kill 3 Turkish hostages

A MILITANT group calling itself Tawhid and Jihad has killed three Turks it was holding hostage in Iraq, Al Jazeera television reported. The channel said on Thursday it had received a video from the group showing the hostages being killed. But it only aired a brief segment showing the men clutching their passports and

sitting on the floor in front of three masked gunmen, one of whom was reading a statement. The gunmen were standing in front of a black banner which looked similar but not identical to the flag of Jama'at al-Tawhid and Jihad, which is headed by al-Qaida ally Abu Musab al-Zarqawi.

Reuters, Dubai

bits of flesh, said rescue worker Hossam Ibrahim. "All the wounded are families. Among the dead, there could be two or three children but the bodies are torn to pieces and it's difficult to tell," Taha said.

France defies kidnappers

France has put into force a ban on Muslim headscarves as 12 mil-

lion pupils begin the school year, despite fears for the lives of two French journalists held hostage by Islamic militants in Iraq. French leaders refused to bow to the kidnappers' demands to rescind the new law banning conspicuous religious symbols from state schools, ignoring a deadline that passed on Wednesday without any fresh word from the hostage-takers.

Iraq war main theme of protests

By David Ho and Bob Dart

NEW YORK, AUG. 30. More than 100,000 protesters vented their anger at the U.S. President, George W Bush, and the Iraq war on Sunday, pounding drums, waving signs and chanting "no more Bush."

As an army of police looked on, the largely peaceful marchers snaked around Manhattan skyscrapers and beside a fortress-like Madison Square Garden, where the Republican National Convention begins on Monday.

"I am resentful of their taking advantage of 9/11 and turning it into political theatre," New Yorker David Goldschmidt said. "But the convention has provided the opportunity for this festival of democracy."

As the marchers passed the Garden, channelled between interlocking metal barricades, a sign on the arena flashed "Thank You New York" and another read 'Welcome.'

Different sentiments

Protesters' signs displayed different sentiments, including "Uproot Bush," "Draft the Bush Twins" and "Quagmire Accomplished."

From rooftops, helicopters and a blimp high above, police eyed the demonstration, the largest anticipated related to the convention.

March organisers estimated 400,000 people turned out. Police would give no official

count, but an anonymous law enforcement source cited by The Associated Press put the crowd at 120,000.

Some 200 people were arrested, bringing the total to more than 500 since protests aimed at the convention began several days ago. A handful of people were arrested near the Garden after someone set a paper dragon on fire.

It is unlike the Democratic convention in Boston last month, where demonstrator turnout was smaller than expected and police arrested only about half a dozen people.

Opposition to the war in Iraq was the central theme on Sunday, and the crowd included veterans of the war and military families.

They were joined in the sweltering heat by Jesse Jackson, filmmaker Michael Moore and an array of activists with diverse causes and methods.

In the shadow of the Empire State Building, a man dressed as a black bomb wearing Mr. Bush's face called for building more weapons.

Another costumed demonstrator roamed the crowd promoting vegetarianism in a giant corn-on-the-cob suit.

Christian Herold, a New York drama professor, handed out bells to demonstrators and encouraged them to "ring out the GOP."

Demonstrators from Billionaires For Bush, which lampoons the administration's

economic policies, turned out in tuxedos and evening gowns and told marchers, "Thank you for paying our taxes."

People came from around the country to protest.

Scott Parkin, a college history professor from Houston, said he travelled with about 60 persons from Texas to tell the President that not everyone in his home state agrees with him.

"We want to have a different world than the one the Republican party and George Bush envision," he said.

Lou Farrell, a school teacher from Hatfield, Penn, volunteered with his son and daughter to be pallbearers for one of dozens of flag-draped coffins symbolising lives lost in Iraq.

Boos and hisses

Protester chants turned to boos and hisses as they encountered a few dozen Bush supporters across from the Garden. The Bush backers chanted "four more years" in a shouting match with protesters who answered "four more months."

A Bush supporter screamed at the passing protesters, telling them to "go back to France." She said her brother-in-law was killed in the Sept. 11, 2001 attack on the World Trade Center and "it is my duty and obligation to let these people know that freedom is never free."

But John Titus, of Dexter, Michigan, whose daughter, Alicia, was a flight attendant on the second hijacked jet to strike the

twin towers, said his loss prompted a different response.

"I think she would be out here," he said. "In spirit, she really is protesting the war."

The sheer number of protesters and police made for odd scenes such as when officers and demonstrators ducked into a fried chicken restaurant and waited on the same bathroom line.

A handful of staffers from the Democratic National Committee scoured surrounding streets soliciting donations for the Kerry campaign from riled-up supporters.

Demonstrators dispersed after the march, some heading to Times Square to protest in front Republican delegates attending Broadway shows.

Thousands trickled into Central Park, despite a city ban on an organised rally there intended to protect the park's grass. The unorganised and diminished demonstration often seemed more picnic than protest as many marchers lounged on the grass alongside curious sunbathers.

Mad Cowboy Disease

First-time protester Sara Urbauz (14), held high a sign saying "Stop Mad Cowboy Disease. Even though I am not old enough to vote, I feel that I have a voice," she said. "What George Bush is doing is not right." — *New York Times News Service*

U.S. turns the heat on Iran now

By Jonathan Steele

HISTORY IS beginning to repeat itself, this time over Iran. Just two years after the notorious Downing Street dossier on Saddam Hussein's alleged weapons of mass destruction and the first efforts to get United Nations approval for war, Washington is trying to create similar pressures for action against Iran.

The ingredients are well-known: sexed-up intelligence material which puts the target country in the worst possible light; moves to get the U.N. to declare it in "non-compliance", thereby claiming justification for going in unilaterally even if the U.N. gives no support for invasion; and at the back of the whole brouhaha, a clique of American neoconservatives whose real agenda is regime change.

The immediate focus for action against Iran is the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), which has produced five reports on Iran in the last 14 months. Part of the U.N., with an international board that acts like a mini Security Council, the IAEA's reports have raised questions about Iran's professedly civilian nuclear programme and its desire to create its own fuel cycle which could eventually be used to produce bombs.

To satisfy its critics, Iran agreed last year to allow so-called intrusive inspections. As a confidence-building measure, it also stopped enriching uranium. In a few days' time the IAEA will issue a new report, and it is its wording that is causing the latest flurry. John Bolton, the Bush administration's point-man, has been rushing round Europe claiming the evidence of sinister Iranian behaviour is clear, even though the IAEA has consistently made no such judgment. It has called for more transparency, but prefers to keep probing

and, like Hans Blix and the U.N. weapons inspectors in Iraq in 2003, insists it needs more time.

Iran, meanwhile, says the IAEA should accept that nothing wrong has been found, close the dossier and let Iran receive the civilian nuclear technology — with the safeguards that go with it — which countries like Germany and France have promised.

Mr. Bolton is not, at this stage, claiming to have intelligence, which the IAEA's inspectors do not. After the fiasco of the U.S.' pre-war materi-

al on Iraq, he has not started to trumpet U.S. sources. But he is choosing to interpret the available knowledge as harshly as possible. He is also close to the Washington hardliners in the Project for the New American Century, who created the doctrine of pre-emptive strikes against unfriendly states and who favour regime change to deal with Islamist fundamentalism.

Norman Podhoretz, the arch-conservative editor of *Commentary* magazine, one of their house journals, said last week: "I am not advocating the invasion of Iran at this moment, although I wouldn't be heartbroken if it happened."

There are differences from the anti-Iraq campaign two years ago. This time the U.S. is taking the lead in going to the U.N. Mr. Bolton wants the IAEA board to say Iran has violated its commitments under the nuclear non-proliferation treaty and take the matter to the Security Council for a decision on sanctions or other stern action. France and Germany are re-

sisting a move to the U.N. Second, even the U.S. (Mr. Podhoretz excepted) is not talking about a full-scale U.S. invasion with ground troops. It has too many soldiers tied up in Iraq and Afghanistan to spare many for a third campaign. The talk is of using U.S. special forces or air strikes to destroy Iran's nuclear facilities, or giving a green light to Israel to do it. Slightly less impatiently, there are hints that the CIA will step up its campaign to overthrow the regime in Teheran by encouraging an-

icans is based on nationalist resentment, and Iranians are no different. People of all political persuasions in Teheran support their country's right to have nuclear power, and probably even bombs. Threatening them with force is not the most intelligent way to persuade them otherwise.

The defeat of Iran's reformist MPs in this spring's unfair elections, as well as the certainty that President Mohammad Khatami will be replaced by a less liberal figure next year, have not ended the chance of dialogue with Teheran. European diplomats detect the emergence of a group of "pragmatic conservatives" in the Iranian leadership who could be easier to deal with than the beleaguered liberals of the past seven years. Many are non-clerical veterans of the Iran-Iraq war who are influenced by nationalism and economic imperatives more than the revolutionary Islamic ideology of the Khomeini generation. They want better relations with the west.

Britain's difference with Washington on Iran is remarkable. It matters more than the better-publicised splits on the Kyoto environmental protocol or the international criminal court. But does Britain's alignment with France and Germany on Iran mean that Tony Blair has really parted with George Bush on a key geo-political and military issue?

We will know the answer after the U.S. election. Even if Mr. Kerry wins, European diplomats expect no major change in Washington's policy towards Iran. Like Cuba, Iran produces special symptoms of irrationality (because of the unrevengeed wound to U.S. pride the mullahs caused when they held diplomats hostage in the embassy a quarter of a century ago). — ©Guardian Newspapers

Limited 2004

American claims over Iran's nuclear programme sound eerily familiar.

ti-government TV and radio broadcasts from abroad and infiltrating opposition movements.

The biggest difference, though, is in Britain's stance. Unlike with the Bush campaign against Saddam Hussein, Britain is siding this time with France and Germany. It is part of a "troika" which promotes constructive engagement rather than confrontation with Iran. Their dialogue ran into a sticky phase this summer with allegations of bad faith on both sides, but the three European states are willing to keep it going.

They have powerful arguments. The disaster of the Iraq war and the failure to bring peace, stability or order make them want no repetition in Iraq's more populous and larger neighbour. Even "limited" air-strikes on Iran's nuclear facilities would unify the country and harden hostility to the west throughout the Middle East, especially if Washington subcontracted the attacks to the Israeli air force.

Most Iraqi resistance to the Amer-

Najaf shrine in America's pincer grip

'Only Iraqi forces will storm the mosque'

Agence France-Presse
Najaf, August 25

US ARMoured vehicles trapped Najaf's Imam Ali shrine in a pincer grip today smashing through Shia militiamen defences as snipers fired on all those coming or going from the mausoleum.

A US plane fired a missile just metres to the west of the mausoleum, making the building tremble and filling it with dust, said a correspondent inside with up to 600 other people.

The closest US vehicle was 20 metres from the western gate of the complex, for four months the military headquarters of radical cleric Muqtada al-Sadr's Mehdi Army, after troops closed in from the Najaf sea, a desert surrounding the city.

Make-shift barricades set up to protect the entrance were torched as tanks moved along the western side of the compound wall towards the surrounding Old City.

US Army 1st Lieutenant Michael Throckmorton, speaking not far from the mosque, said American and Iraqi forces were trying to isolate the militia in one place before an attack.

"What we are trying to do is shape the battlefield to create the big picture. We are trying to do everything that will give us the advantage," Throckmorton said.

Asked what Iraqi forces who entered the battle zone for the first time on Tuesday would do, Throckmorton said: "We hope that they are the first ones to set foot inside (the shrine)."

Iraqi Defence Minister Hazim al-Shalaan had warned the Mehdi fighters they would be wiped out if they did not leave the mosque by Tuesday evening.

The US and Iraqi officials have said only Iraqi forces would storm the mosque. Some 500 Iraqi troops have been deployed to the area around the shrine.

To the east, US forces had smashed through militia defences in the marketplace in Midan square while the heavy boom of artillery fire thundered out across the area from the southern side. The situation on the northern side, closest to the city's vast cemetery, was not immediately clear but the southern and northern exits from the shrine were in the sights of snipers, preventing anyone from entering or leaving.

The shrine — one of the holiest Shia pilgrimage sites in the world — was very close to being sealed off from the rest of the city. Hundreds of heavily-armed Iraqi national guardsmen, who were deployed in the Old City for the first time yesterday, continued to patrol the streets.

Shia militiamen besieged inside the shrine closed all four doors of the compound. The compound wall of what is one of Shia Islam's holiest pilgrimage centres has four gates. The main entrance and exit point in the south was bolted at midday. The three others were closed earlier.

Asked about reports some militia had fled the shrine, Throckmorton said: "I've seen no evidence they are leaving."



An Iraqi guard on the alert near the Ali Imam shrine in the besieged city of Najaf on Tuesday.

Top Shia cleric urges march on siege city

Reuters
Najaf, August 25

IRAQ'S MOST influential Shia cleric returned to the country on Wednesday and urged Iraqis to march to the "burning city" of Najaf, where fighting is creeping ever closer to its sacred shrine.

Aides said Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani arrived in Iraq from Kuwait and was heading to Najaf, his adopted home, after getting heart treatment in London for three weeks.

The news of Sistani's return came as US and Iraqi forces tightened their grip around Mehdi Army militants who have holed up in Najaf's Imam Ali mosque, advancing to within 300 meters of the rebel-held shrine.

The call to march on Najaf by the Shia moderate, who has said little about a crisis that has killed hundreds and undermined the authority of interim Prime Minister Iyad Allawi, could escalate passions among the majority Shia community.

"Najaf is burning. Ayatollah al-Sistani is on his way back and calls on Iraqis from all provinces to join him in the holy city," aide Hamed al-Khafaf said by telephone from Beirut.

The logistics of the march would be known shortly, he said. Another aide said the militia should leave the mosque and US forces should not interfere.

Witnesses saw more than a dozen vehicles heading for the southern city of Basra from Kuwait, led by police cars with sirens wailing. Police said Sistani was in the convoy.

Sistani's departure for London coincided with the outbreak of the rebellion by the militia of radical cleric Muqtada al-Sadr, who has challenged the collegiate leadership of the Najaf clergy led by the elder Sistani.

The march call and Sistani's sudden return appears to be an attempt to reclaim some of the political ground captured during the Sadr's uprising, who has painted himself an icon to the poor masses.

Sadr aide Mahmoud al-Soudani told Al Arabiya television that the Mehdi militia were prepared to talk to halt the fighting. "We are ready to respond to any call from Sayed Sistani or anyone else to stop the bloodshed," he said.



REUTERS

A file photo of a hooded detainee standing atop a box at the Abu Ghraib prison.

Bush jolted by jail torture report

Julian Borger
Washington, August 25

AN OFFICIAL report on the Abu Ghraib abuse scandal yesterday blamed the failure of leadership at the Pentagon for negligence over prison conditions and confusion over interrogation rules which led to "Animal House" sadism in the Iraqi jail.

The report, by a four-member panel of Pentagon advisers, did not pin direct responsibility on the defence secretary, Donald Rumsfeld, by name nor did it find any top officials legally culpable. The worst abuse at Abu Ghraib, it said, was carried out by night shift guards. But the report represented

an implicit indictment of the defence secretary's management of the defence department. "We believe there is institutional and personal responsibility right up the chain of command as far as Washington is concerned," James Schlesinger, a former defence secretary who chaired the panel, told reporters yesterday.

For the first time since the Abu Ghraib scandal broke in March, the Schlesinger report officially made a connection between the actions or omissions of the Bush administration and the brutal treatment of prisoners in US military prisons, and could deepen the damage already done by the affair to the President's re-election effort.

The Schlesinger report depicts the torture scandal as one of the unseen circumstances of poor planning by the Pentagon leadership. "In Iraq, there was not only a failure to plan for a major insurgency, but also to adapt to the insurgency that followed after major combat operations," the report said, adding that the war plan assumed a period of "relatively benign stability" would precede transfer of power to Iraqi authorities.

More damning details of the use of torture against Iraqi prisoners are expected to surface today with results of a separate army investigation into the role of military intelligence at Abu Ghraib.

Leaks from that report, pub-

lished in *The Washington Post* yesterday, included a finding that some guards used dogs to terrify prisoners. The report will mention evidence that at least one Iraqi male detainee was raped. Schlesinger said yesterday: "There was indirect responsibility at higher levels in that the weaknesses at Abu Ghraib were well known, and corrective action could and should have been taken."

Today's report into the role of military intelligence, by Major General George Fay, is expected to recommend proceedings against soldiers not already among the seven facing trial, and against civilian contractors who worked at Abu Ghraib.

Guardian News Service

W Asia

Abuse panel nails Defence brass

Associated Press *5/2/25/8*

WASHINGTON, Aug. 25. — The US Defence Department's most senior civilian and military officials share a portion of blame for creating conditions that led to the Abu Gharib prisoner abuse, according to a report released today by an independent panel of civilian defence experts.

The findings were presented at a Pentagon news conference by Mr James Schlesinger, the former Defence Secretary who headed a four-person commission created by Mr Donald H Rumsfeld.

"There was chaos at Abu Gharib," Mr Schlesinger said, and "sadism on the night shift". The report said the direct responsibility lay with commanders in the field rather than in Washington. Pentagon leaders, however, had an indirect role.

The mistreatment of prisoners, described by the commission as "acts of brutality and purpose-

less sadism," would have been avoided with proper training, leadership and oversight, it said.

In most cases, the abuse was not carried out with the purpose of achieving intelligence from prisoners, he said. "There were freelance activities on the part of the nightshift at Abu Gharib."

'The acts of brutality and purposeless sadism would have been avoided with proper training, leadership and oversight'

The report did not suggest that Mr Rumsfeld ordered any of the abuses or did anything to encourage them. But it indicated that his policies created some confusion at lower levels of the military. "The abuses were not just the failure of some individuals to follow known standards, and they are more than the failure of a few leaders to enforce proper discipline," the report said.

The commission was particularly critical of Lt. Gen. Ricardo Sanchez, the top US commander in Iraq at the time of the abuses. "We believe Lt. Gen. Sanchez should have taken stronger action in November when he realized the extent of the leadership problems at Abu Gharib."

Najaf shrine surrounded

Iraqi forces today accompanied US troops into Najaf for the first time in recent days and advanced to within 200 metres of the Imam Ali Shrine compound as Iraq's defence minister demanded the insurgents inside surrender.

Mr Shalaan added: "If Muqtada al-Sadr surrenders, he will be safe and will be highly respected. But if he continues to resist, then there will be no options for him other than death or prison."

■ Osama driver faces US panel, page 3

THE STATESMAN

25 AUG 2004

Iran and the U.S.

By Hamid Ansari

10-10-27/8

Ideological imperatives notwithstanding, practical considerations are beginning to be voiced in the United States on ties with Iran.

WASHINGTON IS nothing if not a battleground of interests and ideas supportive of those interests. These battles shape the environment on issues of relevance. The pressure of environment can grow so strong that divergent viewpoints are viewed as heretical. Despite this the need to seek a wider perspective is also felt. For a quarter of a century, this has at times been true of the relationship with Iran. An instance of it surfaced last month when the Council for Foreign Relations, New York, published a Report on Iran produced by an Independent Task Force co-chaired by the former United States National Security Advisor, Zbigniew Brzezinski, and the former Director of the Central Intelligence Agency, Robert Gates. A look at the membership of the team dispels any impression of "softness".

The Report admits to "a self-perpetuating cycle whereby mutual distrust begets uncompromising assertiveness and unyielding negotiating positions." It makes a hard assessment of Iran in domestic and foreign policy terms, and proposes a future course "to best address U.S. concerns and advance U.S. interests" since "official enmity between Washington and Tehran belies the convergence in their interests in specific areas." It admits to the centrality of Iran in geopolitical terms, and takes note of the strategic gains accruing to Iran as a result of the decimation of the Taliban in Afghanistan and of Saddam Hussain in Iraq.

It also acknowledges "Iranian resourcefulness and diplomatic dexterity" in matters nuclear but assesses that "a sort of selective accommodation with the international community" would continue. It accepts the durability "even in medium term" of the present Iranian Government, and notes that some segments of the conservative sections of the leadership (with Rafsanjani mentioned by name) are "capable of making limited concessions to reform in their policies both at home and abroad." The report concedes a significant and meaningful moderation in foreign policy but cautions that "prospects for additional moderation of Iran's international approach remains highly uncertain."

The principal recommendation of the Task Force, for U.S. policy, is that a direct dialogue be initiated with Iran on specific subjects through "a basic statement of principles along the lines of the 1972 Shanghai Com-

munique" signed by the United States and China. The focus of this dialogue should be on six themes. (a) Regional stabilisation in Afghanistan and Iraq. (b) A *quid pro quo* on the question of terrorist groups by Iran coming clean on the question of the presence of Al-Qaeda elements in Iran in return for the U.S. taking steps "to conclusively disband" the Iraq-based Mujahidden-e-Khalq cadres that often mounts across the border forays in Iran. (c) A more focussed strategy, to be developed with the European Union and Russia, for the fulfilment by Iran of its October 2003 commitment to the International Atomic Energy Agency on the nuclear issue or face the prospects of multilateral sanctions imposed by the Security Council. (d) Resumption by the U.S. of "a genuinely active involvement" in the West Asian peace process "to stem the tide of extremism in the region" and on the assessment that Iran would acquiesce in a settlement since its "hostility towards the peace process is not immutable." (e) Take steps to reduce Iran's isolation by permitting wider contacts in different fields (including financial institutions whose support Iran would need for its major energy and pipeline projects). (f) Consent to Iran's application to begin talks with the WTO.

The section of the Report on regional conflicts — Iraq and Afghanistan — indicates the urgency of a new approach. The U.S. has compelling interests in both and "Iran has demonstrated its ability and readiness to use its influence constructively in these two countries, but also its capacity to make trouble." Hence the recommendation to resume and expand the Geneva type discussions that were held with Teheran earlier.

"Such a dialogue should be structured to obtain constructive Iranian involvement in the process of consolidating authority within the central governments and rebuilding the economies of both Iraq and Afghanistan. Regular contacts with Iran would also provide a channel to address concerns that have arisen about its activities and relationships with competing power centers in both countries. These discussions should incorporate other regional power brokers, as well as Europe and

Russia — much like the 'Six Plus Two' negotiations on Afghanistan that took place in the years before the Taliban were ousted. A multilateral forum on the future of Iraq and Afghanistan would help cultivate confidence and would build political and economic relationships essential to the long-term durability of the new governments in Baghdad and Kabul."

On another aspect of regional security, the Report asserts that "U.S. interests in achieving peace and stability in the Persian Gulf would be best served by engaging Iran and each of its neighbors in a dialogue aimed at establishing an effective organization to promote regional security and cooperation. Such an organization could be structured to provide a forum for regional dialogue, confidence-building measures, economic cooperation, conflict prevention, and crisis management."

The Report recommends incremental progress rather than a grand bargain, and accepts that the regime of sanctions has not produced the desired results. It suggests that better results can be obtained through the prospects of normal commercial relations with the U.S. and, in what may amount to a heresy in official Washington, proposes that the slogan of "regime change" be dropped since it arouses Iranian nationalist sentiments and brings back the memories of the American role in the ouster of Mosaddeq in 1953. Instead, the policy should be to encourage political evolution and include Iran in the Administration's Middle East Initiative of 2002.

The publication of the Report has rekindled a fierce new debate between the realists and the neo-conservatives. The latter have been helped by the publication of the 9/11 Commission report and its revelation that some of the September 11, 2001 hijackers transited through Iran even though no evidence of official complicity has been found. Harsh assertions have also emanated from Bush administration officials. A controlled rage over the nuclear question, and over the conduct in the matter of the E.U., is evident. Apart from it (unsubstantiated) allegations of interference in Iraq have been made.

Fareed Zakaria has asserted categorically that Iran is the problem of the future.

Ideological imperatives notwithstanding, practical considerations are beginning to be voiced. Dow Jones Energy Service reported on July 30 on the work in Iran of a Halliburton subsidiary and quoted its chief executive telling a business audience in Houston that working in Iran "is right and right." Knowledgeable academics like William Beeman feel the "new round of Iran-bashing is not a prelude to another invasion of a Persian Gulf country but rather a political ploy in an election year."

The impulses motivating the Report require careful analysis. The difficulties of the ventures in Afghanistan and Iraq could be one reason. Another could be the nuclear profile of Iran. The sheer impracticality of ignoring Iran in a wider scheme of things covering West and Central Asia may finally have provoked this departure from orthodoxy. That the CFR, so representative of the foreign policy establishment, has taken the initiative at this stage suggests both a public acknowledgement of the failure of existing policy and a suggestion that some new thinking may fructify in the post-election period. The Report is a signalling exercise in an intricate game that the Americans and the Iranians have played over a number of years. The response from Teheran is typically Iranian — defiant and conciliatory, elliptical, contradictory, fully reflective of the multiplicity of centres that characterise the decision-making mechanism of the Islamic Republic.

Henry Kissinger has written that the Shanghai Communiqué "had an unprecedented feature: more than half of it was devoted to stating the conflicting views of the two sides on ideology, international affairs, Vietnam, Taiwan. In a curious way, the catalogue of disagreements conferred greater significance on those subjects on which the two sides agreed." The mention of that historic document in the context of Iran is itself significant. Others have written about an older American romance with matters Chinese; less has been said about an equally fervent fancy for Iran. The resumed romance of a quarrelsome pair should therefore be watched with interest since it could have far-reaching geopolitical implications for the region and beyond.

(The writer is a Distinguished Fellow at the Observer Research Foundation, New Delhi.)

23 AUG 2002

IRAQI OFFICIALS, MILITIA MEET FOR TALKS ■ AIDES SAY AL-SADR WOUNDED

US forces suspend assault

Associated Press

NAJAF, Aug. 13. — Iraqi officials and aides to a radical Shiite cleric were trying to negotiate an end to nine days of fighting in Najaf today after US forces suspended an offensive against Muqtada al-Sadr's militia, officials said. Also today, aides said Al-Sadr had been injured by shrapnel.

With the talks ongoing, the US military today said it had suspended offensive operations against Al-Sadr's Mahdi Army militia, who are holed up the city's vast cemetery and the Imam Ali shrine.

"We are allowed to engage the enemy only in self defence and long enough to break contact," a US army spokesman said. "That was a blanket order for every-

British scribe freed

BASRA, Aug. 13. — Iraqi militants in the southern city of Basra today released a British journalist they had kidnapped from a hotel here yesterday and threatened to kill after Muqtada al-Sadr's aides demanded he be freed. James Brandon of the *Sunday Telegraph* was brought to Al-Sadr's local office and freed.

"I'm OK, I'm recovering," Brandon said in a telephone interview. "I've been released thanks to (Al-Sadr's) Mahdi Army..." — AP



James Brandon

body." He said the militia appeared to have stopped most attacks as well, and the city appeared quieter today.

Najaf's Governor Mr Adnan al-Zurufi said the talks were between Iraqi government officials and Al-Sadr's representatives and US officials were not involved.

Despite the talks, the US military aide said. He said Al-Sadr was

moved to an unknown destination and his condition was stable. The Iraqi interior ministry, however, said Al-Sadr was not injured and had been involved in the negotiations since this morning.

Al-Sadr sets terms

Al-Sadr today laid down a list of conditions for an end to more than a week of deadly clashes in Najaf, a spokesman said, adds AFP.

The conditions are the withdrawal of the US-led forces and handover of Najaf to the *Mahdavia*, the Shiite religious authority. The other conditions include, restoration of all basic services in Najaf, and Al-Sadr's Mahdi Army recognised as an ideological movement with its members allowed to carry weapons for self-defence.

US military poised to storm Najaf

Associated Press

NAJAF, Aug. 11. — The US military today said it was holding joint training exercises with Iraqi national guardsmen in advance of a major assault against insurgents in Najaf.

"Iraqi and US forces are making final preparations as we get ready to finish this fight that the Muqtada militia started," said Col Anthony M Haslam, commanding officer of the 11th Marine Expeditionary Unit.

The announcement came as fighting in Najaf entered its seventh day with insurgents firing mortar shells at US forces moving into Najaf's vast cemetery and American jets roaring overhead.

Also today, Muqtada al-Sadr, the radical cleric leading the fight against coalition forces, urged his followers to battle on even if he is killed. "I hope that you keep fighting even if you see me detained or martyred," Al-Sadr said in a statement. "I thank the dear fighters all over Iraq for what they have done to set back injustice."

Small clashes continued today in Najaf's vast cemetery, with insurgents attacking Marine patrols with gunfire and rocket-propelled grenades. Insurgents had also set up mortar firing positions near the shrine and placed burning tires in the streets outside the holy compound.

It was unclear whether the planned US offensive would involve raiding the Imam Ali shrine, which would infuriate Iraq's Shiite majority. The US

Chalabi comes back

BAGHDAD, Aug. 11. — Mr Ahmad Chalabi, a former Governing Council member wanted in Iraq on counterfeiting charges, has returned to the country to face the charges, an official from his political party said today.

Mr Chalabi flew into Baghdad this afternoon, said Mr Mithal al-Alusi, of the Iraqi National Congress group. "He is back among his people and trying to get some rest before returning to his political duties, trying to help the government and stop the violence."

Earlier today, Mr Al-Alusi had said that interim Iraqi Prime Minister Mr Ayad Allawi had told Mr Chalabi to remain out of the country until the Premier could provide him proper security. It wasn't clear if security arrangements had already been made by the time Mr Chalabi arrived, but armed men pulled up outside Mr Chalabi's Baghdad residence this evening, removing automatic rifles from the cars and taking them inside.— AP

military says the insurgents are using the shrine as a refuge and the Governor had given US forces permission to raid it.

In a related development, Iraq's Vice-President Mr Ibrahim al-Jaafari called on the US troops to withdraw from Najaf. "Only Iraqi forces should stay in Najaf, these forces should be responsible for security and should save Najaf from this phenomenon of killing."

Elsewhere, a roadside bomb exploded near a market north of Baghdad today, killing at least six Iraqis and wounding nine others.

Thousandth US death in Iraq looms for Bush

Reuters
Washington, August 11

THE UNITED States faces a painful moment probably next month when its military deaths in Iraq are expected to surpass 1,000. It will also be a crucial moment for President George W. Bush, who faces a presidential campaign in which Iraq is a central issue.

"Unfortunately that day will likely arrive next month and it will be a fulcrum event that may change many people's views of what we're doing in Iraq," said David Birdsell, a political scientist at Baruch College in New York City.

"It's a gripping number, a large number, a tragic number and it will be a pivot to revisit Bush's reasons for fighting the war and his premature declaration last year that the mission had been accomplished," he said.

According to the most up-to-date Pentagon figure, which usually lags events on the ground by a few days, the US has lost 931 military personnel in Iraq since the war began in March 2003.

In July, the first month after an Iraqi interim authority took office, US deaths totalled 55, compared to 42 the previous month. So far this month, they are running at a similar or possibly slightly higher rate.

Compared to past wars, this is a relatively low figure. During the Vietnam War, the

US lost 1,363 soldiers in the month of March 1968 alone and more than 58,000 for the entire war. But it is still a higher rate than for any military conflict the US has fought since Vietnam.

"The Iraqi body count hurts the President. Already less than half of respondents in my polling say the war was worth fighting and the 1,000 casualty will be a milestone that will be page one news and put a lot more focus on it," said pollster John Zogby.

Republican political adviser Keith Appell agreed that the 1,000th death would be an "awful milestone" but argued that it would not change anything in the presidential campaign. "The Republicans will be on defence for a couple of days but I don't expect the Bush campaign to back off anything it is saying. He needs to stand resolute, to promise to stay the course until victory and to argue that we have no choice but to fight this war," he said.

Conversely, Democratic presidential nominee John Kerry's best strategy may be to confine himself to expressions of sorrow and comfort for the families of the fallen. "Kerry may just keep quiet. The media will probably do the job for him," said political scientist Vincent Hutchings. The moment will likely arrive around the time when the candidates are preparing for their crucial debates.

JS planes pound Najaf, toll 300

encies
Najaf (Iraq), August 6

MORE THAN 300 people are believed to have died in two days of heavy fighting between foreign troops and Shia Muslim militiamen as US planes pounded the central Iraqi holy city of Najaf today. Najaf's governor Adnan al-Zorfi issued an ultimatum to the militia of radical Shia cleric Muqtada al-Sadr to leave the city in 24 hours, branding them as "criminals".

As dusk fell, explosions echoed throughout the holy city and US military planes were heard overhead. Four missiles struck the home of Ayatollah Bashir al-Najafi without causing casualties, an aide said.

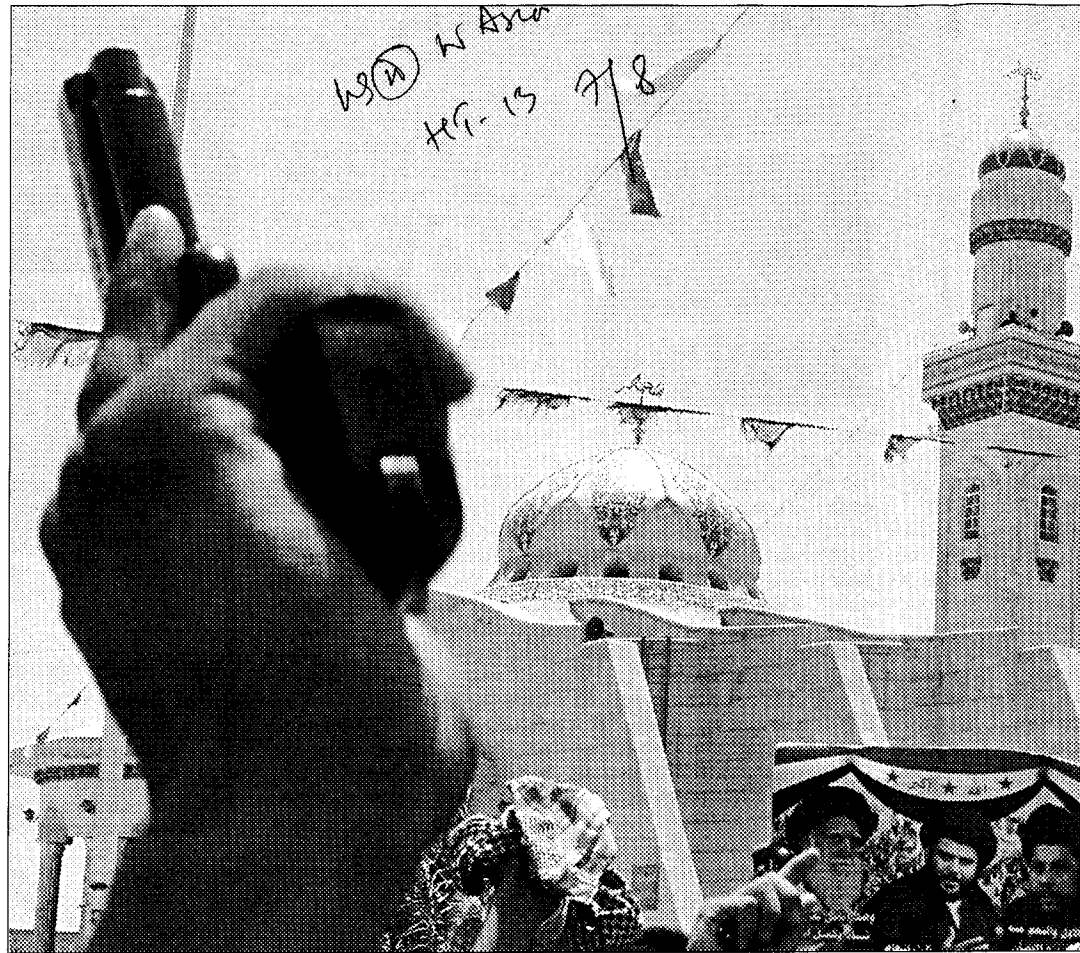
In the worst clashes since a June truce quelled a spring uprising spearheaded by Sadr, the US military said 300 insurgents were killed.

"We estimate we've killed 300 anti-Iraqi forces in the past two days of fighting. We've had a total of three killed, 12 wounded (in the Najaf clashes)", Marine Captain Carrie Batson said.

But a spokesman for Sadr, Sheikh Ahmed al-Shaibani, said only nine militiamen were killed and 20 were wounded.

Medics and police had reported more than 50 killed, with more than 170 wounded as the unrest fanned out across Shia-dominated central and southern Iraq, with insurgents targeting British-led troops in Basra and Amara and the Italians in Nasiriyah. The interim government declared war on all illegal militias and vowed that the offensive in Najaf would be extended elsewhere.

In Najaf, residents stayed at home with their doors bolted as fighters loyal to Sadr prowled the streets. US planes fired rockets over the city and its cemetery, a Sadr stronghold that suffered some of the worst fighting during his Mehdi Army's first standoff with foreign troops in the spring. Explosions and gunfire crackled across the holy city for hours, before a lull at lunchtime on the Muslim day of rest. Dozens of US tanks and armoured vehicles drove into the city.



REUTERS

Shia militiamen run across a street during a clash with US Marines in Najaf on Friday.

In a message read out on his behalf at the Friday prayers in Najaf's twin city of Kufa, Sadr declared the US his enemy. "The Iraqi President said 'America is our friend', but I say 'America is our enemy'," Sheikh Jaber al-Khafaji told worshippers on the cleric's behalf.

The military said two US marines were killed in the province yesterday, bringing to more than 680 the number of US troops killed in action in Iraq since last year's US-led invasion. So far, medics in Najaf have reported 15 dead and more than 40 wounded, with three bodies brought to a hospital in Kufa.

Four civilians were killed and 10 others wounded in overnight fighting in Nasiriyah, police said

today. One ambulance was set alight and burnt out civilian cars littered the deserted streets, said an AFP correspondent. Italian troops are based on one side of the city, with militiamen loyal to Sadr deployed on the other side of the Euphrates river.

"It has been an extremely tense night and we are maintaining maximum alert," Captain Ettore Sarli, chief spokesman for Italian forces in Nasiriyah, said.

"An Italian task force has control of the centre of Nasiriyah and its bridges, and we are seeking mediation with the militia via the governor of the city."

Thursday also saw two Mehdi Army members killed in a 15-minute gunfight with British troops in the southern city of Basra.

Turkey hostages

Turkey said on Friday it was trying to save three of its nationals believed to be held hostage in Iraq and to locate two others who have been missing as the authorities moved to step up security measures for Turks working in the war-torn country. "The resources of our ministry and state have been mobilised, with contributions from some Iraqi circles, to determine the fate of these citizens and rescue them", the foreign ministry said in a statement. The pullout decision was seen as instrumental in winning the release of two truckers who risked execution at the hands of militants in Iraq thought to be led by suspected al-Qaida operative Abu Mussab al-Zarqawi.

Saudi's most-wanted terrorist in police net

Associated Press
Cairo, August 6

SAUDI POLICE arrested a top Saudi terror suspect, officials said on Friday, weeks after the al-Qaida-linked cleric reassured followers he was "taking all necessary precautions" to evade a government sweep.

Faris Ahmed Jamaan al-Showeel al-Zahrani was No. 12 on the kingdom's list of 26 most-wanted terror suspects. More than half the others on the list have been either killed or captured in a crackdown that followed a series of bombings in Riyadh in May 2003.

The police captured al-Zahrani and a second suspect on Thursday night, an unidentified Interior Ministry official told the Saudi Press Agency. The second suspect's name was not released.

The official described al-Zahrani as "a preacher of denouncing people as infidels". Islamic militants often label their enemies as infidels before they attack them. Al-Zahrani and the second suspect were detained "swiftly

and efficiently", and were not able to use the weapons they were carrying, the official said.

"The Interior Ministry wishes to emphasize to all people that the security forces are determined to pursue the terrorists, get them out of their holes, and apply God's law to them", the official added.

Four weeks ago, al-Zahrani wrote an article in which he said he was evading the Saudi crackdown. "I'd like to reassure the people who love me", he told the online al-Qaida publication Voice of Jihad. "I'm careful in my movements and contacts, and I take all necessary precautions".

In the same statement, al-Zahrani rejected a limited amnesty that King Fahd offered militants in June. Under the amnesty, which ended in late-July, suspected terrorists who surrendered were spared the death penalty. Other prominent suspects still on the list include Saleh Mohammed al-Aoofi, a former prison guard said to be al-Qaida's leader in Saudi Arabia.



A TV grab showing Saudi terrorist Ahmed al-Zahrani.

Guantanamo: French suspects freed

Agencies
Paris, July 27

FOUR OF the seven French nationals held at the US prison complex at Guantanamo Bay have been handed over to the French authorities and were to be taken into custody when they arrive in France, the foreign ministry said.

The four were being flown to a US base in the Azores and then on to a military airbase in France, where they were expected to later on Tuesday. The French nationals were to appear before France's counterintelligence agency, the DST, and anti-terrorism judge Jean-Louis Bruguiere upon arrival in Paris, judicial officials said on condition of anonymity. They were to be placed under investigation — one step short of being officially charged — for criminal association with a terrorist enterprise, the officials said.

“Following discussions between France and the US concerning the French prisoners at Guantanamo, the American authorities have decided to hand over to France — at the Guantanamo military base — four of the prisoners being repatriated to France on Tuesday”, the foreign ministry said in a statement. “We’re continuing our discussions with the American authorities to obtain as quickly as possible the release



A car carrying French Guantanamo Bay detainees arrives at the Interior Ministry building in Paris on Tuesday.

REUTERS

of the other French prisoners at Guantanamo”, it said.

Earlier reports spoke of six of the seven detainees being handed over under an agreement reached earlier this month between the US and France. The repatriations follow those of several other European nationals, including five

British men who were sent home in March.

Like most of the estimated 600 prisoners at Guantanamo, the seven French nationals were seized by US forces in Afghanistan between the end of 2001 and early in 2002, when the US went after Al-Qaida and their Taliban

hosts following the September 11 attacks.

The handover of the detainees had been requested by the French anti-terrorism prosecutor Jean-Louis Bruguiere, who has been investigating the men since November 2002 on possible terrorism charges. The six French detainees for whom a deal was reached for transfer to France were named by state-owned France-Info radio as Mourad Benchellali, Imad Kanouni, Nizar Sassi, Brahim Yadel, Ridouane Khalid and Khalid Ben Mustafa. The seventh French national at Guantanamo, Indian-born Mustaq Ali Patel, was not part of the agreement.

Benchellali is the brother of Menad Benchellali, arrested in France in December 2002 in an investigation into an alleged “Chechen connection” in which Islamists were said to have been plotting attacks on Russian targets in France to avenge the bloodshed in Chechnya. Benchellali’s father, imam of a mosque in Lyon, and his younger brother, Hafed, are also in custody.

The US had until recently refused all legal rights to the detainees held at Guantanamo, and only began to press charges against them after the US Supreme Court ruled last month that they had rights to both lawyers and access to civilian court.

US war pocket begins to burn

EDMUND L. ANDREWS

Washington, July 22 : Military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan are running \$12.3 billion over budget this year, and Pentagon officials are trying to make up for the shortfall by transferring money from other accounts and delaying refurbishment of worn-out equipment in Iraq, the General Accountability Office said yesterday.

The office, a nonpartisan Congressional agency, estimated that the army was running \$9.4 billion short of what had been budgeted. By putting off other kinds of spending until next year, the military is likely to run up higher costs in future, said the agency, which was formerly the General Accounting Office.

Administration officials have acknowledged that costs in Iraq are running higher than the \$65 billion that Congress approved for military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. At the administration's urging, Congress is expected to pass an appropriations bill this week that contains \$25 billion in funds for Iraq that can be used immediately.

But the new report suggests that the military could use up nearly half of that money by September 30, the end of the cur-

rent fiscal year. Democrats seized on the report, attacking the administration for consistently underestimating war costs.

"The administration underestimated troop levels, underestimated the tempo and cost of operations, and underestimated the cost of logistics, maintenance, spare parts and services by contractors," said Representative John M. Spratt Jr., Democrat of South Carolina and chairman of the House Budget Committee.

In March, the administration estimated the cost of keeping soldiers in Iraq at \$4 billion a month. But the costs have risen to about \$5.5 billion a month, according to Congressional budget analysts, largely because attacks against American forces and the new Iraqi government show no sign yet of abating.

The G.A.O. estimate on military spending in Iraq is almost the exact opposite of the budget outlook for reconstruction. Congress approved \$18.7 billion for reconstruction in Iraq and Afghanistan, most of that for Iraq, but only a few billion have actually been spent.

Much of the delay stems from the insecurity confronting foreign contractors in Iraq, the same factor that has caused American commanders to keep

troop levels at much higher levels than expected.

Pentagon officials refused to comment on the accuracy of the General Accounting Office's estimate, but they acknowledged that costs were running well above the original budget and they needed to divert money from other parts of the military budget.

If Congress passes a Pentagon authorisation bill this week, as House and Senate leaders hope, Pentagon officials would be able to dip into the \$25 billion in emergency financing immediately. But Pentagon officials said they did not want to use that money until the beginning of the new fiscal year on October 1.

NEW YORK TIMES NEWS SERVICE



Freed Filipino hostage Angelo de la Cruz (left) with his wife Arsemia (right), son Jerick (bottom left) and daughter Bea at Manila airport. (AFP)

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MONDAY, JULY 19, 2004

INCOMPLETE INVESTIGATIONS

11-10
19/2

A POLITICAL COMPROMISE in one case and bureaucratic reticence in the other saved United States President George Bush and British Prime Minister Tony Blair from being held responsible for invading Iraq on false pretences. After separate investigations of the processes antecedent to the invasion of Iraq, the U.S. Senate's select committee on intelligence and the United Kingdom's enquiry commission headed by Robin Butler drew strikingly similar conclusions. The investigators found that the myth about Iraq's arsenal of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) was created and sustained by "group thinking" within intelligence services that relied almost exclusively on unverified information from suspect sources. A National Intelligence Estimate presented to the Bush administration on October 2, 2002 and a dossier prepared by the Joint Intelligence Committee of the U.K. under guidance from Mr. Blair's office on September 21 in the same year either overstated the case about WMD or were not supported by the underlying information. These were the documents the two governments relied on to argue that Iraq was in breach of the obligation to dismantle its non-conventional weapons. However, for their own reasons, the Senate Committee and the Butler commission declined to look into the role played by the political leaders in creating the fiction that the Ba'athist regime posed an imminent threat to world peace. In this the investigators appear to be out of sync with public sentiment in their countries. The results of parliamentary by-elections in the U.K. and opinion polls in the U.S. reveal that vast sections of the public in both countries believe their political leaders led them to war on fictitious grounds.

A Republican majority in the Senate Committee forced the Democrats to strike a compromise and postpone an enquiry into the more important question: did Mr. Bush and senior

officials arm-twist the intelligence community to prepare a threat assessment that suited their purpose? The Democratic members of the Committee subsequently asserted there was ample evidence to show that the President and his aides brought sustained pressure to bear on the intelligence services. Similarly, in the U.K., Lord Butler and his associates refrained from declaring that Mr. Blair leaned on the Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC) to produce a dossier that would back up a pre-set decision to attack Iraq. However, the Butler report brought out the stark contrast between the September 21 dossier and an intelligence assessment made a fortnight earlier, which was markedly different in its tone and thrust. The caveats and qualifications with which the JIC circumscribed its assessment of Iraq's WMD potential in this earlier document were totally absent from the later dossier. While focussing on the lapses of intelligence agencies, the Senate and Butler reports indicate that the political bosses were only too ready to overlook even obvious deficiencies in the information provided to them.

Not surprisingly, the American and British investigations found that the core rationale for the invasion was without basis since no WMD stockpiles were unearthed despite extensive searches carried out during the months of occupation. Further, while the Senate committee nailed the lie about a connection between the Ba'athist regime and Al Qaeda, the Butler committee exposed the falsity of Mr. Blair's claim that Iraq could launch non-conventional weapons at very short notice. Messrs. Bush and Blair try hard to remain unfazed even though every single justification they advanced for military action has come unstuck. The two leaders might soon have more trouble on their hands since the intelligence services will certainly not relish being made scapegoats for outrageous acts of political deception and manipulation.

THE HINDU

19 JUL 2004

Armitage's remarks based on flawed intelligence: Pakistan

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD, JULY 16. Pakistan today maintained that the U.S. Deputy Secretary of State, Richard Armitage's remarks on the existence of "terrorist infrastructure" were based on "incorrect information and flawed intelligence."

The Pakistani Foreign Minister, Khurshid Mehmood Kasuri, told agitated members of the Senate that the remarks were Mr. Armitage's "own assumptions" and were not based on ground realities. The Foreign

Secretary, Riaz Khokar, who was with Mr. Armitage when he repeated the comments he made in New Delhi, chose not to contradict him.

Mr. Kasuri told the Senate that Pakistanis should also look into Mr. Armitage's remarks that human rights violations in Jammu and Kashmir should end.

Reacting to Mr. Armitage's comments, the Pakistan Foreign Office spokesman, Masood Khan, told reporters that the U.S. intelligence sources were "defective and flawed and unreliable."

He said it might be possible that Mr. Armitage got such reports from Indian sources.

Talking to a local television network after his meeting with Pakistani interlocutors, Mr. Armitage said, "We think Pakistan is a great country and has a great future and we want to be the part of that great future and I think we could be helpful if the camps were dismantled."

Mr. Khan said that the President, Pervez Musharraf, had clearly stated that nobody would be allowed to use Pakistani soil for terrorism. "After

this assurance, there is no room for any doubt or need of clarification," he said.

Mr. Khan said Pakistan also expressed its concern directly to Mr. Armitage over his remarks made in New Delhi yesterday.

The spokesman said Mr. Khokhar conveyed Pakistan's concern to Mr. Armitage. Mr. Khokhar denied the presence of such training camps or any movement along the LoC and also urged the U.S. delegation to adopt balanced and "just stance" regarding Kashmir.

Pakistan to get \$700-million U.S. aid

By Sridhar Krishnaswami

WASHINGTON, JULY 16. The U.S. House of Representatives has approved a \$19.4-billion foreign aid bill which includes \$700 millions for Pakistan for military and economic assistance. India will get \$100 millions as part of continuing programmes in education, child health and international military education and training.

Pakistan is one of the major beneficiaries with \$300 millions in military assistance and another \$300 millions in economic aid. This is the first instalment of the five-year \$3-billion assistance package. The remainder is

for continuing existing programmes. The House version will have to be tallied with that of the Senate. Later, it will be sent to the White House.

The package has drawn the attention of the lawmakers who cutting across party lines questioned whether the administration is doing the right thing by continuing to give Pakistan such a huge military aid.

Members of the Congress have asked whether the appropriate thing to do would be to split the package in such a way that two-thirds of the money is used for socio-economic development and the rest for the military.

U.S. proud of ties in South Asia: Powell

By Sridhar Krishnaswami

WASHINGTON, JULY 16. The U.S. Secretary of State, Colin Powell, has said that his country is proud of the kind of relationships it has developed in South Asia.

Speaking at the U.S. Institute of Peace on the subject of the ongoing American efforts to help the people of Iraq, the senior administration official said: "We can be proud of the new relationship we have created in South Asia with Pakistan, with Afghanistan, with the other 'stans' in that part of the

world that used to be on the other side of the Iron Curtain which are now working with us, cooperating with us."

Mr. Powell also said the U.S. had developed separate relationships with India and Pakistan.

"They no longer see India and Pakistan ... down one lens, but we look at them as two proud nations we are working with individually and because we respect them individually, we can help them work together as they solve mutual problems," he remarked.

THE HINDU

17 JUL 2004

ARMITAGE IN PAKISTAN / NO REQUEST FOR TROOPS TO IRAQ

'I was correctly quoted on terrorist camps issue'

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD, JULY 15. The visiting United States Deputy Secretary of State, Richard Armitage, has said that it is for Pakistan to take a decision on whether or not to send troops to Iraq for peace-keeping purposes.

Addressing a news conference along with the Pakistan Foreign Secretary, Riaz Khokhar, here today he, however, maintained that he had not made any request to Islamabad for dispatch of troops to Iraq. It was not clear what exactly he meant by the statement as Washington has already asked Pakistan to consider sending its troops to guard the United Nations missions in Iraq as and when they are re-established.

Mr. Armitage, who faced some tough questions from journalists on his statements made in New Delhi about terrorism infrastructure in Pakistan, tried to do the balancing act by stating that there was violence and human rights violations in Kashmir. The senior official from the Bush Administration, who has been closely coordinating with the Musharraf regime on cooperation against terrorism, during his last visit here had quoted the Pakistan President, Pervez Musharraf, as telling him that there were no terrorism camps in Pakistan and if there were any, they would be gone "tomorrow."

Since 9/11 and emergence of Pakistan as a frontline state in the ongoing war in Afghanistan, senior functionaries of the Bush administration have made an art of making a statement in New Delhi against Pakistan and

neutralising it on Pakistan soil by an additional statement against India. In response to questions about the repeated statements by the U.S. Ambassador in Afghanistan that Pakistan was not "doing enough" in the war against terrorism, Mr. Armitage maintained that Mr. Khalilzad tended to take a "narrow view" of Pakistan in contrast to the broad perspective of Washington. He, however, chose to duck a question on whether the U.S. contemplated change of its envoy in Kabul.

"I was correctly quoted yesterday [in New Delhi] when I noted that all terrorist camps have not been dismantled in Pakistan," Mr. Armitage said immediately after his talks with the official delegation led by Mr. Khokhar. Later, he met a number of Pakistani leaders including the interim Prime Minister, Shujaat Hussain, the Prime Minister-in waiting, Shaukat Aziz, and the Foreign Minister, Khurshid Mehmood Kasur.

On Jammu and Kashmir, Mr. Armitage said that some violence in that State was also indigenous. "But it has to be noted that there are lots of different kinds of violence, some across the Line of Control, other indigenous. It all must be stopped so the people of Jammu and Kashmir can have a prosperous life and prosperous future and that is the U.S. policy." Asked about alleged human rights violation by Indian security forces in Kashmir, Mr. Armitage said: "There is absolutely no question that there is violence and violation of human rights in Kashmir. We have discussed this with our Indian friends" during talks in New Delhi on Wednes-

day. To another question, he said the U.S. would certainly consider any Pakistan request regarding provision of advanced weapon system to meet its defence needs. Such request will be judged by Pakistan's military and "we will help it as partners."

Referring to the provision of some helicopters to Pakistan, he said the U.S. would continue to provide military assistance to fill security gaps on Pakistan's western borders.

Pakistan had provided a list of needed equipment, he said and added that the process would be speeded up.

Regarding difficulties being faced by some Pakistani officials visiting the U.S., he said as soon as the U.S. prevailed in the war on terrorism, such inconveniences would disappear.

Earlier, in his opening remarks, Mr. Armitage described Pakistan as a great friend and said relations between the two countries "is enduring." Expressing his complete satisfaction over the level of bilateral relations, he said they would look to move forward in a cooperative manner.

Mr. Khokhar said he was satisfied with the discussion as Pakistan and the U.S. were good friends and partners. "We discussed bilateral relations, situation in the region, Iraq and Afghanistan." He also expressed satisfaction with the level of U.S. assistance to Pakistan.

In his meeting with Mr. Aziz, Mr. Armitage appreciated the economic reforms introduced in Pakistan during the last five years and said continuity of the reforms agenda was very important for the country's future.

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PAK STILL HAS TERROR CAMPS; RIGHTS VIOLATIONS CONTINUE IN J&K

Armitage does a balancing act

ISLAMABAD, July 15. — The US deputy secretary of state said here today that Pakistan was still not free of terror camps and that human rights violations still existed in J&K. "I was correctly quoted yesterday when I noted that all terrorist camps have not been dismantled" in Pakistan, Mr Richard Armitage, who arrived here last night, said after meeting interim Prime Minister Mr Shujaat Husain, PM-designate Mr Shaukat Aziz and foreign minister Mr Khurshid Mehmood Kasuri.

During his visit here last year, Mr Armitage had said that he was told by Pakistani officials that there were no terror camps and that even if there were any, they would disappear the next day.

Addressing a press conference with Pakistani foreign secretary Mr Riaz Khokhar today, Mr Armitage said part of the violence in J&K was indigenous. "But it has to be noted that there are lots of different kind of violence, some across the LoC, other indigenous. It all must be stopped."

Asked about alleged rights violation by security forces in Kashmir, he said: "There's absolutely no question that there's violence and violation of human rights in



Mr Richard Armitage and Pakistani foreign minister Mr Khurshid Kasuri in Islamabad on Thursday. — AFP

Kashmir. We've discussed this with our Indian friends."

Mr Armitage, who apologised yesterday to Mr George Fernandes for the "strip-search" done on him in the USA, also conveyed his apologies to those Pakistan

along with Gen. Pervez Musharraf. Mr Armitage said: "I'm sorry for the inconvenience caused

Once we finally prevail in this global war on terrorism, these kind of inconveniences will disap-

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Bush presses case on Iraq invasion

By Richard W. Stevenson and Jodi Wilgoren

OAK RIDGE (U.S.), JULY 13. The U.S. President, George Bush, on Monday vigorously defended his decision to go to war against Iraq, saying the invasion was the right thing to do though no banned weapons have been found there, and claiming progress against terrorism and the spread of unconventional arms.

In his first substantive remarks on foreign policy since the Senate Intelligence Committee's report on Friday that the main assessments used to justify the war were overstated or unsupported by the underlying intelligence, Mr. Bush briefly acknowledged the committee's concerns and called its conclusions helpful.

But in the main, his speech was a broad reaffirmation of his approach to heading off potential threats from terrorists and nations seeking or holding nuclear, chemical or biological weapons.

"Today, because America has acted and because America has

led, the forces of terror and tyranny have suffered defeat after defeat, and America and the world are safer," Mr. Bush said.

Mr. Bush's speech was as much a political statement as a foreign policy formulation, reflecting the growing criticism by Sen. John Kerry and his allies of his performance as commander-in-chief.

Its political nature was underscored by a coordinated attack on Mr. Kerry by the Vice-President, Dick Cheney, who accused the Massachusetts Democrat and his running mate, Sen. John Edwards of North Carolina, of developing "a convenient case of campaign amnesia" in criticising Mr. Bush over Iraq now after having voted in 2002 to authorise the use of force in confronting Saddam Hussein.

Mr. Kerry responded by saying that Mr. Bush had failed to reach out to allies to promote a global effort to stop the spread of nuclear weapons and materials, and he implied that the war in Iraq had diverted the United States from other urgent

threats. "The facts speak for themselves," Mr. Kerry said. "There was less nuclear weapons material secured in the two years after 9/11 than in the two years before. North Korea has reportedly quadrupled its nuclear weapons capability in the past year. Iran is developing nuclear weapons capability. Afghanistan has become a forgotten front in the war on terror."

In an apparent response to Mr. Cheney, Mr. Kerry also said he was 'proud' that he and Mr. Edwards had voted against the administration's request for \$87 billion to help finance military Iraq and Afghanistan efforts and reconstruction efforts in "we knew the policy had to be changed." That was a new explanation by Mr. Kerry for a vote that has been a point of much contention during the campaign.

Even as the White House has sought to highlight the transfer of self-governance to Iraqis as a sign of progress there, the intelligence committee's report last week has focused attention

again on Mr. Bush's pre-war assertions that Iraq had banned weapons and was therefore a threat to use them itself or pass them to terrorists. The report has given Mr. Bush's political opponents new ammunition to suggest that the war was fought on a false or at least flawed pretext, has drawn resources away from efforts to hunt down Osama bin Laden and battle Al-Qaeda and has damaged the standing of the United States in the world.

Mr. Bush did not dispute the Senate Intelligence Committee's report, though he softened its conclusions, which strongly criticised the performance of the CIA, as "some shortcomings in our intelligence capabilities." He said the report would "help us in the work of reform," which he said should include more agents around the world, better technology and improved coordination among the intelligence agencies.

And while he acknowledged that one rationale for the war had been refuted by the committee, he sought to make a

case that because Mr. Hussein had a proven record of making and using banned weapons, and possible reasons for putting them in the hands of terrorists, and that leaving him in power was not an option after the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks.

"Although we have not found stockpiles of weapons of mass destruction, we were right to go into Iraq," Mr. Bush said. "We removed a declared enemy of America who had the capability of producing weapons of mass

murder and could have passed that capability to terrorists bent on acquiring them. In the world after September the 11th, that was a risk we could not afford to take." In his speech at the Oak Ridge National Laboratory, Mr. Bush ranged widely over the actions his administration has taken. He said through diplomacy and military action, and through international coalitions, the U.S. has put terrorists on the run, confronted nations pursuing weapons programs and liberated millions of people from tyranny. — *New York Times News Service*

Kerry's mate

US presidential race hots up

A Presidential contender's popularity tends to get bumped up whenever he chooses a running mate and John Kerry could have done worse than choose the telegenic John Edwards as a partner. Polls have shown that another John-John pairing — John Kerry and John McCain — would be a dream ticket, but it would be very unorthodox as McCain is a Republican, and in the end he wouldn't agree to pair with Kerry. He did well to choose Edwards over the obvious Democratic candidate — Richard Gephardt who looks too much like the old Democrats. They had ties with labour unions, while Edwards, whose father was a mill worker but rose on his own to become a successful trial lawyer, embodies the spirit of post-Bill Clinton new Democrats. Edwards balances Kerry in several ways. While Kerry's manners reflect the patrician elite of northeastern US, otherwise known as the "Boston Brahmins", Edwards packs a populist punch and is decidedly non-Brahminical. If Kerry lacks the charisma that Clinton had, Edwards makes up for it. He is a Southerner, which allows Kerry to take the fight to Bush in Southern states.

The Republicans will try to capitalise on Edwards' lack of experience — he is a Senator for one term — by suggesting that he is out of his depth, particularly with security threats America can expect in a post-9/11 world. But Edwards' inexperience is balanced by Kerry, who has a distinguished track record as a soldier in Vietnam. Besides, it should be easy to pick apart the record of the Bush-Cheney team in this area. 9/11 happened on their watch, and their response has been inadequate — Osama bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri are still free, and Al Qaeda is striking at will, three years since the event. Iraq was invaded and its society and administration wrecked on false pretenses and no evidence. Not only is the revolt exploded, and sending Americans home in body bags, but the consequent anarchy has made Iraq a happy hunting ground for exactly the kind of terror the war was supposed to douse. Kerry has not made this point forcefully enough, but an energetic, eloquent candidate for vice-president is exactly the kind of instrument he needs to tear up the administration's record, leaving him free to articulate what a Democratic Presidency, in turn, would stand for.

White House race hots up

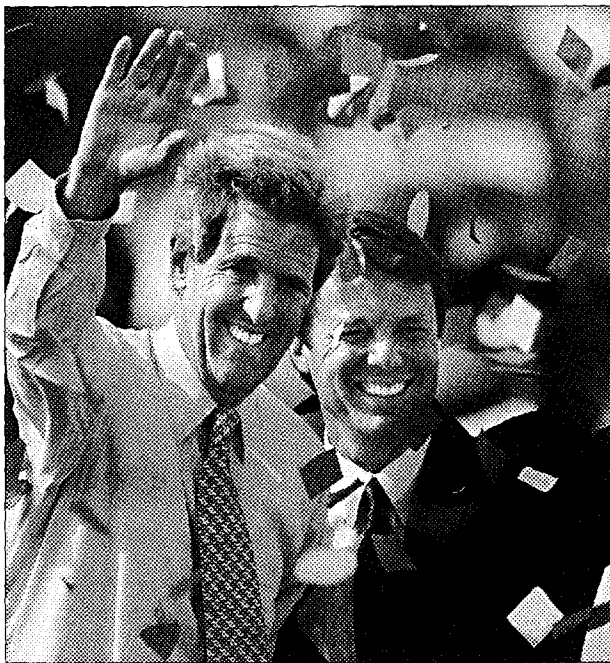
Tough talk, banter kick off four-man campaign

Associated Press
Cleveland (Ohio), July 8

PRESIDENT BUSH on Wednesday curtly dismissed freshman Sen. John Edwards' credentials to be Vice-President, while Democratic challenger John Kerry and his running mate rallied voters in battleground states. "Dick Cheney can be President", Bush declared, and Kerry suggested that was part of the problem.

A day after he welcomed Edwards to the presidential campaign, Bush visited Edwards' hometown of Raleigh, NC, to criticise the North Carolina Senator's role in holding up judicial appointments. The President said he was unconcerned about the potential of Edwards to help carry states in the South, a GOP bastion. "When they go to the polls to vote for President, they'll understand the Senator from Massachusetts doesn't share their values", Bush said. "I'm going to carry the South because the people understand that they share — we share values".

During a trip scheduled before Kerry picked Edwards, Bush said Edwards and other Senate Democrats obstruct the work of the federal judiciary by refusing to fill judgeships. He said he told three nominees in a private meeting, "You're being hung out by a handful of US Senators".



REUTERS
John Kerry with John Edwards in Dayton, Ohio, on Wednesday.

A reporter noted that Edwards was being described as "charming, engaging, a nimble campaigner, a populist and even sexy" and asked, "How does he stack up against Dick Cheney?" Bush didn't hesitate: "Dick Cheney can be President. Next?"

Kerry struck back hours later at a rally in Dayton, Ohio. "He doesn't have a record to run on, he's just got a record to run away from, and he's attacking everyone", Kerry said of Bush. He said Edwards has "more

experience than George Bush and better judgment than ... when he became President". Bush "was right that Dick Cheney was ready to take over on day one, and he did and has been ever since, folks, and that's what we've got to change", Kerry said.

Earlier, Kerry's campaign said Bush was "hitting the panic button". "The fact that the President of the US is personally taking swipes at the Kerry-Edwards ticket a mere day after it was announced speaks volumes",

the campaign said in a statement. "It's just disappointing that the President of the US would stoop to this kind of political bickering".

Kerry, who, himself, once suggested his younger Senate colleague lacked the experience to be President, declared that Edwards was "ready to help lead America". He and Edwards were stumping together for the first time as running mates in Pennsylvania, Ohio and Florida, showcasing their newfound camaraderie and putting aside past differences. "America can do better", an upbeat Kerry said at a lakefront rally in Cleveland as he and Edwards and their families stood in a light rain under a banner declaring "A New Team for a New America".

"I want you to know we think this is a dream ticket. We've got better vision. We've got better ideas. We've got real plans. We've got a better sense of what's happening to America", Kerry said. "And", Kerry added with a grin, "We've got better hair. I'll tell you, that goes a long way". Kerry used the "better hair" line three times on Tuesday and, later, told reporters that his wife, Teresa, had teased him about it. "Teresa turned and said to me, 'You just lost the bald vote'," Kerry said, laughing. For his part, Edwards told thousands of cheering Ohio supporters, "We're going to have a great time".

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Kerry selects Edwards for running mate



DOUBLE JOHNS: Mr John Kerry (left) with Mr John Edwards. — AFP

WASHINGTON, July 6. — US Democratic presidential candidate Mr John Kerry selected former rival Mr John Edwards to be his running mate today, picking the smooth-talking Southern populist over more seasoned politicians in hopes of injecting vigour and blue-collar appeal to the Democratic ticket.

Announcing his selection at a rally in Pittsburgh, Mr Kerry called Mr Edwards a man “who has shown guts and determination and political skills in his own race for the presidency of the USA”. Earlier today, Mr Kerry told supporters in an e-mail about his decision that he couldn’t wait to see the North Carolina Senator going “toe-to-toe with Mr Dick Cheney”.

The two men will be formally nominated at the Democratic National Convention in Boston, which begins on 26 July, to run against President Bush and Vice-President Cheney in the November election. Polls show the race is tight.

Mr Edwards (51) was the last major candidate standing against Mr Kerry in the Democratic primaries to choose a challenger to the Republicans.

He emerged as a favourite second choice of Democratic voters, thanks to his youthful good looks, a self-assured manner and an upbeat, optimistic style. He saved his harshest criticism for Mr Bush, whom he accused of creating “two Americas” — one for the privileged, another for everyone else. — AP

US strikes Iraq 'terror hideouts'

Associated Press
Baghdad, July 1

US JETS pounded a suspected safe house of terrorist Abu Musab al-Zarqawi in Fallujah on Thursday — the latest in a series of strikes against the man suspected of masterminding deadly attacks and beheadings in Iraq.

The missile strike, which a doctor in the insurgent-controlled city said killed four people, came hours before Saddam Hussein was to appear in an Iraqi court.

Near the northern city of Mosul, a homemade bomb exploded as a military convoy passed by, killing one coalition soldier and wounding two others, the military said in a statement. The soldiers' nationalities were not immediately revealed.

A roadside bomb detonated near a central Baghdad hospital, injuring a senior Iraqi Finance Ministry official and killing two of his guards, police and hospital officials said. Ehsan Karim, the head of the ministry's audit board, suffered slight injuries in the bombing, said Col. Adnan Hussein, head of the Interior Ministry's information office.

Meanwhile, the US has increased the reward for the capture of suspected al-Qaida operative Abu Mussab al-Zarqawi from \$10 m to \$25m, equal to the reward for Osama bin Laden.

Bush is real criminal: Saddam tells court

I Says Kuwait invasion was for the Iraqi people

ALISTAIR LYON
BAGHDAD, JULY 1

DOWNCAST but defiant, Iraq's deposed dictator Saddam Hussein appeared before an Iraqi tribunal on Thursday, but refused to recognise its authority and said the "real criminal" was US President George W. Bush.

Saddam, who arrived in handcuffs and chains, was read seven charges under a preliminary arrest warrant and told his rights, pool reporters granted access to the court said.

"I am Saddam Hussein, President of Iraq," he repeated.

He refused to recognise that he was guilty of a crime in invading and occupying Kuwait in 1990, telling the judge: "I did that for the Iraqi people. How can you defend these dogs?"



The former Iraq president deposes in court on Thursday. Reuters

The judge reprimanded Saddam for his language and reminded him he was in a court of law. He looked around with half-smile, saying: "This is all a theatre, the real criminal is Bush. Saddam, 67, and held as a US prisoner of war since his capture in December, appeared thin and tired, reporters said.

He arrived in a US helicopter at a military base and was transferred to an armoured bus to be driven to the makeshift courtroom near Baghdad international airport. He was dressed in civilian clothes, with a grey jacket and a beard. His chains were removed before he reached the court and the cuffs were taken off inside.

Saddam had no lawyers to represent him at the arraignment. Similar proceedings were to be held later in the day for his former aides, including former Deputy PM Tareq Aziz and Hassan Ali Al-Majid, known as "Chemical Ali" for his alleged role in using poison gas against Kurds and Iranians.

The US military handed the 12 men over to Iraqi legal custody on Wednesday, but will continue to guard them following the return of sovereignty to Iraq on Monday.

Kuwait has called for Saddam to be sentenced to death over Baghdad's seven-month occupation of the Gulf state in 1990-91. —Reuters

MEANWHILE

Top Al Qaeda spiritual guide killed in Riyadh

RIYADH: Saudi police killed a top spiritual guide for the Saudi wing of Osama Bin Laden's Al Qaeda network during a shoot-out in Riyadh on Wednesday, security sources said. They named the slain militant as Abdullah Al-Roshood, on a list of 26 most wanted suspects, and said his death was a hefty blow to the ideological hierarchy of Al Qaeda in the world's biggest oil exporting nation. The Interior Ministry said a policeman was also killed in the gunbattle.

Reward for Zarqawi's capture increased to \$25 m

WASHINGTON: The reward for capturing suspected Al Qaeda operative Abu Musab Al-Zarqawi has increased from \$10 million to \$25 million, equal to the reward for Al Qaeda chief Osama bin Laden. US Secretary of State Colin Powell on Tuesday authorised the increase in the reward for information leading to the Jordanian's arrest. The State Department said: "His organisation has committed numerous atrocities in Iraq, including the murder of US citizen Nick Berg." US troops on Wednesday forces destroyed what they said was a safe house used by Al-Zarqawi in Falluja. The air strike killed six people and wounded 15, hospital sources said.

Blasts kill soldier, government official

BAGHDAD: One soldier from the multinational force was killed and two wounded on Thursday when a roadside bomb hit their convoy outside the northern city of Mosul, a US Military spokesman said. He declined to give the nationalities of the victims. In Baghdad, a Finance Ministry official was wounded and two of his staff were killed when a bomb planted on a vehicle in their convoy exploded, an Interior Ministry spokesman said.

—Agencies

Retreat from Iraq

It's not Vietnam yet, but it's getting there

The withdrawal from Baghdad of L. Paul Bremer, who exercised vice-regal powers over the country, was meant to pre-empt large-scale insurgent attacks that could have marked a formal transition of power on 30 June. That Bremer could not leave in an orderly way, after a public event commemorating the hand-over, advertises the fact that the US-UK alliance does not control the situation in Iraq. The flight does not quite resemble the withdrawal from Saigon in 1975, when helicopters scooped up the left-over Americans and proteges from the roof of the US embassy. But it could get there yet. The US-led coalition still has 160,000 troops in Iraq, besides an embassy in Baghdad that is the largest in the world. This outfit will control \$8 billion in reconstruction aid. It is evident that America still aspires to control events there. It is election season in Washington and US casualties in Iraq haven't been playing well domestically, so the plan is to cut costs by having US troops retreat to barracks instead of trying to control what they cannot. This means defeat in any language, including the American.

But the plan cannot work, because Bremer had earlier disbanded Iraq's professional security forces. It remains to be seen whether the hastily trained police and armed forces that were raised can take on Iraq's well-armed insurgents. Mutinies and desertions from Iraq's security forces are already being reported, which means US troops will, in all probability, be back on the streets again to defend the new order. In other words it could be back to square one, as far as the occupation and resistance are concerned. The new administration is supposed to prepare the ground for elections in January 2005, for a national conference to decide on a constitution for Iraq. But with the security situation so unsettled, holding an election looks impractical. It is significant that when Bremer was asked whether he thought a Vietnam-like scenario is likely after his withdrawal, he reportedly replied — "I think it will all depend on what happens with security". He should know. Dick Cheney and Donald Rumsfeld, top honchos in the Bush administration wanted to reverse the effects the Vietnam legacy has had on American foreign policy. It looks as if the US will have to learn the lessons of Vietnam all over again, in Iraq.

US resumes ties with Libya, finally

SALAH SARRAR
TRIPOLI, JUNE 29

THE United States on Monday formally restored its diplomatic ties with Libya, severed for 24 years, as President George W. Bush pledged to work toward a complete normalisation of relations between the two countries.

US Assistant Secretary of State William Burns said in a statement he had formally inaugurated the new US Liaison Office in Tripoli and restored direct diplomatic ties.

"This occurs 24 years after the withdrawal of American personnel and the closure of the US Embassy. ... Libya would be taking its own steps to establish diplomatic representation in the US," he added.

Burns issued the statement after meeting Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi and other Libyan ministers. In a letter to Gaddafi, Bush hailed cooperation between US and Libyan experts on scrapping the North

African country's weapons of mass destruction programme, the official Libyan news agency Jana said.

The US closed its embassy in Libya in 1980 after attacks on two French missions there. Relations deteriorated, culminating in the US bombing of Tripoli and Benghazi in 1986 and the 1988 bombing of a US passenger plane over Lockerbie, Scotland. A Libyan was convicted of the crime in 2001.

But after decades of enmity, US-Libyan ties have improved greatly since Tripoli announced on December 19 that it would abandon the pursuit of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons and allow international arms inspectors into the country. They said the visit had been long planned and was not directly tied to recent allegations — which Libya has denied — that Gaddafi ordered Libyan intelligence agents to kill Saudi Arabia's de facto ruler, Crown Prince Abdullah.

—Reuters

Fighting flares on farflung fronts

Predominantly Sunni cities come under US offensive

USA Today
Baghdad, November 15

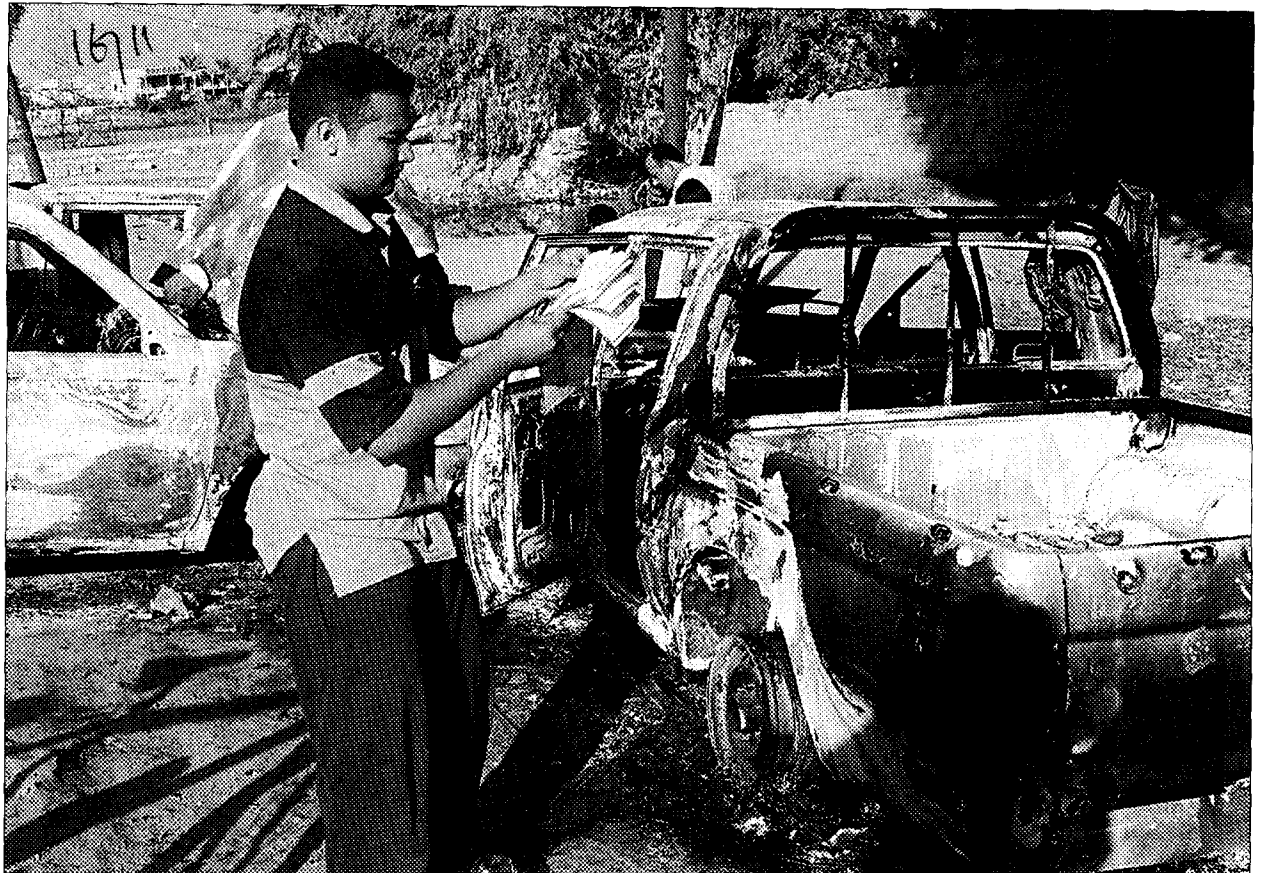
FIERCE BATTLES between insurgents and US and Iraqi forces killed at least 16 people on Monday in Baqouba and south of Baghdad — the latest in a wave of clashes that has swept Iraq's Sunni Muslim heartland even as American forces move against the last remaining pockets of resistance in Fallujah.

Meanwhile, warplanes struck Fallujah as US-led forces hunted for diehard rebels after taking almost total control of the city in a week-long battle that killed 38 US soldiers and more than 1,200 insurgents.

One warplane blasted an underground bunker complex of steel-reinforced tunnels in the very south of Fallujah during a pre-dawn raid, which appeared to have been used by rebels to mount attacks. "The tunnels connected a ring of facilities filled with weapons, an anti-aircraft artillery gun, bunk beds, a truck and a suspected weapons cache," the military said.

A convoy of ambulances and relief supplies trying to enter Fallujah was forced to turn back because the fighting made it too dangerous, the head of the Iraqi Red Crescent said. The Red Crescent and Red Cross have been unable to gain access to people inside Fallujah during more than a week of violence.

Military commanders have warned the weeklong battle for Fallujah — once the symbol of a vicious insurgency against the US-backed government — would fan unrest elsewhere as militants fled and opened up new fronts.



Iraqi men look at vehicles destroyed by US warplanes in the town of Buhruz, a few kilometers from Baqouba, on Monday.

AFP

While Baqouba has a roughly even Sunni and Shia population, a majority of the violence has flared in the predominately Sunni cities of Mosul, Ramadi, Samarra and Baiji.

"We've been expecting increased activity", he said, citing trigger factors, such as the holy Muslim month of Ramadan, which ended on Sunday, and a spike in lawlessness in Iraq's northern capital of Mosul.

The escalating lawlessness prompted US forces to drop two 500-pound bombs

on suspected insurgent targets on the southern outskirts of Baqouba — the Kathoon and Sebarnisah districts. Outside Fallujah, US and Iraqi troops and insurgents clashed in several cities across a belt of central and northern Iraq, including Baqouba, Ramadi, Mosul and Suwayrah, south of Baghdad.

In Baqouba, insurgents attacked 1st Infantry Division soldiers with rocket-propelled grenades and small arms fire near a traffic circle and police station.

2 female kin of Iraq PM freed

TWO FEMALE relatives of Iraqi PM Iyad Allawi kidnapped last week in Baghdad have been released, while a third, his cousin, is still being held hostage. "They were released at 6.00 pm on Sunday and are in good health", the source said. But cousin Ghazi Allawi (75) "is still being held captive". Militants abducted Allawi's cousin, his cousin's wife and their pregnant daughter-in-law from their house in Baghdad last Tuesday. A day later, a previously unknown Islamist group threatened to behead them within 48 hours unless Allawi halted a major offensive on the rebel enclave of Fallujah and released all prisoners held in Iraq. **AFP, Baghdad**

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16 NOV 2004

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

US leaves Iraq well alone

By Jeffrey Gettleman

Baghdad: In a surprise, secret ceremony that was hastily convened to decrease the chances of more violence, US officials on Monday handed over sovereignty to Iraqi leaders, formally ending the American occupation two days earlier than scheduled.

In a tightly guarded room behind high walls, L. Paul Bremer III, the top US administrator, presented a formal letter recognising Iraq's sovereignty to Iraqi Prime Minister Iyad Allawi. Just 30 or so people were present for what Allawi described as the "historic" handover.

A few hours later, Bremer flew off on a military plane, leaving behind a country stunned by the sudden transfer of authority.

"This is a historic day," said Iraqi President Ghazi Yawar, who wants a free, democratic Iraq to be a source of peace and stability for the region and the whole world. We would like to express



Bye-Bye Bremer

our thanks to our friends in the Coalition for the efforts and dedication they have spent."

The President added: "We want to tell them all their sacrifices will not go in vain. We are determined, we are committed, there is

no way to turn back."

US officials said the handover to an interim government, in advance of general elections expected in January, is the crucial first step on Iraq's path to democracy.

"We welcome Iraq's steps to take

its rightful place with sovereignty and honour among the free nations of the world," Bremer said.

But one of the new government's first actions as a sovereign power may be the imposition of martial law to crack down on guerrillas. Insurgents have stepped up attacks in recent weeks, presumably in an effort to disrupt a peace-



► NATO may train Iraqi forces
► US clout in Iraq to stay

ful and orderly transition. Last Thursday, more than 100 people were killed in a series of apparently coordinated explosions in five Iraqi cities. Already on Monday security forces, responding to the announcement, were locking down sections of the capital. Several hotels refused to let guests go in or out, thousands of police stepped into the streets and American fighter jets cut arcs in the sky over Baghdad. NYT NEWS SERVICE

Bush and EU agree on support for Iraq

AGENCIES 5/11 27/6
 SHANNON/NEWMARKET-ON-FERGUS (Ireland), June 26. — Mr George W Bush declared an end to Western rifts over Iraq today, but won little in his search for European military help and took heat over prisoner abuse.

"The bitter differences of the war are over," Mr Bush told a news conference, delayed by anti-American protests around the USA-European Union summit venue in Ireland.

The USA and the EU pledged their support for Iraq's new sovereign government, including the training of Iraqi security forces. A statement released at the end of a one-day summit in the west of Ireland said Baghdad needed the support of the outside world for it to make the transition to a democratic nation. The statement, issued four days before the



President George W Bush and Gen. Colin Powell during the EU-US summit in Ireland on Saturday. — AFP

Satellite pact

ENNIS, June 26. — The USA and the EU today signed an agreement to cooperate on the development of GPS and Galileo, their rival satellite positioning systems. The deal, ratified at an EU-US summit at Dromoland Castle means the two sides will work to ensure compatibility between the existing US system known as the Global Positioning System and the European Galileo project, which is currently under development. — Reuters

US hands over power to a new government in Iraq, also pledged to help reduce Iraq's estimated \$120 billion foreign debt. "I think the bitter differences of the war are over," said Mr Bush after the meeting at Dromoland Castle. "There is a common goal to work

together to help the Iraqi people realise the benefits of a free society."

The meeting appeared to have restored some harmony to trans-Atlantic relations beset by divisions over the US decision to go to war against Iraq. "A close transatlantic partnership is essential for prosperity," said host Prime Minister Mr Bertie Ahern, whose country holds the rotating presidency of the EU. The summit also pledged to combat global terrorism and urged Iran to "rethink" its nuclear programme.

Mr Bush flew out of Ireland after talks with European leaders today en route to Turkey for a Nato summit.

Baquba clashes

Six guerrillas were killed in clashes today in Baquba, north of Baghdad, where fighters have proclaimed loyalty to Jordanian militant Abu Musab al-Zarqawi.

Secret facts on prisoner treatment released

Agencies
Washington, June 23

US PRESIDENT George W. Bush had claimed the right to waive anti-torture laws and treaties covering prisoners of war after the invasion of Afghanistan and Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld authorised aggressive tactics to threaten Guantanamo Bay detainees, including stripping them and harassing them with dogs, according to newly released documents by the White House.

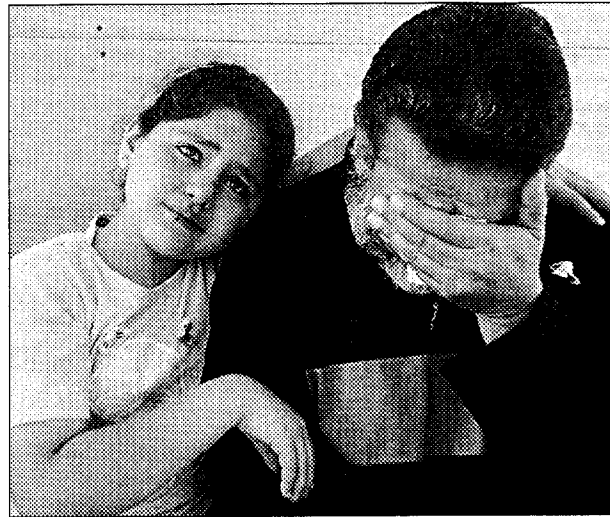
The hundreds of secret documents were released on Tuesday by the Bush government to curtail the damage caused by the prison abuse scandal at Abu Ghraib in Iraq. "We don't condone torture. I've never ordered torture. I'll never order torture", Bush said a few hours before the release.

A Pentagon memo described methods - such as stripping prisoners, posing them into stress positions and harassing them with dogs - which were approved by Rumsfeld in December 2002 only to be rescinded in January 2003.

Rumsfeld's November 27, 2002, memo approved several methods, which apparently would violate Geneva Convention rules, including:

- Putting detainees in "stress positions", such as standing, for up to four hours
- Removing the prisoners' clothes
- Intimidating detainees with dogs
- Interrogating prisoners for 20 hours at a time
- Forcing prisoners to wear hoods during interrogations and transportation
- Shaving detainees' heads and beards
- Using "mild, non-injurious physical contact", such as poking

Prisoners at Abu Ghraib were interrogated for as long as 20 hours at a time, kept hooded and naked, intimidated with dogs and forcibly shaved. Bush and other administration officials have said other treatment at the Iraqi prison,



TEARFUL REUNION: An Iraqi detainee cries during a visit by his daughter at the Abu Ghraib prison on Wednesday.

Saddam says he's keeping cheerful

FORMER IRAQI President Saddam Hussein says his spirit and morale are high and asks relatives to "say hello to everyone" in the only message he has sent to his family since his capture last December, *Newsweek* magazine has reported.

The message, addressed "to my daughter", was delivered to Saddam's eldest daughter, in Amman, Jordan, after representatives of the International Committee of the Red Cross visited him on February 21, *Newsweek* said on Tuesday, citing one of 20 lawyers retained by the family. The heavily censored letter was shown to *Newsweek* by one of the

such as forcing prisoners to perform sex acts, beating them and piling them in a naked human pyramid, were unquestionably illegal.

Less than two months lat-

er, on January 15, 2003, Rumsfeld rescinded approval for those methods without saying why. He appointed a Pentagon panel to recommend proper interrogation

methods. That panel reported to Rumsfeld in April 2003, and its recommendations included prohibiting the removal of clothes, which, it said, could be considered inhumane treatment under international law.

After the review, he reissued his guidance on April 16, 2003, approving 24 interrogation techniques to be used in a manner consistent with the Geneva Conventions, but said any use of four of those methods would have to be approved by him in advance. These four were use of rewards or removal of privileges from detainees, attacking or insulting the ego of a detainee and alternating the use of friendly and harsh interrogators, and isolation.

Rumsfeld issued a new set of approved interrogation methods later that month, disallowing nakedness and requiring approval for four techniques: use of rewards or removal of privileges; verbally attacking or insulting the ego of a detainee; alternating friendly and unfriendly interrogators in a "good cop, bad cop" method; and isolation.

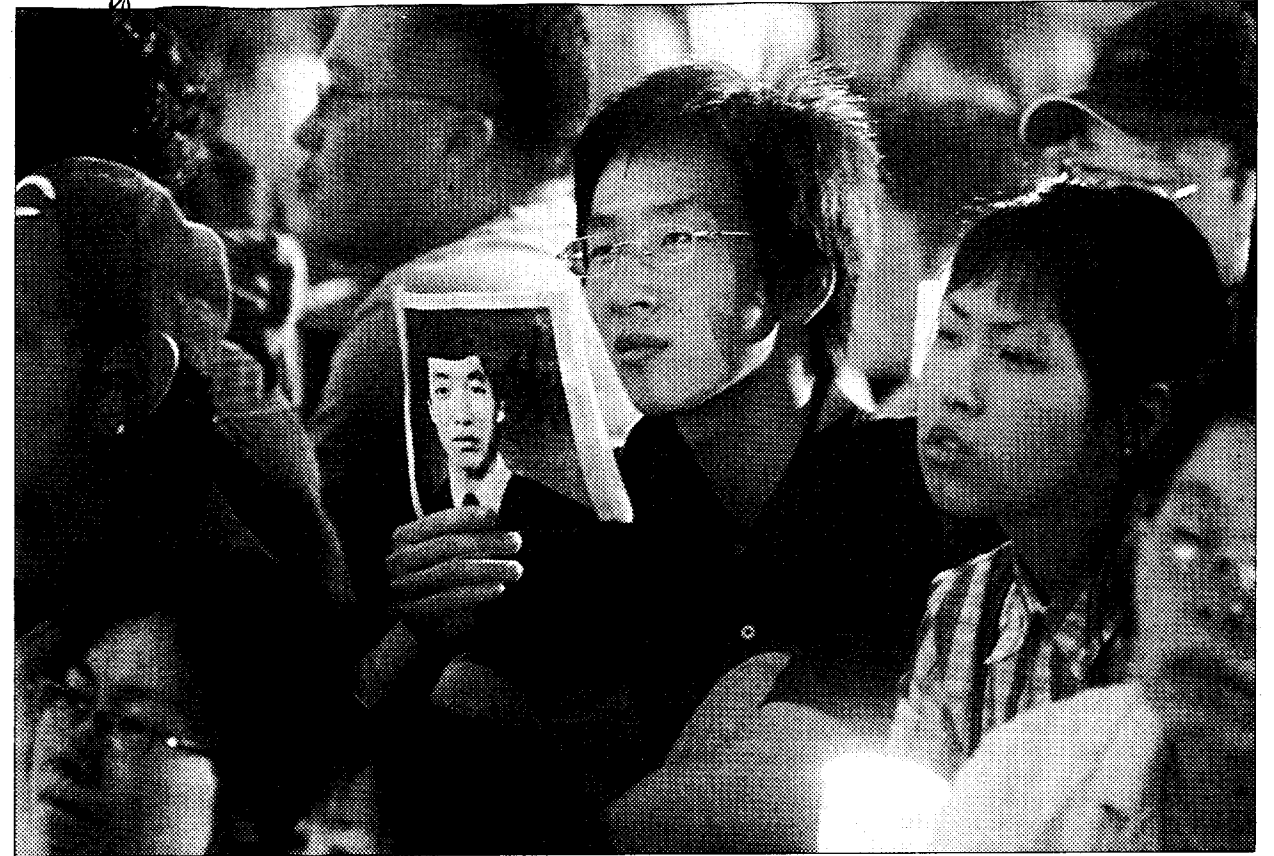
US drops resolution

Facing strong opposition, the United States announced on Wednesday that it was dropping a resolution seeking to renew the exemption for American peacekeepers from international prosecution for war crimes.

US deputy ambassador James Cunningham made the announcement after key Security Council members rejected a US compromise proposal to limit the exemption to one final year.

"The US has decided not to proceed further with consideration and action on the draft at this time in order to avoid a prolonged and divisive debate", Cunningham said after a closed-door council meeting.

Before the meeting, Spain and China said they would abstain if the resolution was put to the vote.



IN MEMORIAM: South Koreans participate in a candlelight vigil for Kim Sun-il during a demonstration against the government's involvement in Iraq in Seoul on Wednesday.

After Korean hostage, Zarqawi now wants Iraq PM's head

Associated Press
Baghdad, June 23

A RECORDING, purportedly made by the mastermind of bombings and kidnappings in Iraq, has threatened to assassinate Iraq's interim Prime Minister and fight the Americans "until Islamic rule is back on Earth". The audio recording was found on Wednesday on a website that serves as a clearinghouse of Islamic extremist statements. It is supposedly from Jordanian-born terrorist Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, whose network has been targeted by two US air strikes since Saturday.

Al-Zarqawi's group, Monothelism and Jihad, claimed responsibility for the beheading of American hostage Nicholas Berg and Kim Sun-il, a South Korean whose decapitated body was found on Tuesday evening between Baghdad and Fallujah. Hours later, the US forces launched an air strike on what the Americans said was an al-Zarqawi hideout in Fallujah. Three people were killed and nine wounded, said Dr Loai Ali Zaidan at Fallujah Hospital. It was the second US air strike on Fallujah since Saturday.

Kim's body was found two days after he appeared

on a videotape broadcast by al-Jazeera television, pleading "I don't want to die" and begging his government to pull its soldiers out of Iraq. South Korea refused and said it would go ahead with plans to send another 3,000 troops here by August.

In the audiotape, the speaker - thought to be al-Zarqawi - told Iraq's interim Prime Minister, Iyad Allawi, "We will continue the game with you until the end". The speaker said, "We won't get bored" until "we make you drink from the same glass" as Izzadine Saleem, the Iraqi govern-

ing Council president killed last month in a car bombing claimed at al-Zarqawi's group. "We will carry on our jihad against the Western infidel and the Arab apostate until Islamic rule is back on earth", the voice said. An official with Allawi's office dismissed the threat, saying it would not derail the transfer of sovereignty next week.

Kim's grisly killing was reminiscent of the decapitation of Berg and of American helicopter technician Paul M. Johnson Jr, 49, who was beheaded by al-Qaida militants in Saudi Arabia.

USA
9/10
18 killed in US air
raid on Fallujah 5/11-
aey/6

AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE

FALLUJAH (Iraq), June 19. - At least 18 Iraqis were killed and eight wounded today in the Sunni rebel stronghold of Fallujah, hospital officials said, in an attack local residents blamed on an American air raid.

"The number of dead registered at our establishment is at 18, with 8 injured," said Mohamed Ismail, a doctor at the hospital.

Local residents, however, said 24 bodies were buried, with some victims taken directly to the cemetery.

"The number of people buried is 24," resident Mr Salah Hamdi said, though this could not be confirmed.

Residents said a US aircraft fired a missile which destroyed two houses and damaged two in Jbail, 50

Indian Injured

BASRA, June 19. - A Portuguese worker and two Iraqis were killed and an Indian was among those injured in a bombing near the southern Iraqi city of Basra today, local officials said. - AFP

km west of Baghdad. "An American plane fired at about 10:30 a.m. on our houses," said a resident.

"It would be inappropriate for us to comment now," a spokesman for the American military said.

Casualties were pulled from the rubble of four houses and taken to hospital after the raid.

If confirmed as an American raid, it would be the first operation on the city since marines withdrew in May.

JLN

American hostage beheaded



A picture released by an Islamist website on Friday shows the head of American Paul Johnson placed on his back after he was beheaded on Saudi Arabia. — AFP

Associated Press

RIYADH, June 18. — The Al-Qaida group that kidnapped American Paul M Johnson said in an online statement tonight that it had killed the hostage, and posted three still photographs of his beheaded body. Johnson (49), worked on targeting and night vision systems for Apache helicopters.

“In answer to what we promised... to kill the hostage Paul Johnson after the period is over ... the infidel got his fair treatment. ... Let him taste something from what Muslims tasted who were long reached by Apache helicopter fire and missiles,” the statement said.

“We, God willing, will continue our road to fight the enemies of God,” the statement said.

One of the three photographs posted on the web site by the Al-Qaida-linked group showed a man’s head, face toward the camera, being held by a hand. The other two showed a behead-

ed body lying prone on a bed, with the severed head placed in the small of his back. The face looked like Johnson’s.

The beheaded body was clad in a bright orange suit, similar to those issued to suspected Islamic militants imprisoned by the USA at Guantanamo Bay — and similar to the suit another American captive, Nicholas Berg, was wearing when he was beheaded in Iraq last month by another group of Islamic militants inspired by the Al-Qaida.

“To the Americans and whoever is their ally in the infidel and criminal world and their allies in the war against Islam, this action is punishment to them and a lesson for them to know that whoever steps foot in our country, this decisive action will be his fate,” the statement added. Soon after the statement appeared, the web site was inaccessible, with a message saying it was closed for maintenance. Arab network Al-Arabiya said there was also a video of the beheading.

A Saudi senior security official said “We have so far nothing on this.”

US includes Pak in elite club

US (2) Bush's move 9-11 '81

Florida: US President George W Bush rewarded Pakistan on Wednesday with "major non-NATO ally" status, opening the door to closer military ties with India's nuclear rival. "I hereby designate the Islamic Republic of Pakistan as a major non-NATO ally of the United States for the purposes of the act and the Arms Export Control Act," Bush said in a statement released by the White House.

The decision, announced as the president made a rally-the-troops speech on Iraq here, means Pakistan is joining an exclusive club of countries that enjoy a privileged security relationship with the US. The announcement came despite US concerns about nuclear proliferation by the father of Pakistan's atomic program Abdul Qadeer Khan, and followed a finding by the official probe into the September 11, 2001 attacks that Islamabad had helped Afghanistan's Taliban regime shelter

South Korea and Thailand, are granted significant benefits in the area of foreign aid and defence cooperation.

Major non-NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organisation) allies are eligible for priority delivery of defence material and the purchase, for instance, of depleted uranium anti-tank rounds. They can stockpile US military hardware, participate in defence research and development programs and benefit from a US government loan guarantee program, which backs up loans issued by private banks to finance arms exports. However, the designation does not afford them the same mutual defence guarantees enjoyed by members of NATO.

US Secretary of State Colin Powell had announced plans to give Pakistan the special status during a March visit to Islamabad, drawing protests from India as well as Pakistan's internal Islamist opposition.

Reward For Being Friends



Osama bin Laden. The decision was also expected to awaken concerns in India, which does not enjoy the special status.

Two Bush administration officials said they knew of no plans to similarly reward New Delhi. Major non-NATO allies, including Argentina, Australia, Bahrain, Egypt, Israel, Japan, Jordan, Kuwait, Morocco, New Zealand, the Philippines,

9/11 panel clean chit to Saddam

Associated Press

WASHINGTON, June 16. — Bluntly contradicting the Bush administration, the commission investigating the 9/11 attacks reported today there was “no credible evidence” that Saddam Hussein helped Al-Qaida target the USA.

In a chilling report that sketched the history of Osama bin Laden’s network, the commission said his far-flung training camps were “apparently quite good”. Terrorists-to-be were encouraged to “think creatively about ways to commit mass murder”, it added.

Osama made overtures to Saddam for assistance, the commission said in the staff report, as he did with leaders in Sudan, Iran, Afghanistan and elsewhere as he sought to build an Islamic army. While Saddam dispatched a senior Iraqi intelligence official to Sudan to meet with Osama in 1994, the commission said it had not turned up evidence of a “collaborative relationship”. The bipartisan commission issued its findings as it embarked on two days of public hearings into the worst terrorist attacks in American history.

The Iraq connection long suggested by administration

officials gained no currency in the report. “Osama is said to have requested space to establish training camps, as well as assistance in procuring weapons, but Iraq apparently never responded,” the report said. “There have been reports that contacts between Iraq and the Al-Qaida also occurred” after Osama moved his operations to Afghanistan in 1996, “but they do not appear to have resulted in a collaborative relationship”, it said.

Pakistan nailed

The 9/11 panel report said Pakistan helped the Taliban regime in Afghanistan to give a haven to Al-Qaida in the face of international pressure, adds AFP. It added that Pakistan broke with the Taliban only after 9/11, even though it knew the Afghan militia was hiding Al-Qaida leader Osama bin Laden. “The Taliban’s ability to provide Bin Laden a haven in the face of international pressure and UN sanctions was significantly facilitated by Pakistani support,” the report said.

Pakistan benefitted from the Taliban-Al-Qaida relationship, as Bin Laden’s camps trained and equipped fighters for Pak-sponsored terrorism in Kashmir.

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Iraq Seeks Custody of Hussein; Bush Has Security Concerns

By ELISABETH BUMILLER and EDWARD WONG

Published: June 16, 2004

WASHINGTON, June 15 - said Tuesday that the United States would hand over Saddam Hussein to the new Iraqi government only when it was clear that the Iraqis had the ability to securely keep him in custody.

His comments came after Iraq's new interim prime minister, Iyad Allawi, speaking in Baghdad, called for the Americans to hand over all detainees, including Mr. Hussein, by June 30, when Iraq is to gain limited sovereignty from the United States.

Custody of Mr. Hussein was one of several issues on which the Americans and the new Iraqi government remain divided as the transfer of authority draws nearer.

For example, the new government's president, Sheik Ghazi Ajil al-Yawar, demanded that the Americans cede Mr. Hussein's marble-tiled Republican Palace, a prominent symbol of power, which the American-led civilian



Doug Mills/The New York Times President Bush with President Hamid Karzai of Afghanistan after a news conference at the Rose Garden on Tuesday. The leaders pledged that Afghanistan would hold its first democratic elections in September.

ARTICLE TOOLS

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administration had used as a headquarters and which the United States was considering as a likely annex to its vast new embassy.

At a sweltering news conference with President Hamid Karzai of Afghanistan in the Rose Garden of the White House, President Bush addressed the question of control over Mr. Hussein. "We want to make sure that he doesn't come back to power," Mr. Bush said. "And so, therefore, it's a legitimate question to ask of the interim government - how are you going to make sure that he stays in jail?"

Mr. Bush did not say when custody would be transferred.

"We're working to make sure there's appropriate security," Mr. Bush said.

The White House had intended the news conference to promote progress in Afghanistan, and Vice President Dick Cheney and other top administration officials attended. But it was dominated by questions about Iraq.

"I mean, one thing, obviously, is that we don't want, and I know the Iraqi interim government doesn't want, is there to be lax security and for Saddam Hussein to somehow not stand trial for the horrendous murders and torture that he inflicted upon the Iraqi people," Mr. Bush said.

Mr. Hussein, who was captured by United States forces in December 2003, is now being held as a prisoner of war at an undisclosed American detention facility in Iraq.

It is unclear who would guard him under the new government or where he might be held. A senior Bush administration official said late Tuesday that one option under serious

THE REACH OF WAR

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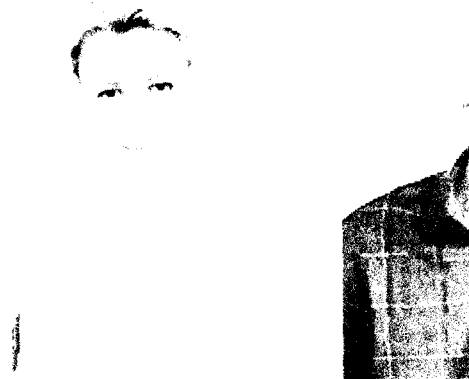
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Saddam Hussein after his capture by American forces in December.



discussion was for the American military to give legal jurisdiction to the new Iraqi government but to retain physical custody of Mr. Hussein until the Iraqis have a secure place to hold him.

A tribunal headed by Salem Chalabi - a nephew of Ahmad Chalabi, head of the Iraqi National Congress - has been established to bring Mr. Hussein and members of his government to trial. War crimes and genocide are among the charges that will be considered, Salem Chalabi has said.

The Geneva Conventions require a country to release prisoners of war at the end of a war or occupation, unless criminal charges are brought against the prisoners. The Bush administration has insisted repeatedly that the occupation is ending on June 30, when the American-led Coalition Provisional Authority is dissolved.

But Dan Senor, a spokesman for the authority in Iraq, said Tuesday that Mr. Hussein could remain a prisoner of war for some time. "We also do not have to hand him over until there's a cessation of active hostilities," he said. "Hostilities, unfortunately, continue."

The American military has said it intends to continue to hold 4,000 to 5,000 detainees after June 30. A lawyer for the occupation authority said those released could be charged and tried by one of three Iraqi court systems.

At the news conference, Mr. Bush also said it would be up to the new government of Iraq to determine how to handle Moktada al-Sadr, a fiery Shiite cleric who has led an insurgency against the American-led occupation and who Mr. Bush has called a "thug." Mr. Sadr is forming a political party that will probably take part in Iraqi elections next year.

His actions are in direct defiance of L. Paul Bremer III, the top American civilian administrator in Iraq, who issued an order last week barring people with illegal militias - like that of Mr. Sadr - from taking part in elections in the near future.

"The interim Iraqi government will deal with al-Sadr in the way they see fit," Mr. Bush said. "They're sovereign."

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US Senate report on Iraq knocks spymaster cold

DOUGLAS JEHL

Washington, June 4: George J. Tenet's resignation may have been hastened by a critical, 400-page report from the Senate Intelligence Committee that was presented to the CIA for comment last month.

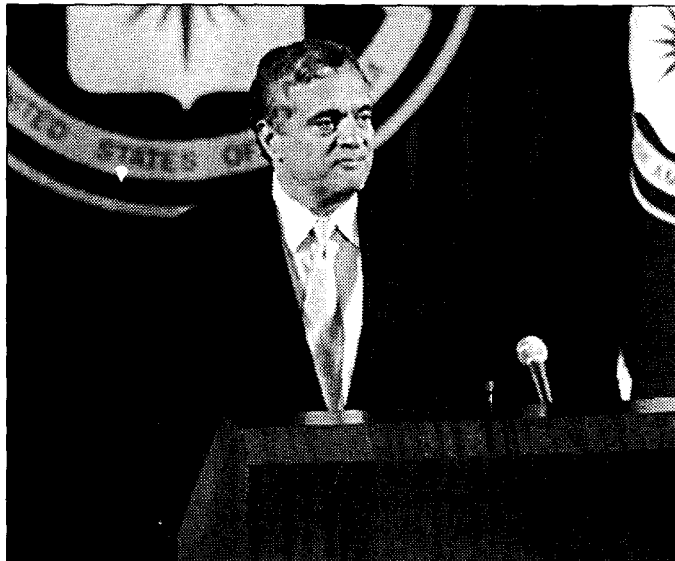
Government officials and people close to Tenet said the classified report was a detailed account of mistakes and miscalculations by American intelligence agencies on whether Iraq possessed illicit weapons before the US invaded last year.

An unclassified version of the report is to be made public this month. Some close to Tenet said the report was among the factors that led him to resign from a post he had considered leaving for several years.

A senior intelligence official said Tenet had neither read nor been briefed on the Senate report. The official described as "bunk" the idea that his departure had been related to the Senate findings.

Officials who have read the report described it as presenting a broad indictment of the CIA's performance on Iraq. They said its criticisms ranged from inadequate pre-war collection of intelligence by spies and satellites to a sloppy analysis, often based on uncorroborated sources, that produced the conclusion that Iraq possessed biological and chemical weapons.

"There are some things that are indefensible," said a recently retired intelligence official who had seen the report. "There are



CIA director George J. Tenet announces his resignation at the agency headquarters in Langley, Virginia. (Reuters)

some real errors, of omission and commission, and it's not going to be a pretty picture."

A Congressional official declined to comment on the tone of the report or its specific content, but said: "Our intention has been to be as detailed and as thorough as possible, and we've been very specific."

The version of the report that was shown to the CIA included only factual findings.

Separate conclusions are still being drafted by Democrats and Republicans on the Republican-controlled panel, government officials said. But the findings alone were portrayed by three officials as likely to be particularly embarrassing to the CIA, whose analysts were the main proponents among those from various intelligence agencies of the view that Iraq possessed illicit weapons.

Tenet and his agency have insisted that it is too soon to say whether the CIA made mistakes in its pre-war assessment. But even before Tenet announced his resignation, the committee chairman, Senator Pat Roberts, Republican of Kansas, said at a meeting yesterday that he believed intelligence agencies were still "in denial". Richard J. Kerr, a former deputy director of central intelligence who has been leading the CIA's internal review of its performance, said he had not read the report.

"This has been a very rough go," he said, citing the criticism during Tenet's tenure of the agency's performance on other issues, including the September 11 attacks, the subject of another report, by an independent presidential commission, which is to be released next month.

Deputy director retires

One day after George Tenet's resignation as CIA director, the U.S. spy agency said today that deputy director for operations James Pavitt will retire soon after 31 years.

Pavitt, 58, decided to retire about a month ago and his retirement is not related to Tenet's resignation, the CIA said in a statement.

NEW YORK TIMES NEWS SERVICE

Senate findings may have led Tenet to quit: Report

United Nations: Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) director George J. Tenet's resignation may have been hastened by a highly critical report from Senate Intelligence Committee about the mistakes and miscalculations by intelligence agencies about Iraq's suspected weapons of mass destruction programme (WMD), a report said on Friday.



The classified, 400-page report was presented to the CIA for comment last month.

According to government officials and people close to Tenet, the report contained a detailed account of mistakes and miscalculations by American intelligence agencies on whether Iraq possessed illicit weapons before the US invaded it.

An unclassified version of the report is to be made public this month, the Times said.

People close to Tenet, who resigned on Thursday, said the report was among the factors that led him to resign from a post he had considered leaving for several years.

But a senior intelligence official told the Times, Tenet had neither read nor been briefed on the Senate report. The official described as "bunk" the idea that his departure had been related to the Senate findings.

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But even before Tenet announced his resignation, the committee chairman, Senator Pat Roberts, Republican of Kansas, said at a meeting on Thursday that he believed intelligence agencies were still "in denial". NYT News Service

Anti-occupation protests greet Bush in Italy

RACHEL SANDERSON
ROME, JUNE 4

THOUSANDS of armed police lined the streets of Rome on Friday as anti-war demonstrators gathered to protest against visiting President George W. Bush and US-led occupation of Iraq.



Bush landed on Friday for a two-day visit to celebrate the defeat of fascism in World War-II, but it is the war in Iraq that has raised passions, which authorities fear, could spark off violent protests by demonstrators.

Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi, a staunch Bush ally, warned of violent protests. During his three-day trip to Italy and France, Bush will seek international support for his Iraq mission, commemorate the June 1944 liberation of Rome and also the D-Day invasion of Normandy. Meanwhile, Pope John Paul called for the speedy return of Iraq's sovereignty, during a meeting with Bush at the Vatican on Friday. —Reuters

AN AMERICAN GULAG-II

Mockery Of US Commitment To Democracy And Human Rights

By BIBHUTI BHUSAN NANDY

Even after the ICRC had lodged complaints of prisoner abuse both in Iraq and Washington, on 19 November, 2003 Lt Gen Ricardo Sanchez, the top US Operational Commander in Iraq issued an order assuming tactical control of the Abu Ghraib prison and turning it over to the 205th Military Intelligence Brigade. Further, he authorised use of terror dogs as a psychological interrogation technique. The prison guards have since told investigators that military intelligence and CIA interrogators asked them to "loosen this guy up for us," or to "make sure he gets the treatment" — all intended to soften the prisoners and "get them to talk".

Indications are that Sanchez was personally present at one torture session at Abu Ghraib; Rumsfeld had approved a plan that brought unconventional interrogation methods to Iraq to gain intelligence about the on-going violent unrest in the country, though such a role for military police personnel is in direct violation of the standing procedure.

Doing Al Qaeda's work

The US army has so far suspended 17 soldiers and recommended disciplinary action against several officers who were involved in running the Abu Ghraib prison. Some half a dozen members of an army reserve have been also facing minor criminal charges. One of the accused soldiers has alleged that he is being made a scapegoat for the failings of his superiors. For their part, commanding officers are in blame-shifting mode.

Considering how the thread of abuse has run through the Pentagon hierarchy right to the Oval Office, the on-going Congressional investigations have to be fair and thorough, examining culpability along the entire chain of command. Given the quality of the evidence recorded so far it is open to serious doubt if they would ever get to the bottom of the matter. Some Republican members of the investigating Senate and House Committees have asserted that they are outraged by the outrage at the reported prison abuse. The acts of omission and commission of the cynical Bush administration also suggest sustained efforts at cover-up:

* The torture regime in Iraq thrived in a climate of administration contempt for American

values, international law and Geneva conventions.

* Bush and Rumsfeld ignored Colin Powell's presentation of the ICRC evidence of abuses in Iraq. Rumsfeld has said that he didn't have the time to read the long report on Abu Ghraib.

* Despite Red Cross reports of extensive abuse, there was no attempt to improve prison supervision. Command lapses

stolen the American porn industry's thunder. In this enterprise Abu Ghraib torturers have acted out their perverse culture: the sexual humiliation of the weak. Ironically, female soldiers, who have for long been targets of sex abuse by their male peers, have finally integrated into the sexualized abuse of the enemy only to humiliate them.

US soldiers came to Iraq sup-



as well as failure of leadership, training and discipline remained great and rampant.

* As the demand for dismissal of Rumsfeld gathered momentum, Bush sent his defence secretary to Iraq, not for streamlining the prison administration, but to boost the morale of the American troops in the face of worldwide condemnation of their despicable conduct.

* Reflecting the arrogant mindset of the White House, Pentagon placed General Miller, who set the questionable interrogation techniques into motion, in command of the entire Iraqi prison system as late as in mid-April this year.

* The administration has settled on a way to deflect attention from the prisoner torture issue by questioning Democrats' patriotism and accusing them and the media of overreaction.

* The US military is squarely responsible for war crimes in Iraq, but the Bush administration has asked the UN Security Council to exempt its troops from prosecution before the International Criminal Court.

As pointed out by *The Guardian*, by brutalising Iraqi prisoners in extremely terrifying conditions the US military has

posedly to liberate the country from Saddam Hussein's dictatorship, but they have themselves tortured and abused Iraqi prisoners. The Abu Ghraib prison was a symbol of Saddam's terror turned into a symbol of American brutality. In the event, the lurid abuse reports from Iraq have become the most effective tool for recruitment to Al Qaeda ranks.

Destroying US credibility

Since World War II, the US has styled itself the "leader of the world". But to get its way, it has often ignored the American public and has used covert action, sabotage, and threat against hapless weaker nations in Asia and Latin America. Through the past five decades, the superpower bully "led" the world by removing many Third World leaders it considered enemies of freedom, even when people had chosen them. Washington provided substitutes of Muhammed Mossadeq in Iran, Jacobo Arbenz Guzman in Guatemala, Patrice Lumumba in the Congo, Ngo Dinh Diem in South Vietnam, Rafael Trujillo in the Dominican Republic, Salvador

Allende in Chile, Daniel Ortega in Nicaragua, Maurice Bishop in Grenada, Manuel Noriega in Panama and Saddam Hussein in Iraq.

If, despite these felonies, American records were better than many other countries it was because of the US system: its tradition of openness, rule of law, due processes, and checks and balances. But the prison abuse reports have made a mockery of America's commitment to democracy and human rights and triggered widespread suspicions of Washington's intentions in Iraq. Even the repressive, pariah regimes of North Korea and Myanmar that systematically violate the human rights of their citizens have questioned America's moral right to raise an accusing finger at the human rights records of other nations.

Clash of civilizations

No administration since Nixon has been so arrogant and insistent that it has the right to operate without oversight and accountability as the Bush presidency. Bush and his neo-con cronies pushed America into a messy, unilateral war, rejecting all voices of sanity at home and abroad.

They refuse to grasp the gravity of the current situation in Iraq, thinking (or pretending?) that the prisoner abuse issue is nothing more than another embarrassment. After the tortures and abuses have come out in the open, they continue to use troops in Iraq as a cover from the rising heat over the mismanagement and misuse of military prisons.

Bush has announced that even after "sovereignty" is transferred to an Iraqi government on 30 June, the 137,000-strong US occupation army will stay put in Iraq for an indefinitely long period. The low-intensity urban war that has gripped Iraq will rage as long as US troops remain on its soil. As in Vietnam, America cannot win this guerrilla war, but its embattled forces will continue to unleash their savagery on hapless Iraqis, inevitably pushing the world towards a predictable clash of civilizations.

The people of America can hope to avoid such a catastrophe only by consigning Bush to the dustbin of history in the November presidential poll. But the question is: will they?

(Concluded)

AN AMERICAN GULAG-I

Torture At Abu Ghraib Part Of US Intelligence Policy

By BIBHUTI BHUSAN NANDY

Since the dawn of civilisation, adversaries in a conventional war have conceded certain basic rights to each other. Humane treatment of war prisoners, and special considerations for civilians, especially women, children and the aged are among those universally recognized rights. The Geneva Conventions codified these norms of civilised combat behaviour, raising them to the status of international law. During the invasion of Iraq last year and in countering its bloody aftermath, the US and British military forces have consistently violated these norms. The number of civilians killed and maimed in indiscriminate bombing during the war and in the anti-insurgency operations thereafter runs into thousands and is comparable only to the savagery of the 1968 My Lai massacre in Vietnam.

Trigger-happy troops

Against this backdrop, in a recent Gallup poll, Iraqis unsurprisingly described US soldiers as "uncaring, dangerous and lacking in respect for the country's people, religion and tradition". One specific Iraqi complaint was that American troops are indiscriminate in their use of force when unarmed civilians are around; they make no efforts to keep ordinary Iraqis from being killed or wounded during exchanges of gunfire.

CBS accounts of US soldiers photographed in acts of torturing prisoners at Abu Ghraib, including sadistic sex abuse and humiliation — rape, sodomy and worse — have enormously compounded this unedifying image of the American military. The revolting picture of naked prisoners stacked up in a human pyramid formation and a male internee with a leash around his neck held by a female soldier in defiance of all basic standards of human decency and accepted conventions of war will haunt viewers for long. More devastating was the death of at least five internees during interrogation.

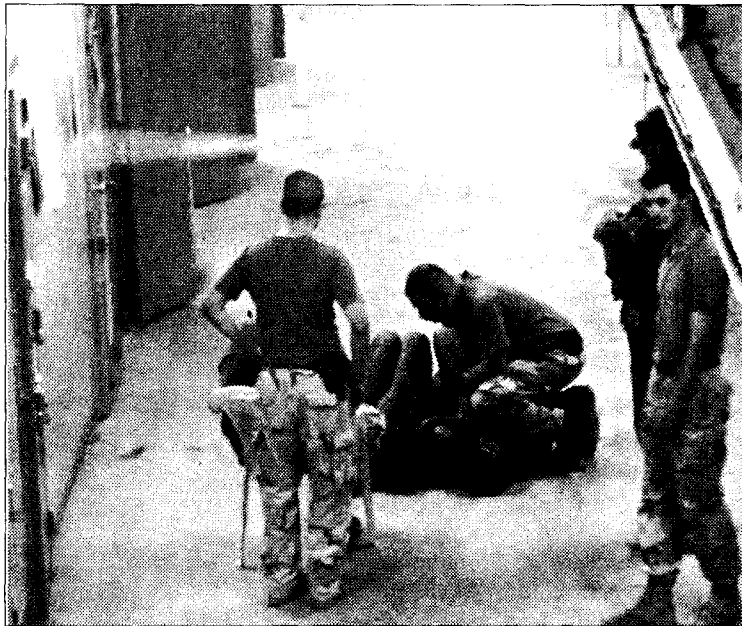
The latest revelations by *The Washington Post* are incalculably more horrifying: military prison guards threw inmates' food into toilets and then made them eat

The author is former Additional Secretary, Research and Analysis Wing

the same, force-fed them pork — a taboo for Muslims — and tortured them into denouncing their faith — Islam. Betraying reckless perversity and depravity, US soldiers collected and preserved copies of the obscene photos as war trophies to be savoured with families and friends back home.

The Abu Ghraib prison was surely not the only place where

conceivable euphemism to cover up torture. The Defence Secretary, Donald Rumsfeld, distinguished between abuse and torture, asserting that he was not going to address the torture word. The former Iraqi air force chief who had turned himself in was killed during interrogation at "a high value" prison, but a Pentagon press release typically peppered this over, saying the



prisoners have been subjected to torture, abuse and humiliation. The Camp Coppler detention centre outside Baghdad was the first site of prisoner abuse that prompted the International Committee for Red Cross to lodge a formal complaint, citing no fewer than 50 incidents, way back in May and June last year. Later, in October, the ICRC and Amnesty International reported that American and British troops had extensively tortured and abused Iraqi prisoners at Abu Ghraib.

'Dirty war' tactics

The US military's first response was to curtail Red Cross inspections. Later, they took action on some issues, but "there were situations that remain unacceptable and difficult". The Red Cross was so outraged by the soldiers' treatment of prisoners that at one point it considered changing its policy and making its reports public.

As the prisoner abuse scandal stunned the whole world, the Bush administration used every

prisoner "said he didn't feel well and subsequently lost consciousness". The Brits were smarter still. British soldiers in Basra were equally brutal in their treatment of the prisoners in their charge, but their commanders were "wary of their troops getting sucked into operations determined by heavy handed American tactics".

Following the horrendous CBS disclosures, George Bush and Tony Blair offered apologies, but in a damage control exercise, they toed the deceptive Pentagon line that the nightmare at Abu Ghraib was an isolated case of unsanctioned behaviour by a few bad soldiers. But from the disconcerting evidence that has surfaced, far from being acts of aberrant few operating in violation of their superiors' commands, the prison atrocities stemmed from application of a predetermined policy. A "pattern and system" was at work behind the "blatantly sadistic, cruel and inhuman" acts.

From the available evidence it is established beyond doubt that

tortures at Abu Ghraib were aimed at breaking prisoner morale and the application of "sensory deprivation" and other "dirty war" techniques to that end was very much part of the US intelligence collection policy and methods. The CIA and the US military intelligence agency freely applied "stress and duress" techniques on prisoners to extract information to pursue the US counter-insurgency campaign in Iraq behind closed doors for long. Now, to the embarrassment of the world's lone superpower, these are graphically out in the open.

Exporting Guantanamo

It all began with the decision to detain those captured in the Afghanistan war at Cuba's Guantanamo Bay without the protections accorded to POWs under the Geneva Conventions. Last August, as the upsurge of violence in Iraq heightened the fear that the war was not going well, the Pentagon sent Major Gen Geoffrey Miller, the Guantanamo commander, to Iraq. For effectively fighting the raging insurgency there, he recommended that detention operations must be "enabler of interrogation" and the United States should rapidly exploit internees for actionable intelligence. Miller added that "it is essential that the guard force be actively engaged in setting the conditions for successful exploitation of the internees".

During the US army's own inquiry into the complaints of atrocities on prisoners, Major-General Antonio Taguba found credible evidence of "systematic and illegal abuse of prisoners". He noted that military commanders had eased the prison rules four times last year to permit guards to use lethal force on non-pliant prisoners. He concluded that military police guards at Abu Ghraib were improperly drawn into the role of setting "physical and mental conditions for favourable interrogation of prisoners".

According to the Red Cross, the physical and psychological coercion used by interrogators "appeared to be part of the standard operating procedures" for the US military intelligence personnel.

(To be concluded)

Iraq PM grapples with status and team list

Baghdad, May 29 (Reuters): Iraq's Prime Minister-designate Iyad Allawi began the process of forming a government team today, meeting US and Iraqi officials, aides said.

Confusion that surrounded his surprise nomination by Iraq's US-appointed governing council yesterday rippled on, with one official in the US occupation authority calling him "just a nominee", despite a White House and UN endorsement.

A senior US official in Baghdad later insisted, however, that the choice was final and said Iraq's new President and two vice-presidents would probably be named tomorrow with the rest of the 26-minister cabinet line-up to follow in a day-or-two.

However, the governing council today agreed with the US-led administration and the UN on key posts in a new cabinet today, senior politicians said, but others cautioned that the list was not yet final. "The governing council, Bremer and Lakhdar Brahimi agreed on the list," council member Ahmad Chalabi said, referring to US Iraq administrator Paul Bremer and UN envoy Brahimi.

"It is not 100 per cent certain that the nominees will accept it but it is pretty sure they will."

Another senior politician confirmed that a list had been drawn up and said it would be announced tomorrow.

But Iraq's current foreign minister, Hoshiyar Zebari, said the list was not final and had yet

to be formally agreed. The new government is due to take over on June 30 when the US-led coalition formally hands over sovereignty.

Chalabi said the only point of dispute remaining was over the relatively ceremonial post of the President, who will have two deputies. He said the two main candidates for President were Adnan Pachachi, a Sunni who was foreign minister of Iraq in the 1960s before Saddam came to power, and Ghazi Yawar, a Sunni engineer who holds the rotating presidency of the council at the moment.

Chalabi said technocrat Thamer Ghadban, who briefly ran Iraq's vital oil industry after the fall of Saddam, had been nominated as oil minister.

Kurdish politician Zebari would be defence minister while fellow Kurd Barham Salih would take over the foreign ministry, Chalabi said, adding that Adel Abdul Mahdi, a Shia, was nominated to be finance minister and Samir Sumatdy, a Sunni, would stay on as interior minister.

Brahimi, asked by Washington to help set up an interim government to take over from US rule next month, seemed to have been completely taken aback by the way the 23-member governing council announced its choice of Allawi.

The US administration was also caught on the hop by the speed of the announcement. But as a long-time exile in the pay of the CIA, Allawi was always a strong candidate in Washington

and US officials were clearly involved in steering the choice.

Ordinary Iraqis know little of a man who spent more than 30 years abroad, first as a medical student in Britain supporting Saddam Hussein's Baath party and later as a wealthy exile who founded the Iraqi National Accord with funds from the CIA.

Aides to Allawi said he was meeting various fellow members of the governing council, which will give way on June 30 to the interim government. One said he also expected to meet Paul Bremer. A spokesman for Brahimi said the envoy would now work with Allawi to form a government. Its main task will be to organise Iraq's first free elections in the new year amid widespread violence from sectarian militias.



Faeza Hassan (right) kisses her 17-year-old son Mahmud Yassin Hassan after he was freed from the Abu Ghraib prison, near Baghdad. (AFP)

30 MAY 2004

THE TELEGRAPH

Bush call to demolish abuse prison

President bid to reassure world

ALEC RUSSELL
ANTON LA GUARDIA AND
GEORGE JONES

Washington, May 25: President George W Bush sought last night to reassure the world that he had a clear strategy for Iraq as the US and Britain revealed plans to hand over power.

With his approval ratings at a new low and senior Republicans stepping up their criticism of his policy, Bush launched his fightback with a prime-time television address.

Speaking at the Army War College in Pennsylvania, he vowed America "will persevere and defeat this enemy and hold this hard-won ground for the realm of liberty".

He also confirmed that Baghdad's Abu Ghraib prison, scene of the worst of the abuses of Iraqi detainees, would be demolished. "Under Saddam Hussein, prisons like Abu Ghraib were symbols of death and torture. That same prison became a symbol of disgraceful conduct by a few American troops who dishonoured our country and disregarded our values," he said.

"America will fund the construction of a modern, maximum security prison. With the approval of the Iraqi government, we will demolish the Abu Ghraib prison, as a fitting symbol of Iraq's new beginning."

He warned there was likely to be more violence before and after the transition. "There are difficult days ahead. And the way forward may sometimes appear chaotic. Yet our coalition is strong... and terrorists will not be allowed to dictate the future."

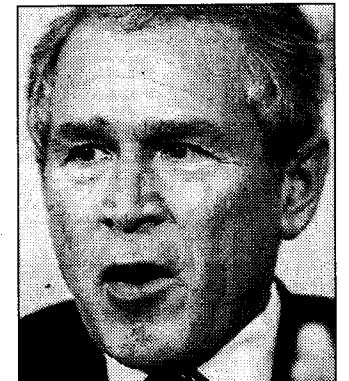
He did not give an exit date for the 135,000 US troops but said "the sooner this goal [of a free government] is achieved, the sooner our job will be done".

He added: "Our terrorist enemies have a vision that guides and explains all their varied acts of murder. Our actions, too, are guided by a vision. We believe that freedom can advance and change lives... These two visions have now met in Iraq, and are contending for the future of that

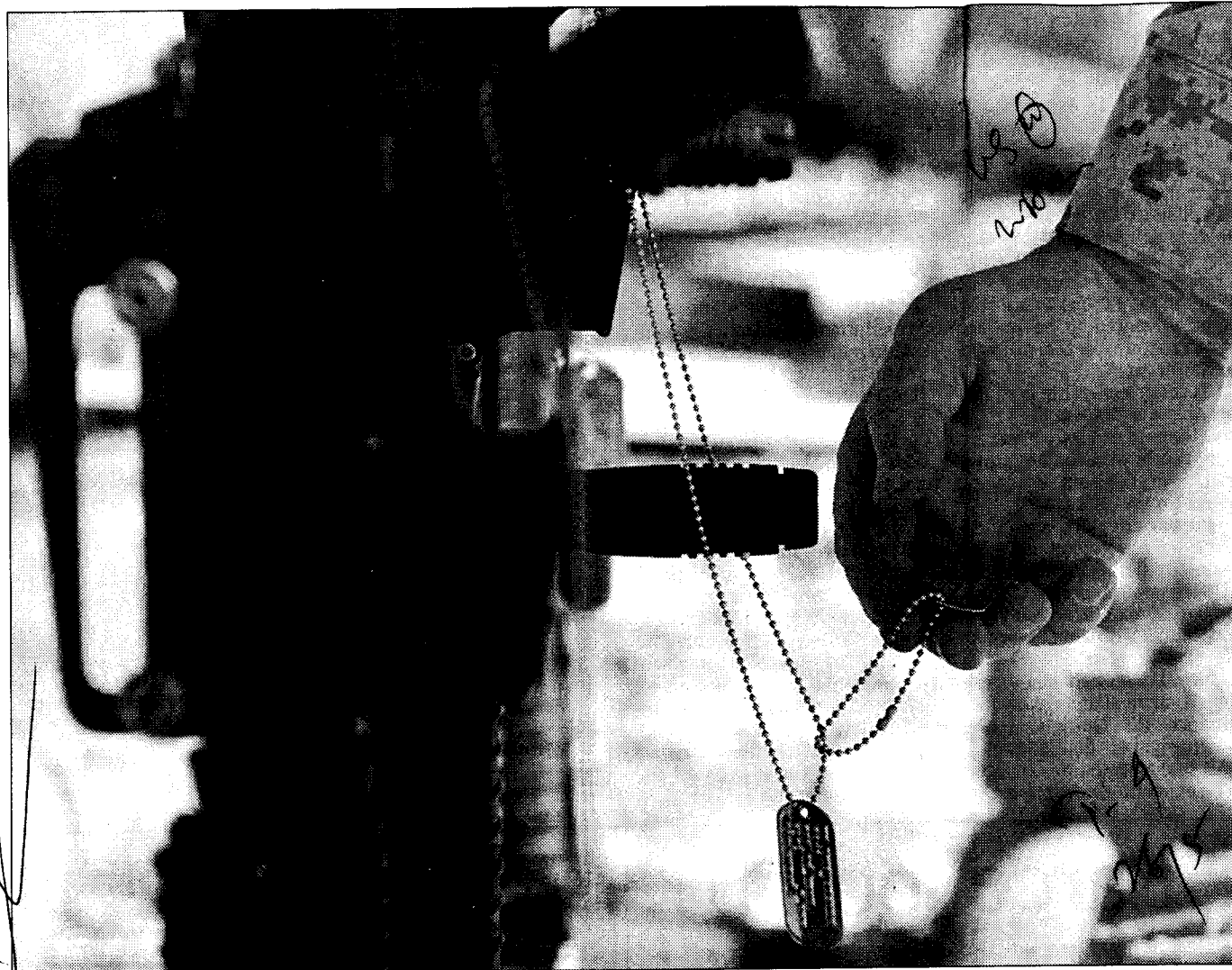
country."

The first in a series of televised speeches, it came after Britain and the US circulated the draft of a new UN resolution. The text outlined plans for the handover of power on June 30 to an Iraqi transitional government and the UN's subsequent role as Iraq moved to democratic elections.

After weeks on the defensive, there was a more confident mood in Washington and Whitehall yesterday that progress was being made on diplomatic and security fronts. Although Blair has refused to criticise Bush in public, British officials believe the President's recent setbacks, in particular over the prisoner



George W. Bush at the White House. (Reuters)



A US serviceman holds the dog-tags of a fallen comrade after a memorial service at Camp Baharia near Falluja. (Reuters)

Pentagon to replace top gun

Washington, May 25 (Reuters): The Pentagon will replace army lieutenant General Ricardo Sanchez as the top US military officer in Iraq, senior defence officials said today.

But they argued that the change was not triggered by the Abu Ghraib Iraqi prisoner abuse scandal.

General George Casey, Army vice chief of staff, has emerged as the top candidate to replace Sanchez in Baghdad in June or July, said the officials, who asked not to be identified.

"There has been no final decision on a replacement, but General Casey is a top candidate," one official said. "This has absolutely nothing to do with Abu

Ghraib," added another defence official. "The secretary (defence secretary Donald Rumsfeld) is very mindful that the perception (of punishment) might arise. But it simply is not the case."

Brigadier General Janis Karpinski, who was in charge of US-run prisons in Iraq during the abuse, has been suspended as commander of the military police brigade at the heart of the scandal.

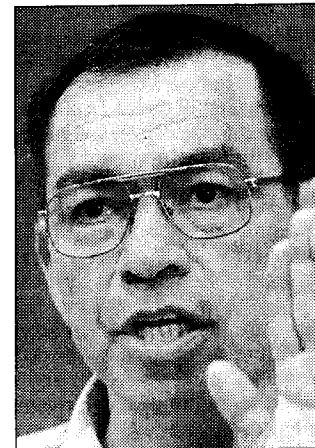
Seven US soldiers have been charged with physically and sexually abusing and humiliating Iraqi prisoners at Abu Ghraib in a scandal that has inflamed the Arab world and undermined US efforts in the country before the handover on June 30 to an inter-

im Iraqi government.

President George W. Bush praised Sanchez. "Rick Sanchez has done a fabulous job. He's been there for a long time. His service has been exemplary," Bush said in response to a question from reporters at the White House.

But defence analyst Loren Thompson of the Lexington Institute, who has close connections to the Pentagon, said: "You'd have to be pretty naive to think that the problems with abuse of detainees had no impact at all on this decision."

The defence officials offered no explanation other than that Sanchez had served the normal year-long rotation in Iraq.



Lieutenant General Ricardo Sanchez

abuse scandal, have strengthened Britain's hand in negotiations over the resolution.

Misgivings

The US faced misgivings from other UN Security Council members today over the powers and length of stay of a US-led force when authority is handed over to an Iraqi interim government on June 30.

France, Germany, Russia and China signalled that they wanted changes to a US-British drafted resolution on Iraq's transition, which is complicated by persistent attacks on foreign forces and the US-led administration in Baghdad.

THE DAILY TELEGRAPH

US says Iraqis behind raids on Chalabi

Washington: As Ahmed Chalabi, chief of the Iraqi National Congress (INC), reacted angrily to the raids at his residence by severing ties with the US-led coalition provisional authority, defence secretary Donald Rumsfeld has said he believed the raids were the handiwork of the Iraqi leadership.

"I certainly was not aware that there was going to be a raid on a home if, in fact, there was. My understanding is that the Iraqis are involved in this, and I think you'd probably best ask the Iraqi leadership," Rumsfeld said when asked about the raid at the residence of Chalabi, after a senate armed force committee meeting on Thursday.

Rumsfeld faced sharp questioning at the Capitol both from senator John Warner, chairman of the senate armed services committee, and from the media over the raid to seize some papers from Chalabi's residence. Chalabi once enjoyed a close relationship with the Pentagon and received US funding in Baghdad.

Earlier, the White House also attributed the raid to a decision of the Iraqis.

The raid has triggered a new controversy in the war-hit nation and the interim governing council is set to meet to discuss the issue.

The Pentagon had financed Chalabi's Iraqi National Congress in London and put him in the governing council at one time. It had even thought of him as presidential material for the Iraqis. Relations between the US and Chalabi soured when Washington found his repeated assurances from London that deposed Iraqi President Saddam Hussein possessed weapons

of mass destruction were proved totally false.

The Chalabi controversy comes close on the heels of the Iraqi prisoners abuse row, which had proved to be a major embarrassment for Washington, and the killing of the interim council president Ezzedine Salim on Monday.

Asked whether he has lost confidence in Chalabi, Rumsfeld replied, "it is not for me to comment on this. To the extent of authorities want to inquire of people, they can do that. "And then, just as with the cases we've been discussing up there (at a meeting of Congress members with President George W Bush), the process should be allowed to work. People should see how it works and what transpires."

Meanwhile a report commissioned by the US Congress says that poor relations between the US state department and Chalabi frustrated efforts to broadcast TV programmes to Iraqis before and during the war.

The report by the general accounting office (GAO), the auditing and investigatory arm of Congress, says the INC, a confederation of Iraqi opposition parties in

exile, received some 33 million dollars from the United States between March 2000 and September 2003. A key aim of the funding to the INC's support foundation (INCSF) was to set up a regular broadcasting schedule beamed at the Iraqi interior.

But because of distrust between the INC and the state department the money was disbursed in short-term and irregular increments, short-circuiting efforts to realize the goal of the money. Agencies



A portrait of Iraqi leader Ahmed Chalabi smashed after US troops and Iraqi officials raided his office in Baghdad on Thursday

Bush high five for Iraq

Press Trust of India

WASHINGTON, May 25. — As violence in Iraq pushed down his approval ratings and increased skepticism about his handling of the war, President Bush outlined five "specific steps" to help the war-ravaged country achieve democracy and freedom but warned that difficult days lay ahead and violence could get worse.

The five steps include transferring authority to a sovereign new Iraqi government on 30 June, helping establish security in areas still gripped by chaos, urging broader international support and reconstructing the country and holding national elections.

"There are difficult days ahead and the way forward may sometimes appear chaotic. The terrorists and

Saddam loyalists would rather see Iraqis die than have any live in freedom. But terrorists will not determine the future of Iraq," Mr Bush said in a prime-time address last night. "Completing the five steps to Iraqi elected self-government will not be easy...

the continuing unrest.

Taking note of the abuse of the Iraqi prisoners by American soldiers, Mr Bush said the USA would demolish Iraq's Abu Ghariib prison after the handover of power as the prison had become "a symbol of disgraceful conduct by a few US troops who dishonoured our country and disregarded our values".

The five steps include transferring authority to a Iraqi government, helping establish security, urging global support, holding polls and helping reconstruction

There is likely to be violence before the transfer of sovereignty and after the transfer of sovereignty."

The President said the US would keep its troops in Iraq at the current level as long as necessary due to

Shrine damaged

Parts of one of the most sacred Shi'ite shrines in Najaf was damaged during clashes today between US forces and militiamen that left at least nine people dead, adds AP. In Baghdad, a car bomb near a hotel wounded at least five Iraqis, the US military said. The target of the blast, about 100 metres from the Australian embassy, was not immediately clear.

THE STATESMAN

26 MAY 2004

27 MAY 2004

Powell modifies assurance on Iraq sovereignty

Press Trust of India

WASHINGTON, May 26. — Within hours after US President George W Bush and Secretary of State Colin Powell assured the world that Iraq will regain full sovereignty at the end of June, Mr Powell modified that assurance by saying that US troops who will remain in Iraq will "do what is necessary to protect themselves." He made it clear that the troops would carry out their mission by doing "what is necessary" even if that might not be in "total consonance" with what the Iraqi government wants.

Mr Powell was answering a question, at a joint appearance at the State Department with Belgian

Foreign Minister Louis Michel, on Prime Minister Tony Blair's categorical statement that the new Iraqi government after 30 June would have veto power over the individual military operations of the coalition force there.

"The actual details of how the forces will work together are being worked out now. We are confident that this will be manageable. We want to take into account the views of the Iraqi interim government. They are sovereign. And so, they have a role to play, obviously. We are there at their consent and with their consent," he said.

"And if you look at the UN resolution that was proposed yesterday, there is language in, I think it is the

Blair denies differences

LONDON, May 26. — UK Prime Minister Mr Tony Blair on Wednesday denied that there was any disagreement between Britain and the United States about the power the new Iraqi government should wield over coalition troops.

An apparent difference in tone between Blair and US Secretary of State Colin Powell on the issue had prompted speculation of a trans-Atlantic rift. Mr Blair insisted that London and Washington agreed that Iraqi ministers should make strategic military decisions but leave the coalition in command of its troops on the ground. — AP

tenth preambulatory paragraph that specifically talks about the consent

of the Iraqi interim government." Mr Powell said: "We would take into account whatever they might say at a political and military level. And to make sure that that happens, we will be creating coordinating bodies, political coordinating bodies and military-to-military coordinating bodies, so that there is transparency with respect to what we are doing."

"Now, if it comes down to the United States Armed Forces protecting themselves or in some way accomplishing their mission in a way that might not be in total consonance with what the Iraqi interim government might want to do at a particular moment in there, US forces will do what is necessary to protect themselves," he said.

Iraq's PM: Hussain Shahrastani, a Shiite nuclear scientist who spent years in the notorious Abu Ghraib prison for refusing to participate in Saddam Hussein's nuclear program, is now the leading candidate to become the prime minister in the interim Iraqi government, a media report said.

Abu Ghraib demolition

The head of Iraq's Governing Council said today that President George W Bush's idea of demolishing the notorious Abu Ghraib prison was a waste of resources, adds AP from Baghdad. "We must not be sentimental," Ghazi Mashal Ajil al-Yawer said. "Torture has taken place in every vault in Iraq. As the Gov-

Radical captured

BAGHDAD, May 26. — US troops captured a key lieutenant of radical Shi'ite leader Muqtada al-Sadr during clashes in Najaf that killed 24 people and wounded nearly 50, hospital and militia officials said.

Riyadh al-Nouri, al-Sadr's brother-in-law, offered no resistance when American troops raided his home, said Azhar al-Kinani, a staffer in al-Sadr's Najaf office.

In Baqouba, about 30 miles northeast of Baghdad, five people were killed and seven others injured when a roadside bomb exploded near a convoy including the police chief of Baladrooz. — AP

erning Council, we do not agree with demolishing," he said.

Wedding video nails US lies

Wg in 82m 21/1-15 25/5

Associated Press
Ramadi (Iraq), May 24

THE BRIDE arrives in a white pickup truck and is quickly ushered into a house by a group of women. Outside, men recline on brightly coloured silk pillows, relaxing on the carpeted floor of a large goat-hair tent as boys dance to tribal songs.

The videotape obtained on Sunday by AP Television News captures a wedding party survivors say was later attacked by US planes early on Wednesday, killing up to 45 people.

The US military says it is investigating the attack that took place in Mogr el-Deeb village, 8 km from the Syrian border, but all evidence, so far, indicates the target was a safehouse for foreign fighters. "There was no evidence of a wedding; no decorations, no musical instruments found, no large quantities of food or leftover servings one would expect from a wedding celebration", Brig.-Gen. Mark Kimmitt, chief US military spokesman in Iraq, said on Saturday. But the video that APTN shot a day after the attack shows fragments of musical instruments, pots and pans, and brightly coloured beddings used for celebrations, scattered around the bombed-out tent.

An AP reporter/photographer who interviewed more than a dozen survivors a day after the bombing were able to identify many of them on the video, which runs for several hours. APTN also travelled to Mogr el-Deeb, 400 km west of Ramadi, the day after the attack to film what survivors



An Iraqi soldier brandishes his Kalashnikov as he secures the site where a car was attacked 500 m. away from the US-led coalition HQ in Baghdad on Monday.

AFP

39 killed in Sadr City clashes

AT LEAST 39 Iraqis were killed in 48 hours of fighting between US troops and militia loyal to radical cleric Muqtada al-Sadr in Baghdad's Shia slum of Sadr City, medics and the military said on Monday. While medics put an overnight death toll at 18, a US military officer based in Sadr City said 26 militiamen were killed and four wounded in various attacks on US patrols between 6 pm on Sunday and 6 am on Monday.

AP, Baghdad

said was the wedding site. A devastated building and remnants of the tent, pots and pans were seen, along with bits of what appeared

to be the remnants of ordnance, one of which bore the marking "ATU-35", similar to those on US bombs. A reporter got names of 10 chil-

dren who, relatives said, had died. Bodies of five were filmed when the survivors took them to Ramadi for burial on Wednesday.

Allies to present UN resolution on Iraq sovereignty

THE UNITED States and Britain plan to introduce on Monday a long-awaited UN resolution on issues raised by the restoration of Iraqi sovereignty on June 30, a US official said.

The UN Security Council was expected to discuss the draft resolution behind closed doors on Monday morning, the official said.

The meeting will come just hours before President George Bush is expected to lay out his vision for the new Iraqi government in a nationally televised speech.

The 15 council ambassadors have held three informal sessions on key elements expected to be in the UN resolution — the handover of power from the US and British occupation authorities to an interim Iraqi government, the role of the multinational force currently led by the US, and the role of the United Nations.

The resolution is also expected to address the question of Iraq's oil revenue and other legal issues.

At the centre of the debate is the amount of power Iraq's caretaker government will have and how long foreign troops will remain in the country. On Friday, US deputy ambassador James Cunningham said all council members favoured giving Iraq full sovereignty.

AP, United Nations

US troops raid Chalabi's Baghdad office

Agencies
Baghdad, May 20

US TROOPS raided a house used by Governing Council member Ahmad Chalabi and searched his party offices in Baghdad on Thursday, piling pressure on the former Pentagon favourite now shunned by Washington.

Squads of soldiers, backed by Iraqi police, sealed off the neighbourhood around the headquarters of the Iraqi National Congress (INC) and a nearby house used by Chalabi for meeting officials, removing computers, files and other equipment.

INC spokesman Haider Moussawi said the troops also wanted to arrest two party members but were told

"They have been putting political pressure on us for weeks. It's part of an attempted character assassination and it's politically motivated, but it won't work," Moussawi said.

Moussawi said he did not know what the raid was related to, but called it a worrying development. "They didn't even have a warrant."

A spokeswoman for the US military said she would investigate reports that US forces were still camped out at the end of the street.

Six Humvees and one armoured vehicle sealed off the road.

US officials said on Tuesday the Pentagon had cut off some \$340,000 a month in funding to Chalabi's INC par-

ty, payments that were made in part for intelligence gathered by the INC.

Deputy Defence Secretary Paul Wolfowitz said the decision "was made in light of the process of transferring sovereignty to the Iraqis".

"We felt it was no longer appropriate for us to continue funding in that fashion," he told a US Senate hearing.

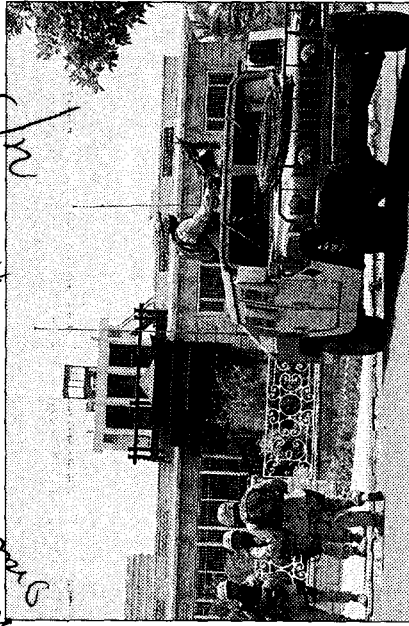
US officials, speaking on condition of anonymity, have accused Chalabi of trying to interfere with an investigation into alleged corruption of the UN-run oil-for-food programme, in which Saddam Hussein's government was allowed to sell oil despite international sanctions to buy food and humanitarian supplies.

Critics allege that former regime officials, in collusion with UN figures, skimmed a fortune off the revenues.

An exile who lived abroad for more than four decades, Chalabi was convicted in absentia of bank fraud in 1992 by a military court in Jordan, where he had founded a bank that failed. He says the charges were politically motivated.

The Pentagon flew him into Iraq with a group of followers after the US-led invasion last year, giving him an opportunity to establish a political base.

But he has struggled to drum up support and surveys in Iraq have ranked him as one of the least-liked politicians.



AP
US soldiers secure the entrance to the residence of Iraqi politician Ahmad Chalabi in Baghdad on Thursday.

by Chalabi they were not present. Chalabi, who turned from exile after the fall of Saddam Hussein as a potential future leader, was not detained.

US copter kills 40 Iraqi wedding guests

Associated Press
Baghdad, May 19

A US helicopter fired on a wedding party on Wednesday in western Iraq, killing more than 40 people, Iraqi officials said. The US military said it could not confirm the report and was investigating.

Lt-Col Ziyad al-Jbouri, deputy police chief of Ramadi, said between 42 and 45 people were killed in the attack, which took place around 2:45 am in a remote desert area near the border with Syria and Jordan. He said the dead included 15 children and 10 women. Dr Salah al-Ani, who works at a Ramadi hospital, put the death toll at 45.

A videotape obtained showed a truck containing bodies of people allegedly killed in the incident.

Most of the bodies were wrapped in blankets and other cloths, but the footage showed at least eight uncovered, bloodied bodies, several of them children. One of the children was headless. Iraqis interviewed on the videotape said partygoers were firing in the air in traditional wedding celebration. American troops have, sometimes, mistaken celebratory gunfire for hostile fire.

"I can't comment on this since we haven't received any reports from our units that this has happened, nor that any were involved in such a tragedy", Lt-Col. Dan Williams, a US military spokesman wrote in an e-mail in response to a question about the incident.

"We take all these requests seriously and we've forwarded this inquiry to the Joint Operations Center for further review and any other information that may be avail-

able", Williams said. TV footage showed the truck of bodies and mourners with shovels digging graves over a wide, dusty area in Ramadi. A group of men crouched and wept around one coffin.

Al-Ani said people at the wedding were firing weapons in the air,

and that American troops came to investigate and then left. However, he said, helicopters attacked the area at about 3 am. Two houses were destroyed in the attack.

US troops took the bodies and those injured in a truck to Rutba hospital, he said. "This was a wedding and the planes came and

attacked the people at a house. Is this the democracy and freedom that Bush has brought us?" said a man on the videotape.

Another man on the tape insisted the victims were attending a wedding party "and the US military planes came ... and started killing everyone in the house".

Army dampener on Red Cross

Press Trust of India
New York, May 19

US ARMY officials in Iraq tried to curtail Red Cross's spot inspection of the Abu Ghraib prison after the international agency reported abuse of prisoners there last year, according to a senior Army officer.

After the International Committee of the Red Cross observed abuses in one cellblock on two unannounced inspections in October and complained in writing on November 6, the military responded that inspectors should make appointments before visiting the cellblock. That area was the site of the worst abuses, the *New York Times* reported.

The Red Cross report in November was the earliest formal evidence known to have been presented to the military's headquarters in Baghdad before January, when photographs of the abuses came to the attention of criminal investigators and prompted a broad investigation. But the senior Army officer told the *Times* that the military did not start any criminal investigation before it replied to the Red Cross on December 24.

The Red Cross report was made after its inspectors witnessed or heard about such practices as holding Iraqi prisoners naked in dark concrete cells for several days at a time and forcing them to wear women's underwear on their heads while being paraded and photographed.

Sivits pleads guilty to prison abuse charges

Agencies
Baghdad, May 19

US SOLDIER Specialist Jeremy Sivits pleaded guilty on Wednesday to three charges he faced in a court martial over the abuse of Iraqi prisoners, CNN reported.

Sivits, the first US soldier court-martialed over the abuse at Abu Ghraib, had pleaded guilty on all four counts he faced, with a reservation related to the taking of a photograph of naked prisoners. Sivits was charged with two counts of maltreating detainees, one of conspiracy to maltreat and one of dereliction of duty around November 8.

Sivits, from the 800th Military Police Brigade, faces up to a year in jail. He had opted to be tried by military judge Colonel James Pohl alone, without a jury. Sentencing was expected later on Wednesday. Describing events that took place at Abu Ghraib on November 8, Sivits said he was



A US military handout of a sketch showing Lt. Stanley L. Martin (left) and Spc. Jeremy C. Sivits.

asked by Staff Sgt. Ivan L. Fredrick to accompany him to the prison facility.

Of his abusing inmates he said, "They said they had been told by military intelligence for them to keep doing what they were doing to the inmates because it was working,

they were talking".

The court martial then found Spc. Jeremy C. Sivits guilty of all charges. If the defendant pleads guilty, they have to prove to the court they are guilty and the court then formally renders a finding.

Pentagon issues new norms for detenus

By Sridhar Krishnaswami

WASHINGTON, MAY 19. Under fire for the gross abuse of Iraqi prisoners and clearly on the defensive for the way detenus are being treated in the 'war' against terror, the Pentagon has issued a review procedure for those detained at Guantanamo Bay in Cuba.

The Deputy Secretary of Defence, Paul Wolfowitz, has issued an order establishing administrative review procedures for enemy combatants captured in the Afghan theatre. The new procedures, according to a news release by the Department of Defence, will provide an annual review of each enemy combatant and the order takes effect immediately.

According to the framework, each detenu will have the opportunity to formally appear before a three-military-officer board and explain why he believes that he should be released. The review board will also accept written information from the family of the detenu and the national Government of the "enemy combatant".

The board will then make an assessment of the "current threat" of the detenu based on all information at its disposal and would make a recommen-

dation to a "high level" official of the Pentagon as to whether the combatant should remain in detention. The Defence official, who will be selected by the Secretary of Defence, will then decide if the enemy combatant should remain in detention.

"The release of enemy combatants prior to the end of a war is a significant departure from past U.S. wartime practices. Enemy combatants are detained for a very practical reason: to prevent them from returning to the fight," the Pentagon said in its release.

Iraq withdrawal

Meanwhile, Mr. Wolfowitz has told lawmakers that it is hard to predict how long American forces will be staying behind in Iraq after the June 30 handover of sovereignty; but the small 'hint' is that the timeframe could stretch to almost 18 months.

"Next year or a year and a half will be so critical. That is the time it will take to stand up Iraqi security," he told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

"We don't know what it will be. We've had changes ... We've had different plans. Our current level is higher than we had planned," Mr. Wolfowitz remarked.

20 MAY 2004

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IZZEDINE SALIM BECAME the president of the Iraqi Governing Council only because the post is held in rotation by the leaders of the motley groups that make up this quisling outfit. For all that, his death in a suicide bombing attack on May 17 reveals the extent to which the forces in neo-colonial occupation of Iraq have lost their grip. If the United States cannot protect its local operatives in a high security area of Baghdad, it has little hope of imposing its will on the rest of the country. As it is, control over the town of Fallujah has been ceded to a force composed of one-time Ba'athists and the efforts to recapture Karbala and other southern enclaves that were taken over by a Shia resistance movement have stalled. Washington might pull in troops from other theatres such as the Korean peninsula to bolster the considerable military presence that it has in West Asia. However, a force enhancement might not matter any more since the will to prevail has weakened with opinion polls indicating that an increasing number of American citizens are alarmed at the rising casualty rate and are turning against a war that serves no purpose. The U.S. Congress has finally begun to question the conduct of the soldiers and the rapidly escalating costs. The revelations that occupation forces tortured and abused Iraqi prisoners have already pushed President George W. Bush and his administration totally on to the defensive and the scandal is not about to die out. New evidence suggests that the abuses occurred because officials at higher echelons pressed the soldiers to extract information without instructing them about the rights of the prisoners.

In its desperation the Bush administration has appealed for a bailout to the United Nations that it once reviled. The U.N. might be able to

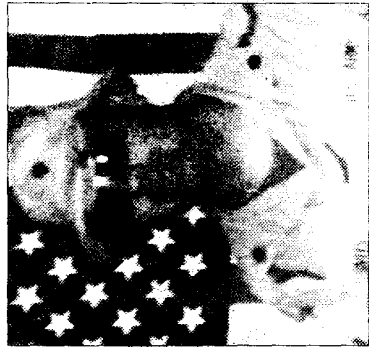
contrive an Iraqi administrative framework to which the occupation forces can notionally transfer power by the promised deadline of June 30. However, as the Governing Council experiment has clearly demonstrated, the people of Iraq will not accept a government that has limited authority. Even the United Kingdom, notorious for its subservience to the U.S., has joined other permanent members of the Security Council in proposing that a measure of real power be conferred on the transitory government to be set up by June 30. They want this interim administration to be given control of at least the Iraqi police forces, the justice system, the jails, and a reconstituted army. They have also urged that the transitory government should be allowed untrammelled access to the national assets, especially the oil resources. In the present circumstances, Washington cannot but act contrite and signal that it is open to suggestions. However, it is not really ready to accept that the reconstituted Iraqi security forces will operate independently of its command and control. The U.S. is also not willing to relinquish its hold over Iraq's wealth.

In cutting off funding for its one-time favourite Ahmed Chalabi, the Bush administration appears to have signalled that the quislings in the Governing Council will not be placed in key positions in the interim administration. However, it was notable that advice from Jordan's King Abdullah that power should be transferred to a military strongman was not rejected out of hand. While Washington would cover itself with ignominy if it resorted to this option, it is in such a desperate situation that the possibility cannot be ruled out. For all the talk of ushering in a democratic order, the U.S. is embroiled in quelling the national resistance movement of the Iraqis rather than allowing them to exercise liberty.

'I APOLOGISE... I SHOULD HAVE PROTECTED THOSE DETAINEES, NOT TAKEN THE PHOTOS'

US soldier sentenced for prison abuse

Associated Press



Spc. Sivits was found guilty of mistreating detainees. — AFP

BAGHDAD, May 19. — Spc. Jeremy C Sivits received the maximum penalty today — one year in prison, reduction in rank and a bad conduct discharge — in the first court-martial stemming from mistreatment of Iraqi prisoners by US forces at the Abu Gharib prison.

Spc. Sivits, who pleaded guilty to four abuse charges, broke down in tears as he expressed remorse for taking pictures of naked Iraqi prisoners being humiliated. "I'd like to apologize to the Iraqi people and those detainees," he said in his statement. "I should have protected those detainees, not taken the photos."

During the hearing, Spc. Sivits told the court he saw one US soldier punch an Iraqi in the head and other guards stomp on the hands and feet of detainees. He also recounted that prisoners were stripped and forced to form a human pyramid.

His testimony and sentencing mark a beginning in efforts to find justice in the Abu Gharib abuse scandal, a process stretching to the highest ranks of the US military.

Spc. Sivits was found guilty of two counts of mistreating detainees; dereliction of duty for failing to protect them from

US General to inspect Afghan jails

KABUL, May 19. — The commander of US forces in Afghanistan has instructed a fellow General to carry out a "top to bottom" review of American holding facilities across Afghanistan, the military said today, in an effort to fend off growing allegations of prisoner abuse.

Military spokesman Lt. Col. Tucker Mansager said the appointed General would visit each of around 20 American prisons across the country and report to the commander, Lt. Gen. David Barno, by mid-June.

British soldier held: At least one British soldier has been arrested in an investigation of faked photographs of alleged abuses of Iraqi prisoners by British forces, the defence ministry said, adds a report from London. In a statement yesterday, the ministry said the arrest, the first of its investigation, were a routine part of its probe and that no charges were immediately filed. — AP



BURDEN OF WAR: Mourners carry the coffins of late Governing Council chief Ezzadine Saleem and six of his bodyguards in Najaf on Wednesday. — AFP

American copter attacks wedding party, 40 dead

Associated Press

BAGHDAD, May 19. — More than 40 people were killed when a US helicopter fired on a wedding party today in western Iraq, Iraqi officials said. The US military said it could not confirm the report and was investigating. Lt. Col Ziyad al-Jbouri, deputy police chief of

Ramadi, said between 42 and 45 people were killed in the attack, which took place about 2:45 a.m. in a remote desert area near the border with Syria and Jordan. He said the dead included 15 children and 10 women. Dr. Salah al-Ani, who works at a hospital in Ramadi, put the death toll at 45. The Dubai-based Al Arabiya TV reported that

more than 20 were killed and 10 injured in the attack. Associated Press TV obtained videotape showing a truck containing bodies of people who were allegedly killed in the incident. Most of the bodies were wrapped in blankets and other cloths, but the footage showed at least eight uncovered, bloody bodies, several of them children. One of the children was headless.

Iraqis said partygoers were firing in the air in traditional wedding celebration. US troops have sometimes mistaken celebratory gunfire for hostile fire. "I cannot comment on this because we have not received any reports from our units that this has happened nor that any were involved in such a tragedy," a US military spokesman said.

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Iraq: U.S. clings to the burdens of power

By Ewen MacAskill

LONDON, MAY 18. Downing Street predicted yesterday that a new United Nations resolution sanctioning the handover of sovereignty to Iraq would be secured soon. The British Prime Minister, Tony Blair's spokesman said confidence about the tabled resolution stemmed from a weekend of diplomatic activity.

Diplomats representing the 15 countries on the U.N. Security Council will meet informally in New York again this week to try to agree a draft.

The British Ambassador to the U.N., Sir Emyr Jones Parry, said: "So far, the discussions have shown a willingness on the part of all members of the Council to work constructively for a resolution that will transfer all sovereignty back to the Iraqis."

But there is disagreement over what constitutes "all sovereignty." The U.S., though committed to the idea of a transfer of full sovereignty, insists it will retain military control after June 30 and appears intent on continuing to wield its immense influence over events in Iraq.

The U.S. under-secretary of state, Marc Grossman, inadvertently confirmed this on Thursday when asked by a Congress committee about the transfer of sovereignty: "I'd say what we're talking about is limited authority."

The U.S. envoy to Iraq, Paul Bremer, and the U.S. Secretary of State, Colin Powell, trying to control the damage, later insisted 'full' sovereignty would be transferred.

Other members of the security council are sceptical. The

French Government argues that "genuine sovereignty" should mean the transfer of almost all powers.

To be decided at the Security Council in the next few weeks is who should have control over military forces, the police, courts, legislation, borders, prisons, the budget and oil revenues.

But the answers will not be found just at the U.N. headquarters but also in Baghdad. Lakhdar Brahimi, the U.N. envoy to Iraq, who is drawing up a list of the members of the provisional Iraqi government, said yesterday the resolution should only be agreed after talks between the Security Council and the provisional government. He is pushing to have the names in place in order to make this possible.

His spokesman, Ahmad Fawzi, said yesterday that only after talks between the provisional government and the security council members "will there be answers to all the questions" about powers.

U.S.-led coalition force

The main divisive issue is the role of the U.S.-led coalition forces after June 30. There are about 115,000 U.S. military personnel in Iraq and about 24,000 from other countries, including 8,000 from Britain. There will be the same number after June 30.

The U.S. and British Governments, in a concerted move at the weekend, stressed that, in principle, they want to leave as soon as possible but that, in reality, they have to stay in order to maintain security.

The French Government wants the Iraqi government to have the power to tell the U.S.-

led forces to leave. Mr. Bremer and Mr. Powell have agreed that in theory the Iraq government would have this power but neither expected it to be exercised.

More contentious and complex is the French Government's proposal that the U.S. should consult the Iraqi government on any military actions it is proposing to undertake. The aim is to try to prevent a repetition of U.S. Falluja offensive.

A British official said: "I guess we will end up with a unitary command and control but there has to be some relationship between the multinational force and the (Iraqi) government. We have not got answers yet."

The rebuilt Iraqi security forces stand at 210,000, including 87,000 policemen, 28,000 civil defence corps, 2,500 military and 74,000 security guards.

Mr. Powell said on Sunday that these forces must be under the U.S. control because in times of conflict there had to be a unitary command — headed in this case by the chief of the U.S. coalition forces.

The French Government accepts that there should be a unitary command but with important qualifications: that the Iraqi caretaker government should have control of Iraqi forces, should be consulted by the coalition force on proposed actions and should give its consent for these actions.

Prisons

At present, the U.S. and its allies are an occupation force governed by the Geneva and Hague conventions on war. Many of those held in Iraqi jails at present are classified as prisoners of war, but that status will cease on June 30.

Full sovereignty would mean that the Iraqi government takes control of all prisons, including Abu Ghraib and those inside the U.S. compounds. According to British officials, the U.S. delegation at the U.N. has not yet set out its position on prisons but one U.S. official has said it will hand over control of most but not all prisons.

The French Government wants a guarantee that the Iraqi government will be able to change existing legislation.

This would be immediately problematic for the US: the new government could overturn an order issued by the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) giving U.S. troops immunity from Iraqi courts.

Full sovereignty would mean the Iraq government could introduce whatever laws it wanted, including Islamist laws on women, alcohol and other issues, a move some Shia clerics are pressing for.

In order to do so, the government would have to overturn an order introduced by the CPA banning any Islamist legislation that would infringe human rights, including the rights of women.

Legal status

There is a further problem: after June 30, the legal status of soldiers from the multinational force becomes unclear. British commanders have expressed concern to the Ministry of Defence about this.

If soldiers from the multinational force are involved in a firefight with Iraqis, what law will cover their actions? — ©Guardian Newspapers Limited 2004

Tanks not tankers

US plans run aground

Lost in the din over abuse of prisoners was the Americans re-writing the phrase “using an elephant gun to shoot an ant” as the ultimate in overkill. Their forces in Iraq have come up with something better. Or worse, since it refers to more than just terminology: tanks to take out guerrillas. They sent an SOS to the Pentagon which resulted in more armoured fighting vehicles being moved to the “occupied territory”. Which reconfirms that the coalition has been sucked into what it had wanted to avoid, fighting in congested urban conditions. The positive response to SOS and Bush’s declaration that “everything” will be done to eliminate what he call terrorists — others laud them as patriots resisting an invading/occupation force — proves that Washington is entrapped, militarily. It must employ increasing fire-power to deal with the situation. That the military operations will not be winding down on 30 June is apparent from a brigade under transfer from Korea to Iraq.

American forces have never been known for efficient peacekeeping operations. But insensitivity to local sentiment and a firm belief that power flows from the barrel of a gun (with apologies to Mao) has ensured that the common folk have opted to side with anti-coalition elements. They would prefer to risk being crushed by military might rather than be denied their dignity. The attitude of the US forces is exemplified by the episode of prisoner abuse and the reasons advanced for additional armour — “to protect foot soldiers, to take out the adversary from a distance”. In other words to blast their way to success. Collateral damage? Do non-American lives or sites sacred to the Shias count for a cent? Who is concerned about winning minds and hearts? After the Marines pulled back from Fallujah a local force headed by one of Saddam’s generals has been entrusted with cleaning up the mess. Initial reports suggest he is doing a better job than West Point graduates. Just how things have failed to work out for America is encapsulated in that SOS for armour. It was Iraqi oil that Bush & Cheney sought, but instead of tankers they are rushing tanks to the land they have illegally occupied. Will heavy weaponry do the trick? Maybe its worth a flashback to the unmentionable parallel — Vietnam. The Americans won virtually every battle there, they still lost the war.

Rumsfeld okayed Iraqi prisoner abuse: Report

Washington: US defence secretary Donald Rumsfeld approved a secret programme that encouraged interrogation methods used at Abu Ghraib prison, where Iraqi prisoners were abused, the New Yorker magazine said on Sunday.

Rumsfeld had approved "a highly secret operation" last year, which "encouraged physical coercion and the sexual humiliation of Iraqi prisoners in an effort to generate more intelligence about the growing insurgency in Iraq," New Yorker investigative reporter Seymour Hersh wrote, citing current and former intelligence officials.

Excerpts of Hersh's report have been released ahead of publication this week.

Hersh said the clandestine defence department operation was known as a special-access programme (SAP).

Its rules were: "Grab whom you must. Do what you want," according to one former intelligence official cited by Hersh.

The US defence secretary's decision to import such techniques into Iraq, after their use in Afghanistan, was opposed by members of US intelligence organisations, the report said.

"They said, 'No way. We signed up for the core programme in Afghanistan, preap-

proved for operations against high-value terrorist targets, and now you want to use it for cab drivers, brothers-in-law, and people pulled off the streets,'" the former intelligence official told Hersh.

The intelligence source said the CIA objected to the programme's use inside Abu Ghraib, where a scandal involving the mistreatment of Iraqis has sparked Democratic calls for Rumsfeld's resignation. The CIA ended its SAP involvement in the jail.

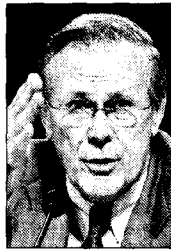
Leaked photos from Abu Ghraib have shown US soldiers abusing Iraqi inmates, forcing them into sexually humiliating positions.

Hersh writes that Rumsfeld left the detailed planning to Pentagon intelligence chief Steve Cambone, but that the programme was ultimately approved by Rumsfeld and the chairman of the joint chiefs of staff, General Richard Myers.

The Pentagon wanted to use tougher interrogation techniques as the US plan to occupy Iraq was hindered by a growing insurgency, Hersh wrote.

"So here are fundamentally good soldiers—military intelligence guys—being told that no rules apply," a former military intelligence official told Hersh.

Agencies



Rumsfeld's apology^w

51 b w w Too little too late MS

That Donald Rumsfeld can be made to go into contrite contortions over abuses of Iraqis at the Abu Ghraib prison, indicates somebody at the White House realises that release of the photos documenting the abuse is devastating America's "mission" in Iraq, resulting in an urgent need for damage control. There were reports that President Bush upbraided Rumsfeld in private but he has reversed himself and defended Rumsfeld as an afterthought in public. Bush's line that abuses represented the "wrongdoing of a few" and those responsible will be thoroughly punished, has few takers anywhere, and none in Iraq. For one the Red Cross has said that mistreatment of Iraqi prisoners is systematic and in some cases "tantamount to torture". For another the army's own internal report documents that abusive US troops weren't acting on their own, but were instructed by military intelligence to humiliate prisoners. Thirdly, Rumsfeld himself spilled the beans, by saying that photos of abuse going round were nothing compared to other photos that the world hadn't seen so far, which include murder and rape. That anybody committing such heinous acts should feel able to photograph their activities, suggests the level of impunity with which they were operating.

Looking closely at the psychological situation of the American soldier, aberrant behaviour on his (or her) part shouldn't be a surprise. They were misled into thinking they could go home soon after a short war. They are caught in a situation where they cannot distinguish between an average Iraqi and someone trying to blow them up. They encounter a new penal system that happens to be part of Rumsfeld's post-9/11 innovations — prisoners are considered beyond the law. Worst of all, they have been persuaded that Iraqis have something to do with 9/11. No wonder, rather than opening doors to a democratic future, as advertised by White House, they unleashed what looks like a tribal vendetta, reciprocated in kind by the rebels who beheaded Nicholas Berg, an American civilian who walked into their hands.

THE STATESMAN 17 MAY 2004

American tanks trample Najaf cemetery

Reuters
Najaf, May 14

US FORCES intensified their campaign against Iraqi cleric Muqtada al-Sadr on Friday by sending tanks into Najaf's cemetery for the first time to blast guerrilla positions.

Explosions and gunfire rocked the city, with much of the fighting concentrating around the main police station, less than a mile from some of the holiest Shia shrines. The fierce gunbattle began in the morning and continued till afternoon.

At least three US tanks moved deep into the Najaf cemetery, a city within a city covering several square miles. They blasted suspected positions of al-Sadr's guerrillas, who have been using the sprawling graveyard to stage hit-and-run attacks on US positions on the fringes of the holy city. Clouds of white smoke rose as shells burst among the tombs. The guerrillas fought back with rocket-propelled grenades and mortars.

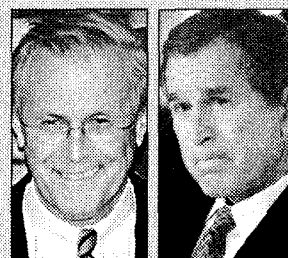
US commanders, however, clarified that they will not encroach on holy sites, including the Imam Ali shrine where al-Sadr has taken refuge. But they will disband the "illegal militia" this week since their patience was wearing thin after more than a month of fighting across southern Iraq.

Clashes were also reported between US forces and al-Sadr's Shia Mehdi militia in the nearby holy city of Karbala. US troops, as close as half a mile from Karbala's most sacred buildings, made loudspeaker announcements calling on the people to stay out of the area. Helicopters dropped leaflets urging al-Sadr's men to surrender.

Meanwhile, Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, who had paid a hurricane visit to Iraq on Thursday as Washington tried to contain the prisoner abuse scandal, said the indignity would not wreck America's mission.

Rumsfeld had made a surprise visit to Baghdad's Abu Ghraib prison where US troops abused and sexually humiliated Iraqi detainees. The affair has shredded US credibility among Iraqis. Some even question whether the American rule is better than that of Saddam Hussein, who had thousands tortured at Abu Ghraib.

The Defence Secretary has been fending off calls for his resignation over the crisis,



We don't read no newspapers

WHILE US President George Bush said he shuns news coverage because he worries it might cloud his "clear outlook" with what he perceives as a Left-leaning bias, Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld on Friday revealed that he has stopped reading newspapers.

In a book excerpt published by *The Washington Times* on Friday, Bush is quoted as saying, "It can be a frustrating experience to pay attention to somebody's false opinion or somebody's characterisation, which isn't true. I don't watch the nightly newscasts on TV, nor do I watch the endless hours of people giving their opinion about things." Bush, who is known to browse through the sports section, said he scans the front pages of some dailies.

Meanwhile, addressing US troops after a visit to the Abu Ghraib prison, he said revelations that US guards had abused Iraqi inmates left him "stunned", but he congratulated the military for their overall efforts in Iraq.

AP, Baghdad

which is threatening President Bush's bid for a second term in November elections.

The US administration is trying to confine the damage to the seven military police reservists charged over the abuse. However, the Red Cross says it warned the Pentagon months ago about systematic abuse in Iraq. A new Red Cross report has also criticised the US treatment of detainees at Guantanamo Bay.

Beheaded American civilian Nick Berg has added to the pressure on Bush. An Islamist website recently said the al-Qaida executed Berg to avenge the abuse on prisoners.



An American tank and a helicopter close in on the cemetery in the holy city of Najaf on Friday.

After bullets, blames fly over mosque

KEEP OFF KARBALA: IRAN

Reuters
Najaf, May 14

AIDES TO militant Iraqi cleric Muqtada al-Sadr blamed US tank fire on Friday for three holes that appeared in the vast gilded dome of the Shias' holiest shrine, the Imam Ali Mosque in Najaf.

Qais al-Khazali, Sadr's chief spokesman, showed the damage to journalists after six hours of heavy fighting in which US armour advanced for the first time onto sacred ground in its confrontation with Sadr's Mehdi army militia.

The holes, high above the ground, were on the side of the dome facing Najaf's vast cemetery, where American tanks stormed in to attack guerrilla positions hidden among the tombs. But it was not possible to determine when or how the damage was caused.

The US commander in the region, Maj-Gen Martin Dempsey, repeated that his forces were trying to avoid damaging holy places. Such action would risk inflaming religious passions among the 60 per cent of Shias in Iraq.

The damaged shrine is dedicated to Imam Ali, the 7th century Muslim leader whose descendants founded the Shia branch of Islam. There was also fighting close to other important Shia shrines in the holy city of Karbala, 30 miles away.

About 250 al-Sadr fighters paraded before the Imam Ali Mosque during a lull in Friday's battle chanting 'Long live, Muqtada!' Khazali renewed

promises of retribution against the American forces that he said had crossed a "red line" onto sacred ground.

"There are no red lines left now that the Imam Ali shrine, our holy of holies, has been violated," he said. Sadr's militia, who rose up against the US-led occupation across Shia-dominated southern Iraq, have been under increasing pressure from the US military onslaught and from irritation among rival Shia leaders anxious to end the fighting.

Reports of the damage to the shrine, which includes the tomb of the son-in-law of the prophet Muhammad, Imam Ali, were widely reported across West Asia by Arabic language television stations. In Tehran, Iranian and Shia Muslim leaders warned the US on Friday that the holy cities of Najaf and Karbala were "red lines" not to be crossed.

Sadr warned a rival Shia faction on Friday not to side with the US-led coalition in Iraq against him and his Mehdi Army militia. "I wonder what has happened to the Badr Brigade," Sadr told worshippers at the main weekly Muslim prayers in the Shia shrine town of Kufa, referring to the militia of the Iran-backed religious party, the Supreme Council of the Islamic Revolution in Iraq.

"They were the most supportive of my late father and his fight against Saddam. They must watch out so that they are not sucked into America's plot to incite fighting among Shias," Sadr warned.

Over 300 Abu Ghraib prisoners released by US

Associated Press
Abu Ghraib, May 14

MORE THAN 300 Iraqi detainees, some weeping and waving to friends, were released from the Abu Ghraib prison on Friday, a day after Defence Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld made a surprise visit and insisted the Pentagon did not try to cover up abuses there.

One bus carrying 40 prisoners left the jail and drove to an American military base in west Baghdad, where tribal leaders awaited some of them. One by one, prisoners got out, kneeled, and prayed beside the bus. Others left on the same bus, bound for other Baghdad neighbourhoods.

Hundreds of relatives of those detained had stood outside the prison since early morning, waiting for their release. US Marines blocked off both lanes of a highway as the first bus left the prison compound. At least five other buses left the prison. After spending over nine months in the prison, Hussein Sami did not complain of physical abuse. However, he said he and other prisoners were under psychological pressure, with guards repeatedly shouting and insulting inmates. The prison was also unsafe because Iraqi insurgents sometimes targeted it with mortar rounds.

Sami arrived at his house in the Dora neighbourhood of Baghdad, and family members slaughtered a sheep at the gates in celebration. He claimed he was never told why he was arrested. His father and brother were left behind at Abu Ghraib, Sami said.

Another former prisoner, Mohammed al-Musawi, complained that he was humiliated by guards at least once during his 11-month incarceration.

"They forced me to take all my clothes off and female prison guards were whispering and laughing at me," Musawi said while sitting in a room with tribal leaders. He was arrested in Baghdad's Hurriyah neighbourhood, for allegedly participating in an attack against a US tank. Musawi spoke of other detainees who left interrogation rooms with bruises, apparently from beatings. "After taking some of the detainees into the interrogation rooms, they would come out with bruises and swellings in their bodies," he said.

Both men spoke inside the US military's Camp Thunder in west Baghdad after a short bus journey from Abu Ghraib. The coalition periodically releases prisoners from the notorious Saddam-era jail, where abuses of prisoners by American soldiers have erupted into a major scandal and damaged the credibility of the US-led coalition governing Iraq.

Images of abuse were taken by American military guards at the prison near Baghdad. Courts-martial have been ordered for three military police guards. Nahidah Abdulkarim, a housewife who said her three sons were de-



GOOD LORD! Iraqi detainees pray after their release on Friday.

tained by US forces in January, stood in a dusty field and peered through the barbed wire fence at the prison. "I am so eager to see them again so that I can kill all the bad and ugly thoughts that my sons had been abused inside the prison," she said. "Every time I see the pictures of the abused prisoners, I die a hundred times."

Police Lt. Col. Omar Aljuburi said he came to check on the possible release of his two cousins, who were arrested in the northern town of Kirkuk for allegedly participating in the insurgency against US troops. Aljuburi said the allegations were false.

During his visit on Thursday, Rumsfeld encouraged prison commander Maj. Gen. Geoffrey Miller to thin out the prisoner population as quickly as possible. Miller said 300 to 400 detainees per week are either released outright or transferred to the Iraqi justice system.

The more than 3,000 Iraqis at Abu Ghraib are "security detainees", or people suspected of roles in insurgent attacks on coalition forces, said the commander, Maj. Gen. Geoffrey Miller.

More jail horror tales tumble out

Reuters
Los Angeles, May 14

ABU GHRAIB guards stripped Iraqi prisoners naked, mocked, struck and kicked them and then "in the crudest of humiliations, forced them to hit each other", the *Los Angeles Times* reported on its web site on Thursday. Meanwhile, German television reported that US troops tortured to death an Iraqi prisoner in their custody in January this year and captured the abuse on film.

Spiegel TV said in a statement that it had witness accounts and documents to prove that 47-year-old Asad Abdul Kareem Abdul Jaleel had been killed at the US military base Al Asad west of the town Khan Al Baghdadi. The investigative news programme said he had been picked up on the open road and taken to the base on suspicion of belonging to an insurgent group.

The channel also said US forces had tried to cover up the death of the prisoner by declaring in a report that he had "died in his sleep".

In its report, *Los Angeles Times* said Spc. Jeremy Sivits, the first soldier to face a court-martial in the abuse scandal, has told investigators "a harrowing tale" of how guards led by Spc. Charles Graner abused the detainees during nightly rounds. The *Times* said that according to documents it had obtained, Sivits claimed Graner was always "joking, laughing ... acting like he was enjoying it".

Sivits, one of seven military police officers facing charges in the case, will plead guilty at a court-mar-

Prison sex show

SHOCKING VIDEO footage, seized by the US military investigators looking into the Abu Ghraib prison scandal, show Lynndie England, a female US soldier, having sex with fellow guards in front of the inmates. According to *The Sun*, the film shows England naked and eagerly engaging in romps with other US soldiers while stripped inmates were forced to watch. An earlier photograph showed England pulling an inmate with a leash.

ANI, London

tial proceeding next week, the *Washington Post* reported on Friday. Sivits, 24, admitted in a sworn statement that he photographed the abuse but never reported it, according to the newspaper.

His offer to plead guilty was accepted by the staff judge advocate overseeing his court-martial, according to a memo reviewed by *The Washington Post* and lawyers representing others charged in the case, the newspaper said. But the paper said it could not be determined to which charge he would plead guilty.

The *Times* also reported that Sivits' statement implicates five of the other six soldiers accused of abusing detainees at the prison outside Baghdad.

According to *Times*, Sivits said all of the abuse was done without the knowledge of their superiors in the Army chain of command.

Mirror says sorry, editor quits

THE *DAILY Mirror* on Friday apologised for publishing fake photographs of alleged abuse of Iraqi prisoners by British forces. The newspaper also said it would be "inappropriate" for Piers Morgan to continue as editor and he had stepped down.

The move by the newspaper and its owners, Trinity Mirror PLC, came hours after commanders of the Queen's Lancashire Regiment bitterly denounced the pictures, and said they had proof that the photos said to be taken in Iraq had been staged in Britain.

Daily Mirror editor Piers Morgan had staunchly defended the photos, which had caused an uproar when they were published on May 1. However, the government said it had concluded that the pictures published in the newspaper were fakes.

AP, London

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Rumsfeld for bar on prison photographs

Associated Press

BAGHDAD, May 13. — US defense secretary Donald H Rumsfeld, making a surprise visit to Iraq aimed at containing the prisoner abuse scandal, said that US administration lawyers are advising the Defense Department not to publicly release any more photographs of Iraqi prisoners being abused by US soldiers.

“As far as I’m concerned, I’d be happy to release them all to the public and to get it behind us,” Rumsfeld said. “But at the present time I don’t know anyone in the legal shop in any element of the government that is recommending that.”

Government lawyers argue that releasing such materials would violate a Geneva Convention stricture against presenting images of prisoners that could be construed as degrading, Rumsfeld said en route to the Iraqi capital.

Defense Department officials arranged meetings with the top US commander in Iraq, Lt. Gen. Ricardo Sanchez, and other senior commanders.

Sanchez said that it appears Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, an associate of Osama bin Laden, was responsible for killing Nicholas Berg, the American beheaded in an execution shown in a video posted on the Internet.

Rumsfeld’s trip followed President Bush’s visit Monday to the Defense Department, where he got an update from commanders in Iraq and declared his unwavering support



Donald Rumsfeld (left) and Richard Myers (right) are greeted upon their arrival in Baghdad by LT Gen. Ricardo Sanchez (centre), head of the US-led Coalition Forces in Iraq. — AFP

for Rumsfeld, who has taken a lot of criticism from members of Congress for his handling of the scandal.

Some Democrats have called for his resignation, but Rumsfeld gave no indication that he was considering quitting.

The 71-year-old defense chief did appear weary, however. He has weathered three lengthy rounds of questioning from congressional committees over the past several

days. After taking questions aboard his plane for nearly an hour he called a sudden halt, saying his voice was giving out.

He fiercely defended the Defense Department’s response to the revelations of US guards at the Abu Gharib prison. “The garbage that you keep reading – about cover-up and the Pentagon doing something to keep some information from people – is unfair, inaccurate and wrong,” he said.

THE STATESMAN 15 MAY 2004

ইরাকি বন্দি নির্যাতনের ছবি দেখানো হবে মার্কিন কংগ্রেসে

ওয়াশিংটন, ১২ মে—ইরাকে বন্দিদের উপর মার্কিন সেনাবাহিনীর অত্যাচারের আরও একগুচ্ছ ছবি ও ভিডিও আজ মার্কিন কংগ্রেসের সদস্যদের দেখার জন্য দেওয়া হচ্ছে। পেট্রাগন আগেই সতর্ক করে বলেছে, ওই ছবিগুলি আগের ছবির তুলনায় আরও বীভৎস। সেনেট ও হাউস অব রিপ্রেজেন্টেটিভস-এর সেনাবাহিনী সংক্রান্ত কমিটির সদস্যরা ওই সব ছবি ও ভিডিও পরীক্ষা করার পরে আবার তা পেট্রাগনের কাছে ফেরত পাঠানো হবে। কিন্তু ওই ছবিগুলি প্রকাশ করা নিয়ে মার্কিন কংগ্রেসের সদস্যরা একমত নন। বেশিরভাগ সদস্যই ছবিগুলি প্রকাশের দাবি তুললেও কোনও কোনও রিপাবলিকান সদস্য বলছেন, এই সব ছবি আমেরিকার স্বার্থ বিপন্ন করবে, তাই প্রকাশ করা ঠিক হবে না। এদিকে ভ্যাটিকানের বিদেশমন্ত্রী বলেছেন, ৯/১১ আঘাতের চাইতেও ইরাকি বন্দিদের উপর মার্কিন সেনাবাহিনীর অত্যাচারের ঘটনা আমেরিকার উপর বড় আঘাত হেনেছে। দুর্ভাগ্য এটাই, এই আঘাতটা কোনও সন্ত্রাসবাদী দল করেনি, মার্কিনীরা নিজেরাই তাদের দেশের বিরুদ্ধে এই কাজ করেছে। তাঁর মতে, ওই কেলেঙ্কারি গোটা আরবদুনিয়ার কাছে পশ্চিমী সভ্যতাকে ঘৃণার বিষয় করে তুলবে। তিনি জানিয়েছেন, মার্কিন প্রেসিডেন্ট বুশকে পোপ নিজেই এ ব্যাপারে তাঁর মনোভাব জানাবেন।

ইরাকি বন্দি নিগ্রহের দ্বিতীয় দফার ওই ছবিগুলি প্রকাশের প্রক্ষে মার্কিন কংগ্রেস এখনই কোনও সিদ্ধান্তে না পৌঁছলেও মার্কিন পত্রপত্রিকা ও টিভিতে এই বিষয়ে আরও ছবি ও তথ্য বেরিয়ে চলেছে। একটি মার্কিন টিভি জানিয়ে দিয়েছে, এবার তারা আর একদফা ভিডিওটেপ দেখাবে। তাতে একজন মার্কিন নারী সেনাকে দেখানো হয়েছে, যে বিনা স্বিধায় এমন সব কথা

তাকে স্পষ্ট যে বন্দি ইরাকিদের নৃত্য কোনওটাই তাকে বিচলিত

করেনি। বরং ইরাকি বন্দিদের জন্য তার তাচ্ছিল্য ও ঘৃণা ফুটে বেরোচ্ছে। ইরাকের ক্যাম্প বৃক্সা জেলখানায় প্রহরারত ওই নারী সেনার মন্তব্য, “এ জায়গাটা আমি ঘেমা করি। আমি বাড়ি ফিরতে চাই, আবার অসামরিক নাগরিক হতে চাই। আজকেই আমরা দু’জন বন্দিকে গুলি করেছি। একজনের বুকে গুলি লেগেছে। অন্যজনের হাতে। জানি না, যার বুকে গুলি লেগেছে সে বেঁচে আছে কি না।” কেন গুলি করা হয়েছে, সেটাও জানা গিয়েছে। “যার বুকে গুলি লেগেছে, সে একটা লাঠি নিয়ে আমাদের কয়েকজনকে ভাড়া করেছিল। আমাদের ওই দলটা ওদের খাবার সরবরাহ করতে গিয়েছিল।” জেলখানা সম্পর্কে ওই মার্কিন সেনাটি আরও তথ্য দিয়েছে, “এখানে স্যান্ড পাইপার সাপ আছে। একবার কামড়ালে ছয় ঘণ্টার মধ্যে মৃত্যু অনিবার্য। দু’জন বন্দি এরই মধ্যে সাপের কামড়ে মারা গিয়েছে, কিন্তু তাতে কী এসে যায়!”

বন্দি ইরাকিকে নগ্ন অবস্থায় গলায় কুকুরের চেইন বেঁধে হাসিমুখে দাঁড়িয়ে যে মার্কিন নারীসেনার ছবি এখন সারা বিশ্বে বহুল পরিচিত, সেই লিভি ইংল্যান্ড এখন দাবি করছেন, তাঁর উর্ধ্বতন অফিসারদের হুকুম তামিল করতেই তিনি ওভাবে পোজ দিয়েছিলেন। এ ভাবে নগ্ন বন্দিদের পাশে দাঁড়িয়ে ছবি তোলায় সময় তাঁর মানসিক অবস্থা কেমন ছিল তা জানতে চাইলে লিভির উত্তর, “আমার বেশ অদ্ভুত লেগেছিল।” তিনি জানান, উর্ধ্বতন অফিসাররা তাঁকে বলেছিলেন যে ইরাকি বন্দিদের নিগ্রহ ও অপমান করে ভাল ফল পাওয়া যাবে। এক প্রবন্ধের উত্তরে তিনি জানান, ছবিতে যা দেখা যাচ্ছে, তার চাইতেও খারাপ অবস্থায় ইরাকি বন্দিদের পড়তে হয়।

এদিকে ইরাকে আমেরিকার সহযোগী হিসাবে যুদ্ধরত ইতালি সেনাদের কমান্ডার আজ স্বীকার করেছেন যে ইরাকি

বন্দিদের উপর অত্যাচারের ঘটনা নতুন কিছু নয়। ইতালির সেনা অফিসারের বক্তব্য, মার্কিন পরিচালনাধীন বন্দিশালায় কী হচ্ছিল, তা তাঁদের জানা ছিল না ঠিকই, কিন্তু মার্কিন-মিত্র ইরাকিদের অধীনে যে সব বন্দিশালা রয়েছে, সেখানে বন্দিদের উপর নিয়মিত অত্যাচার হয়। দক্ষিণ ইরাকের নাসিরিয়ায় ইতালি সেনারা ইরাকি পুলিশদের জেলে বন্দিদের উপর অত্যাচার করতে দেখেছে। প্রতিবাদ জানিয়েও লাভ হয়নি বলে ওই অফিসারটি জানিয়েছেন। তিনি আরও জানিয়েছেন, সন্ত্রাসবাদী সন্দেহে কাউকে ধরা হলে তাকে ব্রিটিশ সেনার হাতে তুলে দেওয়া হত। তারপরে কী হত, কখনও খোঁজ নেওয়া হয়নি।

এ দিকে, রেডক্রস ও অ্যামনেস্টি ইন্টারন্যাশনালের তরফে ব্রিটিশ সরকারকে বন্দিদের উপর অত্যাচারের অভিযোগ জানিয়ে রিপোর্ট দেওয়া হয়েছিল বলে জানানোর পরে ব্রিটিশ পার্লামেন্ট এখন উত্তপ্ত। প্রধানমন্ত্রী টনি ব্ল্যারকে এখন পার্লামেন্টে কটিন জেরার সামনে পড়তে হচ্ছে।—রয়টার্স

ব্রাসিলিয়া, ১২ মে: প্রেসিডেন্টের পানদোষের কথা লেখায় নিউ ইয়র্ক টাইমস-এর এক সাংবাদিককে দেশ থেকে বহিস্কার করবে ব্রাজিল। সাংবাদিক ল্যারি রোটার লিখেছেন, প্রেসিডেন্টের পানদোষ গোটা ব্রাজিলে সমস্যা তৈরি করেছে। এই দোষের জন্য তিনি শাসনক্ষমতা হারাতে বসেছেন। ব্রাজিলের প্রেসিডেন্ট লুইজ ইনাসিও লুলা ডা সিলভা ওই সাংবাদিককে বলেন, এই মন্তব্যের জন্য তাঁর ভিসা কেড়ে নেওয়া হবে। পরে সাংবাদিকদের লুলা বলেন, “এমন নির্বোধ মন্তব্যের জন্যে আমি কী বলব। যে লেখক আমার বিষয়ে জানেন না এবং যাঁর বিষয়ে আমিও কিছু জানি না, তিনিই এর ফলাফলটা ভাল বুঝবেন। এই ধরনের মন্তব্যের প্রতিক্রিয়া হয় না, কেবল প্রত্যুত্তর হয়।” — রয়টার্স

American beheaded, USA vows to catch killers

Associated Press

Coalition disclaims detention

LITTLE ROCK (Arkansas), May 12. — The Bush administration has vowed to hunt down and bring to justice the people who beheaded American hostage Nick Berg in Iraq and filmed it.

"Our thoughts and prayers are with his (Berg's) family," White House press secretary Mr Scott McClellan said yesterday. "It shows the true nature of the enemies of freedom. They have no regard for the lives of innocent men, women and children. We will pursue those who are responsible and bring them to justice."

The video, posted yesterday on a website known to have links with the Al-Qaida, showed the 26-year-old contractor being slain by an Al-Qaida-affiliated group. The video said the killing was to avenge the abuse of Iraqi prisoners by American soldiers.

The tape also included threats against Mr George W Bush and General Pervez Musharraf.

In Pennsylvania, Berg's father lashed out at the US military and Bush administration yesterday, saying that his son might still be alive had he not been detained by US officials in Iraq.

BAGHDAD, May 12. — The young American who was decapitated on a videotape posted by an Al-Qaida-linked website was never under US custody despite claims from his family, coalition spokesman Mr Dan Senor said today.

Mr Senor told reporters that Nick Berg (26), from West Chester, Pennsylvania, was detained by Iraqi police in Mosul. The Iraqis informed the Americans and the FBI met with Berg three times to determine what he was doing in Iraq.

Mr Senor said that to his knowledge, "he (Berg) was at no time under the jurisdiction or detention of coalition forces."

The spokesman said Berg was arrested by the Iraqi police in Mosul on 24 March because the police "suspected that he was engaged in suspicious activities". He refused to elaborate.

Asked for details about Berg's last weeks in Iraq, Mr Senor replied: "We are obviously trying to piece all this together, and there's a thorough investigation." But he said he was reluctant at this time to release details. "The US government is committed to a very thorough and robust investigation to get to the bottom of this... As I said, everybody is shocked by the horrific images of this terrorist act." — AP

Berg, a small telecommunications business owner, spoke to his parents on 24 March and told them he would return home on 30 March. But he was detained by Iraqi police at a checkpoint in Mosul on 24 March. He was turned over to US officials and detained for 13 days. His father, Mr Michael Berg, said his son was not allowed to make phone calls or contact a lawyer.

FBI agents visited Berg's parents in West Chester on 31 March and told the family they were trying to confirm

their son's identity. On 5 April, the Bergs filed suit in federal court in Philadelphia, contending that their son was being held illegally by the military. The next day, Berg was released. He told his parents he hadn't been mistreated.

Rumsfeld defends techniques: US Defence Secretary Mr Donald H Rumsfeld defended military interrogation techniques in Iraq today, rejecting complaints that they violate international rules and may endanger Americans taken prisoner.



This sequence of video grabs from footage aired by the Dubai-based Al-Arabiya news network shows five hooded gunmen belonging to an Iraqi group linked to the Al-Qaida standing behind Nick Berg before they beheaded him. The victim was dressed in an orange jumpsuit, similar to that worn by detainees at the US naval base in Guantanamo Bay. Al-Arabiya cut the video before his armed captors are apparently seen cutting off his head with a large knife. — AFP

US soldier adds shock to abuse

Press Trust of India

WASHINGTON, May 12. — American TV channel CBS, which provided the world the first pictures of brutality in Abu Gharib prison, has another shocker: A U.S. soldier at a prison camp in Iraq is seen on a videotape saying she does not care that two prisoners have died.

On the home video, to be aired today by CBS 60 Minutes II, a young woman soldier who is not being identified by the network says: "We've already had two prisoners die — but who cares? That's two less for me to worry about."

She said: "We actually shot two prisoners today. One got shot in the chest for swinging a pole against our people on the feed team. One got shot in the arm. We don't know if the one we shot in the chest is dead yet," says the soldier.

I was told to smile: England

The Army private facing a court-martial for being photographed with naked Iraqi prisoners says she was following orders to create psychological pressure on them, AP adds from Fayetteville, (North Carolina).

Pfc. Lynndie England told KCNC-TV in Denver that her superiors gave her specific instructions on how to pose for the photos. Asked who gave the orders, she would say only, "Persons in my chain of command."

Another prison shocker from a US soldier

Agencies
Washington, May 12

AMERICAN TV channel CBS, which provided the world the first pictures of brutality in Abu Ghraib prison, has another shocker: A US soldier at an Iraqi prison camp is seen on a videotape saying she does not give damn if two prisoners have died.

On the home video, aired today by CBS 60 Minutes II, an unidentified woman soldier says: "We've already had two prisoners die — but who cares? That's two less for me to worry about."

"We actually shot two prisoners today. One got shot in the chest for swinging a pole against our people on the feed team. One got shot in the arm. We don't know if the one we shot in the chest is dead yet," says the soldier, who was at Abu Ghraib prison in Baghdad and Camp Bucca in south Iraq. "I actually got in trouble the other day because I was throwing rocks at them," she says. "I hate it here. I want to come home. I want to be a civilian again."

Two other soldiers accused of abusing prisoners at Camp Bucca say the problems began with the chain of command. They say they had complained to the office of Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld and written letters to the White House and two Senators but got no response.

England speaks

The US army private facing a court-martial for dehumanising Iraqi prisoners says she was following orders to create psychological

pressure on them. Private Lynndie England told KCNC-TV in Denver that her superiors had instructed her on how to pose for the photographs. Who had given her the orders? She would only say: "Persons in my chain of command."

In the abuse photographs, England (21) is seen smiling, cigarette in between lips, leaning forward and pointing at the genitals of a naked, hooded Iraqi. Another photo taken at Baghdad's Abu Ghraib prison shows her holding a leash that encircles the neck of a naked Iraqi man lying on his side.

"I was instructed by persons in higher rank to stand there, hold this leash, look at the camera, and they took pictures for PsyOps (psychological operations)," she told the station. "I didn't really mean, want to be in any pictures." The interview was taped yesterday at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, where England, a military reservist from West Virginia, met one of Denver lawyers who have volunteered to take her case.

More abuse photos

Senators are getting a look at more photos of American soldiers brutalising Iraqi prisoners but won't have the authority to release the pictures that the Pentagon warns could deepen international fury over the abuses.

The photographs were being made available for three hours on Wednesday afternoon in a high-security, classified office in the Capitol.

Bush imposes curbs on Syria

THE US has imposed economic sanctions on Syria and ordered a freeze on its certain assets in America accusing the Arab country of supporting terror, developing weapons of mass destruction and failing to stop militants entering Iraq.

The sanctions ban export to Syria of American products other than food and medicine, prohibit Syrian aircraft from entering US and freeze all assets that belong to certain Syrian individuals and government entities, a White House statement said.

President George W. Bush imposed the sanctions on Tuesday, accusing Syria of "supporting terrorist groups".

PTI, Washington



This video grab shows five hooded gunmen standing behind Nicholas Berg, a private American businessman from Pennsylvania, before he was reportedly beheaded.

Berg was asked to leave Iraq, but he refused: US

Associated Press
Baghdad, May 12

NICK BERG, the American civilian who was beheaded in a video posted on an al-Qaida-linked website, had been warned to leave Iraq but refused, US officials said on Wednesday.

Berg's father has lashed out at the US military and the Bush administration, saying his son might have

been able to leave the country before the violence worsened had he not been detained by US officials in Iraq.

A US official said Berg was in Iraq "of his own accord" and had been advised to leave Iraq but refused. The masked men who butchered Berg claimed they were angered by coalition abuses of Iraqi prisoners.

The White House, however,

rejected any link between Abu Ghraib and Berg's "brutal, barbaric" beheading. Spokesman Scott McClellan said, "Terrorists are going to seek any excuse to try to justify murder, destruction and chaos".

The American captive identified himself as Nicholas Berg, 26, of West Chester, a suburb of Philadelphia. His body was found near a highway overpass in Baghdad

on Saturday, the same day he was beheaded, a US official said.

After pushing Berg to the floor, the men severed his head and held it up for the camera on the video posted on Tuesday. It bore the title 'Abu Musab al-Zarqawi shown slaughtering an American', referring to an associate of Osama bin Laden believed behind a wave of suicide bombings in Iraq.

Terror update

■ Saddam Hussein will not be handed over to the Iraqi authorities for trial before June 30, date of planned transfer of sovereignty to the interim Iraqi government, and no trial will start before 2005, according to Iraq's war crimes chief, Salem Chalabi. He, however, said that Saddam would definitely be handed over to the Iraqis before July 1

■ Between nine and 25 militiamen were killed in clashes with US forces overnight in the holy Iraqi city of Karbala. A US military official in Baghdad said upto 25 militiamen of cleric Moqtada Sadr's Mehdi Army died in the fighting, while seven US soldiers were wounded, four of them slightly

■ Shia cleric Moqtada al-Sadr vows to press on with fight, but says would disband militia if Shia leaders asked

■ US military announces two further courts martial for abuse of Iraqi inmates at Abu Ghraib prison

■ Vatican says Iraq abuse bigger blow for US than September 11

■ Philippines is to review security of its 3,000 nationals working in Iraq after one killed in mortar attack

General says she resisted bid to use force in prison

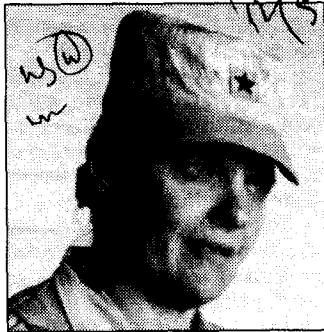
R. JEFFREY SMITH
AND JOSH WHITE

Washington, May 12: The American general who was in charge of running prisons in Iraq told army investigators earlier this year that she had resisted decisions by superior officers to hand over control of the prisons to military intelligence officials and to authorise the use of lethal force as a first step in keeping order; command decisions that have come in for heavy criticism in the Iraqi prison abuse scandal.

Brigadier General Janis Karpinski, head of the 800th Military Police Brigade, spoke of her resistance to the decisions in a detailed account of her tenure furnished to army investigators. It places two of the highest-ranking army officers now in Iraq, Major General Geoffrey Miller and Lieutenant General Ricardo Sanchez, at the heart of decision-making on both matters.

Karpinski, who has been formally admonished by the army for her actions in Iraq, said both men overruled her concerns about the military intelligence takeover and the use of deadly force.

Each man contests portions of her account, which appears in the classified annex to the army's internal probe into the abuse and torture of detainees at



Brigadier General
Janis Karpinski

Abu Ghraib prison. Her account was described by a US government official to *The Washington Post* and confirmed by her attorney.

Karpinski's account surfaced on the same day another officer accused by the army of wrongdoing in the scandal, Lieutenant Colonel Jerry L. Phillabaum, released an official rebuttal stating that Abu Ghraib perpetually lacked key resources and personnel, and that the leadership above him was almost entirely unresponsive to his requests for help.

Phillabaum wrote that military police assigned to the prison were not properly trained in the Geneva Conventions or detention operations, but that training alone would not have prevented the abuses, which he said came

at the hands of a few soldiers.

He also said that in one instance, a female guard under his command took "vigilante justice," using physical force against a male prisoner who she believed had assaulted Jessica Lynch, an army private captured by Iraqi soldiers and later rescued by American troops during the war.

Karpinski said the decision about transferring control of the prison to military intelligence officials was broached at a September 2003 meeting with Miller, who was then in charge of the US detention centre at Guantanamo Bay, known colloquially as "Gitmo".

Karpinski, the first female general officer to lead US soldiers in combat, was a beleaguered field commander trying to cope with what she and others have described as constantly shifting assignments, poor living conditions and near-daily mortar attacks on Abu Ghraib prison.

Two US sergeants will face court martial on a string of charges relating to the assault and sexual humiliation of detainees at the Abu Ghraib prison, officials said today. No dates were fixed for the trials of Staff Sergeant Ivan "Chip" Frederick and Sergeant Javal Davis.

LOS ANGELES TIMES-
WASHINGTON POST NEWS SERVICE

THE TELEGRAPH 12 MAY 2004

Senate apologises to Iraqi victims

Washington: The US senate on Tuesday unanimously approved a resolution condemning the abuse of Iraqi prisoners by US soldiers in Iraq and apologising to victims of the mistreatment and their families.

The resolution said soldiers found guilty of abuse, at Abu Ghraib prison outside Baghdad, would be brought to justice for their actions. It "condemns in the strongest possible terms the despicable acts at Abu Ghraib prison and joins with the President in expressing apology for the humiliation suffered by the prisoners in Iraq and their families."

10-10-05
The resolution also urged the Bush administration to take "appropriate measures" to ensure such acts do not occur again while calling for a full investigation into the abuses.

US Major General Antonio Taguba, who authored a report detailing the abuse of Iraqi prisoners inside Abu Ghraib prison, was to appear before Congress on Tuesday. Taguba is due to appear before the senate's committee on armed services, which is investigating the abuse claims, alongside

USA @ ...
other high-ranking Pentagon officers and civilians.

A full copy of Taguba's report, which also used photos and videos seized from soldiers deployed at the prison, will be delivered to the committee. Photographs seized by Taguba's team that have found their way into the US media have caused shock and outrage.

On Monday Bush was shown over a dozen selected photographs of the abuse at an hour-long briefing at the Pentagon attended by top cabinet officials

Iran
besides defence secretary Donald Rumsfeld.

The pictures seen by Bush were selected from hundreds of photographs which have not yet been seen by the public. In addition, the Pentagon has in its possession several dozen short videos of varying qualities that show abuses being committed, Pentagon chief spokesman Larry Dirita said. There were "many, many hundreds" of images on in three CDs, he said but noted that each disc contained many duplicate images so the total number of images was difficult to determine. Agencies



Gen A Taguba

THE TIMES OF INDIA
12 MAY 2005

Abuse probe blames top brass 'failure'

Reuters
Washington, May 11

THE ABUSE of Iraqi prisoners reflects a failure of the leadership in the US armed forces, the general who investigated the mistreatment said on Tuesday. He, however, said he found no evidence that American soldiers had acted on the direct orders of higher-ups.

Asked to say in "your own soldier's language" what had caused the abuse at the Abu Ghraib prison, US Army Maj. Gen. Antonio Taguba recited a litany of ills.

"Failure in leadership, sir, right from the brigade commander down, lack of discipline, no training whatsoever and no supervision. Supervisory omission was rampant," Taguba, the author of a Pentagon report on the abuse, told the latest Senate hearing on the scandal.

But Taguba told the Senate Armed Services Committee he did "not find any evidence of a policy or a direct order given to these soldiers to conduct what they did. I believe that they did it on their own volition." The hearing followed an all-day grilling of Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld on Friday, at which he apologised for the abuse but said he would not step down simply to appease his political enemies.

At the Pentagon's insistence, Under Secretary of Defence Stephen Cambone, who is in charge of intelligence, and other Pentagon officials also appeared with Taguba to testify on the scandal.

Coalition military intelligence officers estimated that about 70 to 90 per cent of the thousands of prisoners detained in Iraq had been "arrested by mistake," according to a report by Red Cross given to the Bush administration last year and leaked this week.

The report said the mistreatment of prisoners, apparently tolerated by US and other coalition forces in Iraq, involved widespread abuse that was "in some cases tantamount to torture."

Democrats on the committee were irked that the Pentagon balked at plans for Taguba to testify by himself, calling it an "attempt to dilute Taguba's testimony," a Democratic aide said. "Taguba is known as a straight-talker."

Taguba's report and photographs shown around the world of naked prisoners stacked in a pyramid or positioned to simulate sex acts at the prison near Baghdad have shocked Americans and set off an international furore that has posed a serious setback to US efforts to stabilise Iraq.

Bush ratings hit new low

President Bush's job approval rating has slipped to a new low and public support for the war in Iraq has declined, according to a poll released on Monday.

The CNN/USA Today/Gallup Poll found Bush's approval rating had dipped to 46 per cent, down from 52 per cent a month earlier. Bush led presumptive Democratic nominee John Kerry 48 per cent to 47 per cent, a reversal of a poll taken last week when Kerry had a one-point edge, in a statistically insignificant shift.

The new poll, with a sampling error of three percentage points, was conducted among 1,003 adults, Friday to Sunday, amid a broadening scandal over abuse of Iraqi prisoners by US troops.



REUTERS
US National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice awaits President George Bush's arrival to speak at the Pentagon on Monday. After his visit, Bush told reporters he continued to stand firmly behind Defence Secretary Rumsfeld.

Videotape shows rebels beheading US civilian

Reuters
Dubai, May 11

AN ISLAMIST website showed a videotape on Tuesday of an al-Qaida-linked group beheading an American and vowing more executions as revenge for the abuse of Iraqi prisoners.

The poor quality tape showed a man sitting on the floor with five masked men behind him. After one of the masked men read out a statement, they pushed the bound

man to the floor, cutting off his head and holding it aloft.

It was not immediately possible to verify the authenticity of the tape carried on Muntada al-Ansar Islamist website. On the tape, the man identified himself as Nick Berg before the execution.

"My name is Nick Berg, my father's name is Michael...I have a brother and sister, David and Sarah," said the man, who was shown bound and seated in a chair in the poor quality tape carried on Muntada al-Ansar Islamist website. It was not immediately possible to verify the authenticity of the

Amnesty reports wanton killing of Iraqi civilians

Reuters
London, May 11

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL accused British soldiers in Iraq on Tuesday of killing civilians who posed no apparent threat, widening an Anglo-American scandal over the behaviour of occupation troops.

The human rights group said in a report that Britain was undermining the rule of law in Iraq by failing to investigate properly the killings of up to 37 civilians over the past year, including an eight-year-old girl.

The report piled more pressure on the British government as Washington and London sought to limit fallout from a prisoner abuse scandal after a leaked report said the International Red Cross alerted them months ago to cases of mistreatment.

The scandal, which has enraged the Arab world, has prompted growing calls that Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld should resign, but President Bush gave Rumsfeld a resounding vote of support on Monday.

The Senate Armed Services Committee was set on Tuesday to question an army officer who reported on the prisoner abuses, Major General Antonio Taguba. His report, completed in March, cited "systematic and illegal abuses of detainees".

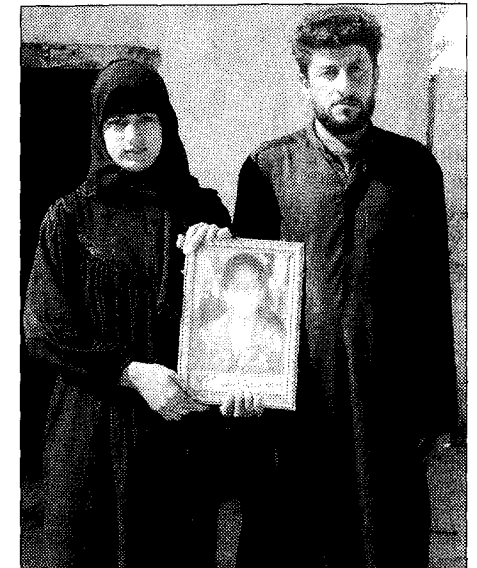
Tuesday's Amnesty report said British troops' actions in Iraq had breached international human rights standards.

"The British Army's response to suspected unlawful killing of civilians has undermined, rather than upheld, the rule of law," it said.

The report added: "It has failed to conduct investigations into all killings of civilians, and the investigations that have been carried out have failed to ensure that justice was done and seen to be done in the eyes of the victims' families."

It highlighted nine cases in southern Iraq, including that of eight-year-old Hanan Saleh Matrud, shot dead on August 21 last year. The Amnesty report quoted a witness as saying a soldier had aimed at her, but the army said she was killed accidentally by a warning shot.

A Defence Ministry spokesman said the government was studying the report and would respond in detail.



REUTERS
An handout photograph released on Tuesday shows the parents of Hanan Saleh Madrud, who was allegedly shot dead by a UK soldier.

Mirror photos fake: Govt

THE UK government claimed for the first time on Monday night that the London-based *Daily Mirror's* Iraq "abuse" photographs were fakes, saying an investigation had revealed doubts about their authenticity. Geoff Hoon, the UK defence secretary, told the House of Commons of "strong indications" that a truck seen in the pictures was not used in Iraq, and said later on the UK's *Channel 4 News* that they were fakes. The *Mirror* reacted angrily to the comments, saying Hoon was attempting to divert attention from the real story of abuse.

Hoon also questioned why the pictures were in black and white. Later on *Channel 4 News* he said it was "important that the *Mirror* now answer why they have perpetrated this hoax". The *Mirror* issued a strong rebuttal.

GNS, London

tape in which masked men said the execution was revenge for the abuse of Iraqi prisoners.

Russian hostage killed

A Russian national was killed and two others taken hostage in an attack in Baghdad, RIA Novosti quoted the Russian embassy in Baghdad as saying on Tuesday.

AFP reports from Moscow that the three worked for the Interenergoser vice company, which was working to restore energy supplies to the war-torn country.

A group of armed men attacked the Russians as they were returning from work by car in Baghdad on Monday afternoon, the report said. They had been working to restore an electric power station located some 50 kms south of Baghdad.

Russian officials told RIA Novosti that no one has yet claimed responsibility for the attack and that no ransom or other demands had been made for the hostages' release.

Interenergoser vice sent most of its staff back home after that incident, which involved workers for a different Russian energy company.

Pentagon approved abuse in Guantanamo: report

Press Trust of India

WASHINGTON, May 9. — Amidst the raging controversy over the abuse of Iraqi prisoners, a new report has said the US government last year approved interrogation techniques for use at its detention facility in Guantanamo Bay that permitted disrobing detainees, reversing sleep patterns and exposing prisoners to heat, cold and "sensory assault".

Though Guantanamo prisoners were treated better than those in Abu Gharib in Iraq, they too were subjected to severe stress to make them talk.

A classified list of about 20

techniques was approved at the highest levels of the Pentagon and the Justice Department in April 2003 and represents the first publicly known documentations of an official policy permitting interrogators to use physically and psychologically stressful methods during questioning, the *Washington Post* reported quoting unnamed defence officials.

The use of any of these techniques required the approval of senior Pentagon officials — and in some cases, of the Defence Secretary.

Interrogators must justify that the harshest treatment is "militarily necessary", according to the document,



The Guantanamo Bay detention centre. The Pentagon officially permitted disrobing detainees, reversing sleep patterns and exposing prisoners to sensory assault during interrogation. — A file photograph

as cited by one official. Once approved, the harsher treatment must be accompanied

by "appropriate medical monitoring".

"We wanted to find a legal

way to jack up the pressure," said one lawyer who helped write the guidelines. "We wanted a little more freedom than in a US prison, but not torture." Defence and intelligence officials said similar guidelines have been approved for use on "high-value detainees" in Iraq — those suspected of terrorism or of having knowledge of insurgency operations. Separate CIA guidelines exist for agency-run detention centers.

Some prisoners could be made to stand for four hours at a time. Questioning a prisoner without clothes was permitted if he is alone in his cell. Ruled out were techniques such as physical con-

tact — even poking a finger in the chest — and the "wash-board technique" of smothering a detainee with towels to threaten suffocation, the newspaper reported.

Placing electrodes on detainees' bodies "wasn't even evaluated — it was such a no-go," said one of the officials involved in drawing up the list.

It could not be learned whether similar guidelines were in effect at the U.S.-run Abu Gharib prison outside Baghdad, which has been the focus of controversy in recent days. But lawmakers have said they want to know whether the misconduct reported at Abu Gharib in Iraq.

Torture by the book

W 1995
The pattern of abuse of Iraqi prisoners follows established CIA interrogation techniques. Vikram Dodd analyses

IN THE UK the debate about photographs depicting abuse of Iraqi prisoners has centred on their authenticity. In the US there are no doubts about the pictures showing what American soldiers did in Baghdad's Abu Ghraib prison. But the photos raise a larger question. Did a gang of reservists from Virginia hit on ways of mistreating Muslim prisoners all by themselves? President Bush says the photos disgust him. However, there is growing evidence that the abuses in Abu Ghraib were not aberrant acts, but a product of US policy.

In e-mails released by his family, Staff Sergeant Ivan Frederick, a guard at Abu Ghraib, says military intelligence used dogs to intimidate prisoners, leading to "positive results and information". When Sgt Frederick questioned some of the abuses, "the answer I got was: this is how military intelligence wants it done". Another guard supports his claim that intelligence people controlled Abu Ghraib, as does the former head of US military prisons in Iraq, Brigadier General Janis Karpinski.

The recently leaked army report into the abuses, by Major General Antonio Taguba, said military intelligence, CIA personnel and private contractors "actively requested that guards set physical and mental conditions for favourable interrogation of witnesses".

It is not just in Iraq that the US is accused of abusing its prisoners. The five Britons released from Guantanamo Bay told of beatings and other ill-treatment. Weeks before last year's alleged abuses at Abu Ghraib, Gen Karpinski said a team of intelligence officers from Guantanamo Bay visited Abu Ghraib to "give them new techniques". While in Iraq in late August and early September 2003, the Guantanamo team — overseen



PHOTO: AFP
A demonstration in Turkey against the torture of Iraqi prisoners at the hands of US soldiers. Sexual humiliation was used by the US to break Muslim detainees in Guantanamo Bay camp as well, reports a British inmate released from that camp.

by Major General Geoffrey Miller — recommended that military police guards act as "enablers" for interrogations, Gen Taguba reported. The US is now bringing in Gen Miller to run prisons in Iraq.

A Briton released from Guantanamo alleged that, as in Abu Ghraib, sexual humiliation was identified as a way of breaking Muslims. In Iraq it was the simulation of oral sex, forced masturbation and naked human pyramids. In Guantanamo, one British detainee said, nude prostitutes paraded before detainees to taunt them.

Abuse charges against the US have now surfaced in Iraq, Guantanamo,

was written for use in Honduras. Entitled 'Human Resource Exploitation Training Manual', it states: "The purpose of all coercive techniques is to induce psychological regression in the subject by bringing a superior outside force to bear on his will to resist. Regression is basically a loss of autonomy."

While the pulling of fingernails may be out, coercion and psychological stress are permitted, according to the CIA manual. How to put such advice into practice is up to intelligence officers. One of the Iraqi images was of the hooded man standing on a box, wires attached to him. He was reportedly told he

would be electrocuted if he moved. According to the manual, threatening him with electrocution may have been better than the real thing: "...The threat to inflict pain can trigger fears more damaging than the immediate sensation of pain." However, "if a subject refuses to comply after a threat has been made, it will also prove ineffective".

The 1983 CIA manual draws heavily from the 1963 "Kubark manual", named after the codeword the CIA gave itself. It explains what the US military may have hoped to gain by sexually humiliating prisoners. "The effective

tiveness of most of the non-coercive techniques depends upon their unsettling effect. The interrogation situation is in itself disturbing to most people encountering it for the first time. The aim is to enhance this effect, to disrupt radically familiar emotional and psychological associations.... When this aim is achieved, resistance is seriously impaired. There is an interval... of suspended animation, a kind of psychological shock or paralysis.... At this moment the source is far likelier to comply."

This appears to be what US intelligence officers at Abu Ghraib have been putting into effect. Specialist Sabrina Harman, one of the accused guards, testified that it was her job to keep prisoners awake, including the man on a box with wires attached to his fingers, toes and genitals.

According to the *New Yorker*, she stated: "Military intelligence] wanted to get them to talk. It is Graner [a guard] and Frederick's job to do things for MI... to get these people to talk." The Kubark manual states that "resistance is sapped principally by psychological rather than physical pressures". It also warns that approval from headquarters is needed for "bodily harm" or "medical, chemical or electrical methods".

The two deaths now being treated as murder probably emanate from sadism, rather than policy. It remains to be seen what kind of disciplinary or legal action the Abu Ghraib interrogators and their superiors will face. As Sgt Frederick wrote in an e-mail: "They always said that shit rolls downhill, and guess who is at the bottom?" And if George W Bush is unsure what US intelligence is capable of, he can always ask his dad. The first President Bush used to be head of the CIA.

The Guardian

Abuse won't affect policy: Bush

WASH WSN
9 9 15
ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON, May 8. — The abuse of Iraqi prisoners by US military guards "are a stain on our country's honour", but will not deter America's mission to bring democracy to Iraq, President George W Bush vowed today.

The US President said the abuse and sexual humiliation of prisoners in Iraq's notorious Abu Ghraib prison "was the wrongdoing of a few" and should not reflect on the thousands of US military personnel "who are serving and sacrificing in Iraq", Mr Bush said in his weekly radio address.

"Our mission in Iraq will continue... We have no intention of leaving the nation at the mercy of thugs and murderers. We're determined to help build a free and stable Iraq, a nation at peace with its neighbors and with the world."

Mr Bush, who earlier in the week apologised for the abuse of the Iraqi prisoners, indicated that punishment arising from the incident will go beyond the seven members of the Army Reserve's 372nd Military Police Company already charged by the military. "We will learn all the facts and determine the full extent of these abuses," he said. "Those involved will be identified. They will answer for their actions."

The President also said all prison operations in Iraq will be reviewed "to make certain that similar disgraceful incidents are never repeated".

On West Asia, Mr Bush said: "I think that things in West Asia for the USA are difficult right now... I think they're difficult because people don't really understand our intentions."

In a separate broadcast, Democrats suggested that was not

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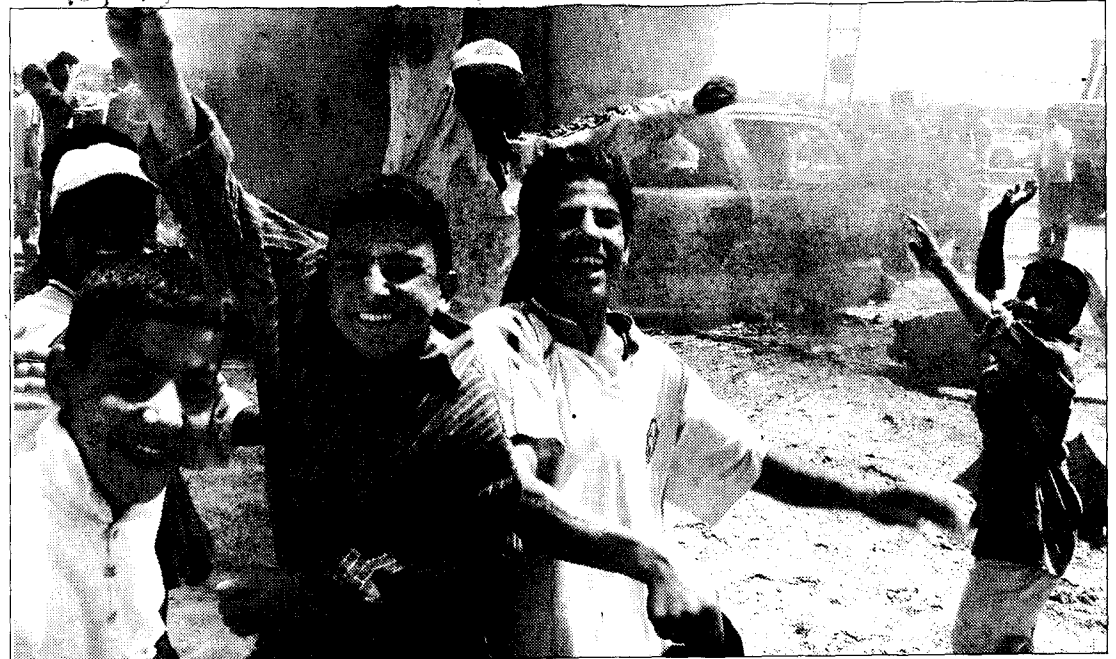
WASHINGTON, May 8. — The Pentagon rejected an army plan last year to send an experienced military lawyer, Congressman Steve Buyer, to help oversee the unit blamed for prisoner abuse at the Abu Gharib complex.

That left the prison complex, which holds up to 7,000 Iraqis, without an onsite lawyer to guide interrogations and treatment of prisoners.

The top lawyer for the 800th Military Police Brigade, the army unit in charge of detainees at Abu Ghraib, later came under fire in an Army report about the abuse for being ineffective and "unwilling to accept responsibility for any of his actions". The rejected lawyer and other experts say having had a lawyer at the prison might have prevented or at least mitigated the beatings, sexual humiliation and other abuse detailed in photographs and the Army probe. — AP

enough. General (ret'd) Wesley Clark, the former Democratic presidential candidate, suggested the prison abuses were yet another example of Mr Bush's poor leadership. "The President made mistake after mistake as commander-in-chief, taking us into a war we didn't have to wage, alone and under false pretenses, and is now managing it poorly," he said in the Democratic response to Bush's radio address.

He called for Bush "to change course... bring in our allies, give them a seat at the table and together create an international organisation to provide economic and political assistance to the Iraqis... We must not bear so much of the burden."



FALLUJAH REVISITED? Iraqi children celebrate in front of a burning sports utility vehicle attacked on the road leading from Baghdad to Abu Gharib on Saturday. — AFP

Rumsfeld goes on the defensive

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

WASHINGTON, May 8. — Admitting that it was "possible" his resignation could help undo the damage caused by the prisoner abuse scandal in Iraq, US Defence Secretary Mr Donald Rumsfeld said he will appoint a panel of senior officials to review the ongoing probes into the issue.

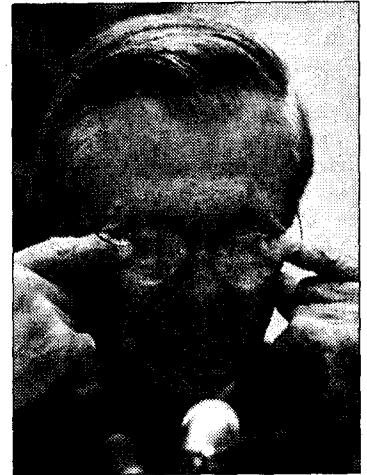
Mr Rumsfeld, grilled by the Senate Armed Services Committee yesterday, was asked whether his resignation would help undo the damage done by the abuse of Iraqi prisoners. "That's possible," he said.

Asked specifically by a Democrat member of the Committee "whether he would not

be serving the country better if he resigned", Mr Rumsfeld said; "I would resign in a minute if I thought I could not be effective."

"I would not resign simply because some people are trying to make a political issue of it." The US Defence Secretary told the Committee he would appoint a panel of former senior officials to conduct an outside review of ongoing investigations into the scandal to determine whether additional probes were necessary.

"I'm confident that these distinguished individuals will provide a full and fair assessment of what has been done thus far and recommend whether further steps may be necessary."



Mr Rumsfeld: No more eyewashes. — PTI

My job was to create hell: Soldier

Reuters

Washington, May 8

HER JOB was to "make it hell" for Iraqi prisoners so they would talk, one of the six US soldiers accused of prisoner abuse was quoted as saying on Friday.

The Washington Post reported that Spec. Sabrina Harman told it in e-mail interviews that detainees were handed over to her military police unit at the Abu Ghraib prison by military intelligence officers, or by civilian contractors who conducted interrogations.

She was assigned to break the detainees down for interrogation, Harman said in e-mails this week from Baghdad, the Post said on its Web site. But she did not discuss specific charges against herself.

"They would bring in one to several prisoners at a time already hooded and cuffed," Harman, a military police reservist, was quoted as saying.

"The job of the MP was to keep them awake, to make it hell so they would talk."

A Pentagon spokeswoman declined to com-

ABU GHRAIB PRISON ABUSE

ment on the Post article, saying the matter was under investigation. The spokeswoman also declined comment on whether military intelligence officers or civilian contractors delivered prisoners to the Abu Ghraib prison. The issue of who was in charge of the prison during the reported abuse was a prominent one in hearings on Capitol Hill on Friday.



"It's going to get still more terrible, I'm afraid."

US DEFENCE SECRETARY DONALD RUMSFELD WARNING OF MORE PICTURES

Won't quit: Rumsfeld
DEFENCE secretary Donald Rumsfeld offered his "deepest apology" to the victims, but said he would not resign just to satisfy his political enemies. Rumsfeld said he wouldn't resign "simply because people try to make a political issue out of it", but he didn't rule out the possibility of stepping down. He said if he could not be effective, "I certainly wouldn't want to serve. And I have to wrestle with that."

Agencies, Washington

ABU GHRAIB ATROCITIES / 'THESE EVENTS OCCURRED ON MY WATCH'

My deepest apologies, says Rumsfeld

By Sridhar Krishnaswami

WASHINGTON, MAY 7. Under fire for the gross abuses of Iraqi prisoners, the United States Defence Secretary, Donald Rumsfeld, offered his "deepest apologies" to the Iraqi prisoners who were mistreated by American soldiers.

Mr. Rumsfeld told members of the Senate Armed Services Committee that he accepted full responsibility for what went on as those happened in his watch.

"These events occurred on my watch. As Secretary of Defence, I am accountable for them. I take full responsibility," Mr. Rumsfeld told members of the Senate panel. The top civilian official of the Pentagon will be appearing later this afternoon at a House panel. Republican and Democratic lawmakers on Capitol Hill have been shocked at the kind of outrages that have been committed on Iraqi prisoners; and some have asked Mr. Rumsfeld to step down.

There have also been calls on the U.S. President, George W. Bush, to fire him.

Many lawmakers have wondered if there was indeed a pattern of abuse, not just at the infamous Abu Ghraib facility but all over Iraq; and when and



The U.S. Secretary of Defence, Donald Rumsfeld (right), and the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Richard Myers, take oath before the Senate Armed Services Committee on Friday on Capitol Hill in Washington. Later they deposed on the Abu Ghraib prison abuse by U.S. soldiers — AFP

what did the Pentagon know about the goings on.

Congress also wants to know why members were not "properly and adequately" informed.

Mr. Rumsfeld's testimony before Congressional committees comes one day after the

President offered his apologies. But fresh disclosures have surfaced that could spell trouble for the Republican administration — the Defence Secretary in particular.

Agency reports say that the International Committee of the Red Cross had warned

American officials of abuse of prisoners in Iraq more than a year ago.

"We were dealing here with a broad pattern, not individual acts. There was a pattern and a system," Pierre Kraehenbuehl, Director of Operations for the ICRC, has been quoted.

অবশেষে বৃশ ক্ষমীপ্রার্থী,

৩৫শ্রীশ্রীশ্রী ৭ মে: বাগদাদের আবু হাইব জেলে ইরাকি বন্দিদের উপর মার্কিন সেনাদের মর্শংস অত্যাচারের ঘটনার জন্য অবশেষে ক্ষমা চাইলেন মার্কিন প্রেসিডেন্ট জর্জ বৃশ। বৃশের অতিথি জর্ডনের রাজা আবদুল্লাহকে সঙ্গে নিয়ে মার্কিন প্রেসিডেন্ট আজ সাংবাদিকদের সামনে এলে তাঁকে ইরাকের জেলা-কেলেঙ্কারি নিয়ে একের পর এক প্রশ্নের মুখে পড়তে হয়। বৃশের দু'টি আরবি গিতি চ্যালেঞ্জকে সেওয়া সাক্ষাৎকারে বৃশ ইরাকি বন্দিদের উপর এই দুর্বাহারকে নিন্দনীয় বললেও এর জন্য ক্ষমা চাননি। শুধু বৃশই নয়, চাপের মুখে পড়ে তাঁর প্রতিরক্ষাসচিব ডোনাল্ড রামসফেল্ডও আজ এ নিয়ে ক্ষমা চেয়েছেন।

আগের দিনই কেন ক্ষমা চাননি, এই প্রশ্নের মুখে আজ বৃশ বলেন, জর্ডনের রাজার সঙ্গে বৈঠকে তিনি তাঁকে বলেছেন, আবু হাইবের ঘটনা আমেরিকার সূনাগের কলঙ্ক। তবে এই ঘটনার জন্য আমেরিকার ডোনাল্ড রামসফেল্ডের ইস্তফার সজাবনা বৃশ উড়িয়ে দেন। যদিও রোজই এখন মার্কিন-ব্রিটিশ পত্রপত্রিকায়

ইরাকে জেলবন্দিদের উপর নতুন নতুন অত্যাচারের ছবি ও তথ্য বেরিয়ে চলেছে। মঙ্গলবারই আমেরিকা স্বীকার করে, ইরাকে ও আফগানিস্তানে মার্কিন হেফাজতে এ পর্যন্ত ২৫ জন বন্দি মারা গিয়েছেন। এদের মধ্যে দু'জনকে মার্কিন সেনারা অবশ্যই খুন করেছে। বাকিদের মৃত্যু নিয়েও তদন্ত চলছে। বন্দিদের অত্যাচারের জন্য পুরো দায়িত্ব রামসফেল্ড স্বীকার করেছেন। এই অবস্থায় তাঁর নিজের দল রিপাবলিকান ও বিরোধী ডেমোক্রেট পার্টি থেকে ক্রমশই তাঁর পদত্যাগের দাবি জোরালো হচ্ছে। জেনিভায় আন্তর্জাতিক রেডক্রসও বলেছে, ইরাকে মার্কিন সেনারা ব্যাপক হারে মানবাধিকার লঙ্ঘন করে চলেছে।

আজ সাংবাদিকদের বৃশ বলেন, “ইরাকি বন্দিরা ও তাঁদের পরিবারবর্গ যে অপমান ও লাঞ্ছনার শিকার হয়েছেন তার জন্য আমি লজ্জিত ও দুঃখিত।” “ওই ছবিগুলিতে যা দেখেছি তা আমার মত মার্কিনেরা কখনওই সমর্থন করে না। ছবিগুলো দেখে আমার নিজেকে অসুস্থ বলে মনে হচ্ছিল।” কিন্তু আরও

চাপের মুখে রামসফেল্ড

কেলেঙ্কারির খবর আসছে। মার্কিন সেনাদের কাছে সেনাবাহিনীর তরফে জানানো হয়েছে ৪২ জন অসামরিক ইরাকির উপর অত্যাচারের ঘটনা ঘটেছে। ইরাকি বন্দিদের উপর অত্যাচারের ঘটনায় আমেরিকার মতই বিরত ব্রিটেনও। এক ব্রিটিশ সেনা একটি দিনিকে সাক্ষাৎ প্রমাণ-সহ জানিয়েছেন ইরাকি বন্দিদের উপর কী ভাবে অমানুষিক অত্যাচার করেছে ব্রিটিশরা। এই ঘটনা নিয়ে ব্রিটেনের প্রতিরক্ষা দফতর তদন্ত শুরু করেছে। ওই সেনা ব্রিটেনের একটি পত্রিকাকে অত্যাচারী ব্রিটিশ সেনাদের নাম ও পদমর্যাদাও জানিয়েছেন।

এ পর্যন্ত বৃশ প্রশাসনের পক্ষ থেকে একমাত্র তাঁর জাতীয় নিরাপত্তা উপদেষ্টা কন্ডেলিজা রাইসই ক্ষমা চেয়ে নেন। বিরোধীরা রামসফেল্ডের ইস্তফার দাবিতে সরব হলেও বৃশ বলেন, “রামসফেল্ড দু'দু'টি যুক্তি আমার প্রতিরক্ষাসচিব ছিলেন। তিনি এখনও আমার মন্ত্রিসভার সদস্য থাকবেন।” তবে প্রকাশ্যে রামসফেল্ডকে সমর্থন করলেও বৃশ ব্যক্তিগত ভাবে রামসফেল্ডকে এই

ছবিগুলি প্রচারের খবর সময়মতো তাঁকে না জানানোর জন্য ইতিমধ্যেই তিরস্কার করেছেন। তবে ইরাকি বন্দিদের উপর অত্যাচার ও হত্যার জন্য মার্কিন প্রতিরক্ষাসচিব ডোনাল্ড রামসফেল্ড মার্কিন কংগ্রেসের তদন্ত কমিটির জেনার সামনে পড়েছেন। রামসফেল্ডকে প্রশ্ন করা হয় জানুয়ারি মাস থেকে বন্দিদের উপর এই ধরনের অত্যাচারের ঘটনার কথা জানা সত্ত্বেও কেন এত দিন তিনি এ ব্যাপারে সবাইকে অন্ধকারে রেখেছিলেন।

এ দিকে, আমেরিকার একটি সংবাদপত্র জানিয়েছে ইরাকের জেলগুলিতে ইরাকি বন্দিদের উপর অত্যাচারের খবর ফেব্রুয়ারি মাসেই রেড ক্রস একটি গোপন রিপোর্টে বৃশকে জানিয়েছিল। আবু হাইব জেলে ইরাকি বন্দিদের নগ্ন অবস্থায় আলফোর্ডের আটক রাখা হচ্ছে বলেও জানিয়েছিল রেড ক্রস। এই অমানুষিক আচরণ ও অত্যাচারে মার্কিন সেনারা সক্রিয় ভূমিকা নিচ্ছে বলেও ওই রিপোর্টে বলা হয়েছে। এই রিপোর্ট হাউস যাতে এই ধরনের অত্যাচার বন্ধ ব্যবস্থা নেয় তার জন্যও অনুরোধ করেছিল রেড ক্রস।— রয়টার্স

ক্ষমাপ্রার্থী

কায়রো ও ওয়াশিংটন, ৬ মে—কারাগারে বন্দি ইরাকীদের উপরে মার্কিন সেনার পাশবিক অত্যাচারের ছবি দূনিয়া জুড়ে বিতর্ক সৃষ্টি করার ঊর্দ্বৈক্যে পরে পরিস্থিতি সামলাতে নেমে বিশেষ কিছুই বললেন না আমেরিকার প্রেসিডেন্ট জর্জ ডব্লিউ বুশ।

আরব দুনিয়ার ক্ষোভ প্রশমিত করতে দু'টি আরবি টেলিভিশন চ্যানেলে সাক্ষাৎকার দেন বুশ।

বাগদাদের আবু স্নাইব কারাগারে যারা বন্দিদের সঙ্গে অমানবিক আচরণ করেছে, সেই মার্কিন সেনাদের শাস্তি দেওয়া হবে বলে ঘোষণা করলেও এই ঘটনার জন্য সরাসরি মার্জনা চাননি মার্কিন প্রেসিডেন্ট। কারাগারের ছবি দেখে আরব দুনিয়ার মতো মার্কিন নাগরিকেরাও স্তম্ভিত বলে মন্তব্য করেছেন তিনি।

কিন্তু আরব দুনিয়া সম্পর্কে অবহিত মহল এবং সেখানকার নীতি বিশ্লেষকদের ধারণা, মার্কিন প্রেসিডেন্ট এক দিন টি ভি-তে মুখ দেখালেই আরবের মানুষের মনোভাব বদলে যাবে না।

ইরাকে বন্দিদের উপর মার্কিন সেনাদের পাশবিক অত্যাচারের ফলে আমেরিকা অঞ্চলভিত্তিক পত্রের জন্য মার্কিন প্রতিরক্ষাসচিব ডোনাল্ড রামসফেল্ডকে আড়ালে ভাঁসনা করলেও প্রকাশ্যে তাঁর নিন্দা না করে বরং সমর্থনই করেছেন বুশ।

ইরাকে বন্দিদের উপরে অত্যাচারের ঘটনা প্রকাশ্যে আসার পরে রামসফেল্ড যেভাবে বিষয়টি সামলেছেন, তাতে বুশ ক্ষুব্ধ হলেও ইরাকিরা যদি কেলেঙ্কারির দায়িত্ব নিয়ে রামসফেল্ডকে পদত্যাগ করতে হবে না বলেই হোয়াইট হাউস জানিয়ে দিয়েছে। তবে, সেনাদের সামরিক বাহিনী সংক্রান্ত কর্মীদের কাছে আগামী কাল সাক্ষ্য দিতেও হাজার হতে হবে রামসফেল্ডকে।

আমেরিকার ভাবমূর্ত্তি ফেরাতে যখন আসবে নেমেছেন স্বয়ং মার্কিন প্রেসিডেন্ট, তখনই আমেরিকাকে লজ্জায় ফেলার মতো আরও কিছু ছবি প্রকাশিত হয়েছে। ইরাকি বন্দিদের উপরে নৃশংস অত্যাচার চালানোর এই ছবিগুলির মধ্যে কয়েকটি

আবার বেরিয়েছে প্রখ্যাত একটি মার্কিন সংবাদপত্রেই।

বন্দিদের নয় করে, হাত পিছমোড়া করে বেঁধে, গলায় কখনও বুকুরের বগলস পরিয়ে আবার কখনও কারাগারের দরজার সপ্ত বেঁধে রাখার ছবি এমনিতেই ভয়াবহ। তার উপরে বেশ কয়েকটি ছবিতে অসহায়, মুখ ঢাকা বন্দিদের পাশে সহস্যা মার্কিন সেনার উপস্থিতি আমেরিকার অস্বস্তি আরও বাড়িয়ে দিয়েছে।

মাত্র দিন দুয়েক আগেই মার্কিন বিদেশসচিব কলিন পাওয়েল থেকে শুরু করে হোয়াইট হাউসের মুখপাত্র স্টুট ম্যাকক্লোনান বলেছিলেন, ইরাকি বন্দিদের উপরে ওই অত্যাচার মার্কিন সেনার সামগ্রিক মনোভাবের প্রতিফলন নয়।

মার্কিন অর্ধসাহায্যে চলা আল-হুরা চ্যানেলে কাল মার্কিন প্রেসিডেন্ট বলেন, “গণতন্ত্রে সব কিছু নিখুঁত চলে না। ভুল হয়েই থাকে। কিন্তু গণতন্ত্র বলেই ভুলের তদন্ত হবে এবং অপরাধীদের বিচার

হবে।” অন্য একটি চ্যানেল, দুবাইয়ের আল-আরাবিয়াতে বুশের বক্তব্য, “পশ্চিম এশিয়ার মানুষের মতো আমেরিকার মানুষও ওই ছবি দেখে শিউরে উঠেছেন।” বন্দিদের উপরে অত্যাচারকে এখানে ‘জঘন্য’ বলে মন্তব্য করেন বুশ।

তবে আরব দুনিয়া তথা পশ্চিম এশিয়ার ক্ষোভ প্রশমনের এই চেষ্টায় কতটুকু কাজ হবে, তা নিয়ে সংশয় রয়েছে খোদ আরব দুনিয়াতেই। টি ভি-তে হামেশাই মার্কিন প্রেসিডেন্টকে দেখতে অভ্যস্ত এই আরব দুনিয়া বা পশ্চিম এশিয়ার মানুষ জর্জ বুশের এক দিনের টি ভি বক্তৃতায় নতুন করে আশ্বস্ত হওয়ার কিছু পাবেন না বলে একাংশের ধারণা। আরও একটি মত হল, ইরাক এবং ইজরায়েলে মার্কিন নীতির পরিবর্তন না-করে শুধু দুঃখপ্রকাশ করে কোনও লাভ হবে না। মিশরের প্রেসিডেন্ট হোসনি মুবারকও এই মতের শরিক।

সমালোচনা আরও আছে। আল-হুরা চ্যানেলটা চলেই আমেরিকার টাকায়। সেই রকম একটি

দেবেন বুশ

চ্যানেলে আরবি তর্জমার কোনও ব্যবস্থা না-রয়ে মার্কিন প্রেসিডেন্টের বক্তৃতায় আদৌ কোনও উপকার হল কি না, সে প্রশ্ন তুলছেন অনেকে। তা ছাড়া, পশ্চিম এশিয়ার মানুষের চেয়েও আসন্ন প্রেসিডেন্ট নির্বাচনের আগে আমেরিকার জনতার চেয়ে ভাল সাজার দায়ই বুশের বেশি ছিল কি না, সেই সংশয় থাকছে।

আরবি ভাষাকার হাসান শারবাল বলেছেন, “দেয়ী সেনাদের মার্কিন প্রেসিডেন্ট শাস্তি দিলে বা আমেরিকার জাতীয় নিরাপত্তা উপদেষ্টা (কেডোলিজ রাইস) ক্ষমা চাইলেই সব মিটে যাচ্ছে না।” মিশরের এক সংবাদ-বিশ্লেষক আহমেদ এল-বিয়র কথায়, “বুশের লজ্জিত হলেই চলেবে না। এক্ষণই ইরাক থেকে সেনা ফিরিয়ে নিতে হবে, সেখানে যে ভয়ঙ্কর জন্মায় হয়েছে, তা স্বীকার করতে হবে এবং মার্কিন সেনার কৃতকর্মের জন্য প্রকাশ্যে ক্ষমা চাইতে হবে।”

ইরাকেও ইতিউত্তি শোনা গিয়েছে একই ভাবনার প্রতিধ্বনি। — রয়টার্স

A matter of honour

Bush must overhaul Iraq policy to avoid total disaster. He can begin by firing Rumsfeld—today, not tomorrow or next week

WE ARE in danger of losing something much more important than just the war in Iraq. We are in danger of losing America as an instrument of moral authority and inspiration in the world. I have never known a time in my life when America and its President were more hated around the world than today. I was just in Japan, and even young Japanese dislike us. It's no wonder that so many Americans are obsessed with the finale of the sitcom Friends right now. They're the only friends we have, and even they're leaving.

This administration needs to undertake a total overhaul of its Iraq policy; otherwise, it is courting a total disaster for us all.

That overhaul needs to begin

with President Bush firing Secretary of Defence Donald Rumsfeld — today, not tomorrow or next month, today. What happened in Abu Ghraib prison was, at best, a fundamental breakdown in the chain of command under Rumsfeld's authority, or, at worst, part of a deliberate policy somewhere in the military-intelligence command of sexually humiliating prisoners to soften them up for interrogation, a policy that ran amok.



THOMAS L. FRIEDMAN

Either way, the Secretary of Defence is ultimately responsible, and if we are going to rebuild our credibility as instruments of humanitarian values, the Rule of Law and democratisation, in Iraq or elsewhere, Bush must hold his own Defence Secretary accountable. Words

matter, but deeds matter more. If the Pentagon leadership ran any US company with the kind of abysmal planning in this war, it would have been fired by shareholders months ago.

I know that tough interrogations are vital in a war against a merciless enemy, but outright torture, or this sexual-humiliation-for-entertainment, is abhorrent. I also know the sort of abuse that went on in Abu Ghraib prison goes on in prisons all over the Arab world everyday, as it did under Saddam — without the Arab League or Al-Jazeera ever saying a word about it.

I know they are shameful hypocrites, but I want my country to behave better — not only because it is America, but also because the war on terrorism is a war of ideas, and to have any chance of winning



What happened in Abu Ghraib was, at best, a breakdown in the chain of command under Rumsfeld, or, at worst, part of a policy of sexually humiliating prisoners to soften them for interrogation, a policy that ran amok

we must maintain the credibility of our ideas.

We were hit on 9/11 by people who believed hateful ideas — ideas too often endorsed by some of their own spiritual leaders and educators back home. We cannot

win a war of ideas against such people by ourselves. Only Arabs and Muslims can. What we could do — and this was the only legitimate rationale for this war — was try to help Iraqis create a progressive context in the heart of the

Arab-Muslim world where that war of ideas could be fought out. But it is hard to partner with someone when you become so radioactive no one wants to stand next to you. We have to restore some sense of partnership with the world if we are going to successfully partner with Iraqis.

Bush needs to invite to Camp David the five permanent members of the UN Security Council, the heads of both NATO and the United Nations, and the leaders of Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia and Syria. There, he needs to eat crow, apologise for his mistakes and make clear that he is turning a new page. Second, he needs to explain that we are losing in Iraq, and if we continue to lose the US public will eventually demand that we quit Iraq, and it will then become

Afghanistan-on-steroids, which will threaten everyone. Third, he needs to say he will be guided by the United Nations in forming the new caretaker government in Baghdad. And fourth, he needs to explain that he is ready to listen to everyone's ideas about how to expand our

force in Iraq, and have it work under a new UN mandate, so it will have the legitimacy it needs to crush any uprisings against the interim Iraqi government and oversee elections — and then leave when appropriate. And he needs to urge them all to join in.

Let's not lose sight of something — as bad as things look in Iraq, it is not yet lost, for one big reason: America's aspirations for Iraq and those of the Iraqi silent majority, particularly Shiites and Kurds, are still aligned. We both want Iraqi self-rule and then free elections. That overlap of interests, however clouded, can still salvage something decent from this war — if the Bush team can finally screw up the courage to admit its failures and dramatically change course.

Yes, the hour is late, but as long as there's a glimmer of hope that this Bush team will do the right thing, we must insist on it, because America's role in the world is too precious — to America and to the rest of the world — to be squandered like this.

New York Times

America reels under prison scandal

Report reveals 25 custody deaths

CRAIG GORDON

Washington, May 5: At least 25 prisoners have died in custody in Iraq and Afghanistan, including two that army officials believe were killed by American captors.

That revelation by the Pentagon yesterday came as Congressional officials warned that the prisoner abuse scandal in Iraq is deeper than already disclosed.

The CIA confirmed that the agency's inspector general had "several investigations" under way of alleged abuses of Iraqi prisoners by its own personnel. One of the CIA's investigations, said a US official, involved the death of an Iraqi Republican Guard general who was being questioned by the CIA last November.

Nearly a week after the photos of Iraqi prisoners being humiliated and sexually abused were made public, the Bush administration yesterday faced a raft of new questions about how the incidents occurred, why top officials didn't respond more quickly and why Congress wasn't notified as investigations pointed up serious problems in the Iraqi detention system.

The graphic photos — and a classified Army report that called the abuses "systemic and illegal" — have created the most serious crisis for US officials in Iraq since the war, and it comes less than 60 days before they are scheduled to hand over power to an Iraqi interim government.

Army officials confirmed 20 criminal investigations are on.

In Iraq, the outcry continued.



Iraqi Sunni clerics talk with US Marines about the situation of Iraqi prisoners at the Abu Ghraib prison on Wednesday. (Reuters)

Iraq's US-appointed human rights minister said he had resigned this week to protest abuses of Iraqi detainees by American guards. Abdul-Basat al-Turki said he feared the abuses were not an isolated incident, as American officials say, but "the violations are a common act."

Abu Ghraib was one of Saddam Hussein's most notorious prisons and torture centres — exactly the kind of place that US

officials have said was put out of business when they deposed Saddam. But now it has become a symbol of what many Iraqi perceive as American abuses — so much so that defence secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld was forced to draw a distinction between American practices there and Saddam's, calling the abuses in the photos an isolated incident.

The army also disclosed for the first time the extent of its

own criminal investigations in the region, saying it has investigated 25 deaths and 10 prisoner assault cases since December 2002, mainly in Iraq. The army supervised more than 40,000 detainees at the post-war peak, and now oversees about 10,000.

Relatives' appeal

Lawyers for 12 Iraqi families who allege their relatives were unlawfully killed by British tro-

ops in post-war Iraq took their case to London's High Court today.

The ministry of defence refuses to accept responsibility for the deaths but the families' lawyers are demanding a judicial review to examine if the killings were a violation of the victims' right to life under European law.

THE LOS ANGELES TIMES- WASHINGTON POST NEWS SERVICE AND REUTERS

Glare on Rumsfeld

K.P. NAYAR

Washington, May 5: Even as George W. Bush and his top aides were engaged in damage control in the Arab world, a new front on Iraq was opening for the President at home.

Senators and members of the House of Representatives are furious that they were not told about the prisoner abuses, confirmed by a US army general by then, at a classified briefing by defence secretary Donald Rumsfeld held only hours before CBS aired pictures of naked Iraqis being interrogated in the Abu Ghraib prison.

The Republican leader in the House of Representatives and a close ally of Bush, Tom Delay, said: "If we are going to be part and a partner in this war on terror, then we ought to be completely briefed, not just briefed on things they want us to hear."

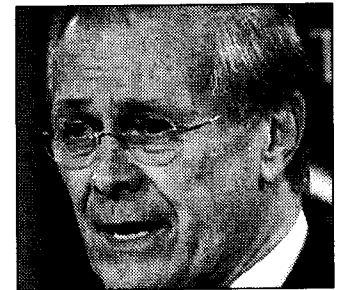
As the Bush administration gets increasingly enmeshed in the prison scandal, Rumsfeld's position is beginning to look shaky: so much so the White House asserted today that the President had full confidence in his defence secretary.

Earlier in the day, Senator Joseph Biden, the senior-most Democrat on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, said on NBC News: "If it goes all the way to Rumsfeld, then he should resign... Who is in charge? I mean, look, every single solitary decision made almost since the fall of Saddam Hussein has been mistaken. Who is making these decisions? It is not the President... He ultimately makes decisions based on information presented to him by top officials in his administration. The President is

being very ill served," Biden said.

Senator John McCain, a senior Republican who was a prisoner of war in Iraq for five and a half years, said: "Responsibility lies with those in charge, and that is the secretary of defence and those in the chain of command."

Senate armed services com-



IN THE LINE OF FIRE: Donald Rumsfeld

mittee chairman John Warner said later Rumsfeld has been asked to testify at a public hearing tentatively set for Thursday on the scandal, adds Reuters.

Warner, a Virginia Republican, called the allegations of mistreatment by US troops "an appalling and totally unacceptable break of military regulations and conduct".

He said Rumsfeld and the other civilians who control the military "have the ultimate responsibility of the actions of the men and women in uniform".

Warner, speaking on the Senate floor, said he was discussing the appearance with Rumsfeld's office, and hoped to have an open committee hearing tomorrow morning. He said Rumsfeld might also be asked to meet in a closed session with senators.

Bush tries to placate skeptical Arabs

Associated Press

CAIRO, May 5. — President George W Bush told a skeptical Arab world today that the actions of soldiers who mistreated Iraqi prisoners “don’t represent America” and pledged that “justice will be served.” He stopped short of apologizing.

“This is a serious matter, a matter that reflects badly on our country,” Mr Bush conceded in an interview with Al-Arabiya. He added; “This is a free country. We do not tolerate this kind of abuses.”

The US President gave interviews to two Arabic TV stations, hoping to limit damage from the prisoner-abuse scandal that has torn at the USA’s already weakened image in the region. But his message was a hard sell, and many watching said Mr Bush’s words did little to change their opinions.

“Mr Bush had a whole year to fulfil his promises regarding bringing freedom and democracy to Iraq,” said Mr Mouwaddaq Fadhil, a 55-year-old taxi driver in Baghdad. “But he failed, and now we are hearing the same



STAND OFF: US troops stand guard as Iraqis protest at the entrance of Abu Gharib prison on Wednesday. — AFP

aired most of the interview, unedited, in English with no subtitles. Most Arabs do not speak English. Station officials said they rushed the raw interview onto air and would broadcast a dubbed version later today.

Mr Bush also gave an interview to Al-Hurra, a US-government funded Ara-

‘The practices that took place in that prison are abhorrent and they don’t represent America. They represent the actions of a few people’

“must understand that what took place in that prison does not represent the America that I know,” he told Al-Hurra. “The America I know is a compassionate country that believes in freedom. The America I know cares about every individual. The America I know has

More Iraqis allege torture in prison

Reuters
Abu Ghraib, May 4

WITH SIX US soldiers reprimanded and six others facing criminal charges, Iraq's prisoner-abuse scandal looked far from over on Tuesday as more Iraqis came forward to allege maltreatment by US troops.

"If the Americans ever come back to detain me, I'll commit suicide", Sha'aban al-Janabi, a former prisoner, said as he pointed at the notorious Abu Ghraib jail on the outskirts of Baghdad.

Janabi, arrested in December near Fallujah and accused of participating in attacks on the US forces, says he was beaten frequently during the 25 days he spent inside Abu Ghraib.

"I was blindfolded and handcuffed. We were dumped outside on a gravel yard for 10 days, we were given one bottle of water all day for cleaning and drinking", he said.

On the flat scrubland outside Abu Ghraib, where thousands of people are believed to have been tortured and put to death under Sad-

dam Hussein, dozens of men and women now gather each day hoping for news of relatives seized by America.

Some Iraqis say Abu Ghraib is something of a sanctuary compared with what happens in other US-run prisons around the country.

Abdullah al-Dulaimi, standing outside Abu Ghraib trying to get information about two of his brothers detained there, said he had been held in a detention centre near the border with Syria for a month in January.

He says he was once put in something called the "coffin", a wooden box too short to stand up in, for two days. He says he was also frequently beaten and had electrical wires attached to his penis.

"We were beaten, deprived of sleep and humiliated", he said.

"If you ever talked to the prisoner next to you, you'd have to do push-ups with a soldier standing on your back. They made us stand naked and, then, a soldier would come and beat us with a stick and, sometimes, sodomise us with the stick", he said.



REUTERS
Gen George Casey (R), vice chief of staff in the US Army, walks with his aides to a Senate armed service committee in Washington on Tuesday. Casey appeared at the committee, which is investigating the events surrounding alleged abuse of Iraqi prisoners by US troops.

US frees 240 inmates from Abu Ghraib amid tension

Agence France-Presse
Abu Ghraib (Iraq), May 4

THE US authorities freed about 240 inmates from the notorious Abu Ghraib prison near Baghdad to waiting relatives on Tuesday, amid continuing tension over the abuse of prisoners by military guards.

At midday on Tuesday, scores clustered around a US soldier who emerged at the dusty perimeter of the sprawling complex to announce the names of those released to a crowd of about 200 people, but most were left disappointed.

The authorities regularly free inmates from Abu Ghraib, but about 5,000 so-called "security detainees" remain inside, some of whom have been held since the US-led invasion of the country in March last year which toppled dictator Saddam Hussein.

The publication of pictures of the sexual humiliation and abuse of detainees at Abu Ghraib by US guards has sparked bewilderment and fear among Iraqis with friends and relatives in the jail.

Regular releases have failed to mollify those who wait outside, including, some who say they have been coming every day for months without getting the chance to see their relatives.

Abu Ghraib, about 32 km west of Baghdad, was where thousands of political prisoners were tortured and executed under Saddam.

Iraqi abuse scandal: seven US soldiers reprimanded

Agencies

Reprimandum (GOMR), an effective career killer, which blocks any promotion and could see them expelled if the military decides to take further action, an officer said. The seventh individual has been handed a "letter of admonishment", a punishment one grade below the GOMR. All seven are now appealing the rulings.

The officers, whose reprimands were issued in the last month during one of three investigations into the abuse of detainees at Abu Gharib prison near Baghdad, include Brigadier General Janis Karpinski, who oversaw the prison system in Iraq. The officer refused to say if Brigadier General Karpinski, a reserve officer, received a GOMR or the lesser reprimand.

Besides the officers, six US

prison guards have been charged with criminal conduct for abusing detainees at Abu Gharib and four more are still under investigation. A third enquiry has also been opened into interrogation procedures at Abu Gharib that could lead to criminal indictment or administrative punishment of intelligence officers, both military and CIA, and civilian contractors involved in questioning detainees.

A US officer said the military is telling its servicemen to be on the lookout for backlash stemming from the abuse and is briefing troops on how to discuss the issue in conversation with Iraqis. "We have made it very clear to commanders and all the way down to the lowest soldier, 'You've got to get out there and explain what happened here.'"

BAGHDAD, May 3. — Kidnapped American truck driver Mr Thomas Hamill escaped his Iraqi captors yesterday, prying open a door of the house where he was held when a US patrol passed by. Mr Hamill, running a kilometre to the US patrol, identified himself and led the soldiers to the house, where two Iraqis with an automatic weapon were arrested, a military spokesman said. By today, he was out of Iraq and had arrived in Germany for treatment at a US military hospital. He was also due to be reunited with his wife, Mrs Kellie Hamill, at the Landstuhl Regional Medical Centre. He had been kept in captivity for more than three weeks by gunmen who blasted the convoy he was driving in the outskirts of Baghdad. — AP



Mr Thomas Hamill

Escape to freedom

Troops fired at in Najaf

NAJAF, May 3. — US forces in Najaf came under their most intense attack yet by Shi'ite militiamen in a clash today that may have killed up to 20 Iraqis. But US commanders said they will still hold back from going after the militia's leader, a radical cleric, to avoid angering Iraq's Shi'ite majority.

Meanwhile, the US military turned to a new commander for an Iraqi force taking control of Fallujah, considering Maj. Gen. Md Latif, who opposed Saddam Hussein, to replace another general who may have been involved in Saddam-era repression.

US troops in Najaf clashed for hours with Shi'ite militiamen

who barraged the Americans' base with mortars overnight, then in the afternoon fired from several directions. Tank and machine gun fire demolished a building that troops said fire was coming from, raising a pall of smoke into the air. Apache attack helicopters circled the area but did not fire.

An American commander said the US troops would "maintain our defence posture" until someone "much higher takes a different decision". He said there were few civilian casualties because troops were using precision fire. "I think every soldier here understands the sensitivities of the situation." — AP

- **FALLUJAH SIEGE / FORMER IRAQI SOLDIERS TO TAKE OVER**

U.S. starts troop withdrawal

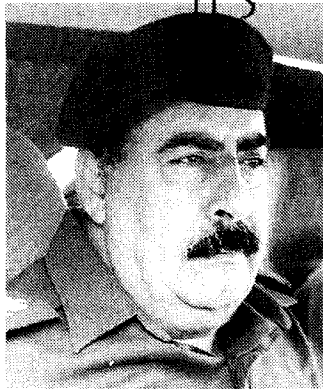
By Atul Aneja

MANAMA, APRIL 30. Two battalions of U.S. troops have started withdrawing from Fallujah, as part of a deal that would bring former Iraqi troops serving in the army of Saddam Hussein to the frontlines of the restive Sunni stronghold.

The first Marine battalion left this morning from abandoned factories and garages from where it confronted guerilla fighters on the opposite side in the southern part of the town. American troops have also begun to move out from the western side. A pull out from northern Fallujah was expected during the second phase of the withdrawal.

Fighting between U.S. troops and Iraqi fighters has been most intense in this zone, ever since American forces besieged the town on April 5. The Arabic language Al-Arabyia satellite channel quoted Ahmed Hardan, a physician who was involved in earlier negotiations with U.S. forces, as saying that American troops would complete their movement out of the southern portions by early Saturday and withdraw from the northern segment of the town on Sunday.

U.S. troops disengaging from Fallujah are likely to be sta-



Maj. Gen. Jassem Mohamed Saleh who will command the newly-formed Fallujah Protection Army. — AFP

tioned in nearby rural areas. The move is deliberate and is meant to allow troops to rush back into Fallujah in case the experiment with Iraqi forces to stabilise the situation there does not work. The phased withdrawal will be accompanied by a gradual induction of former Iraqi regular troops.

An estimated 900 to 1100 soldiers are slated to comprise the Fallujah Protection Army and will be commanded by Jasim Mohamed Saleh. A former commander of a brigade of the Iraqi Republican Guard, Gen. Saleh said he was forming "a new emergency military force" that

would help bring order to the town. He added that his force would include former soldiers, policemen and members of Iraqi civil defence forces, and would operate "without the need for the American army, which the people of Fallujah reject." Cheering crowds, many fluttering the Iraqi flag, greeted the convoy of Gen. Saleh, who visited Fallujah to meet community leaders this morning. Negotiations were under way in Najaf, which has also been besieged by U.S. forces, on the redeployment of forces. Ahmed Shaybani, a spokesman for the radical Shia cleric Moqtada Al Sadr, who had steered an anti-American uprising earlier this month, said that talks were being held between the Najaf police and tribal leaders.

He pointed out that there was a proposal that the Mehdi Army, loyal to Mr. Al Sadr, would leave the city after handing over security to the Najaf police.

The Americans, in turn, he said, should not send their forces into Najaf, and allow Mr. Al Sadr to stay in the holy city. Analysts point out that Mr. Al Sadr could be inclined to accept a deal with the Americans as there have been recent indications that his support from neighbouring Iran, on which he is dependent, might be declining.

THE HINDU

THE HINDU 7 MAY 2004

U.S. soldiers face action over abuse charges

By Julian Borger

WASHINGTON, APRIL 30. Graphic photographs showing the torture and sexual abuse of Iraqi prisoners in Abu Ghraib prison outside Baghdad, now being run by the United States, have emerged from a military inquiry which has left six soldiers facing a possible court martial and a General under investigation.

The scandal has also brought to light the growing and largely unregulated role of private contractors in the interrogation of detainees.

According to lawyers for some of the soldiers, they claimed to be acting in part under the instruction of mercenary interrogators hired by the Pentagon.

U.S. military investigators discovered the photographs, which include images of a hooded prisoner with wires fixed to his body, and nude inmates piled in a human pyramid.

The pictures, which were obtained by an American TV network, also show a dog attacking a prisoner and other inmates being forced to simulate sex with each other. It is thought the abuses took place in November and December last year.

Brigadier General Mark Kimmitt, Deputy Director of Operations for the U.S. military in Iraq, expressed his embarrassment and regret for what had happened. He told the CBS current af-

airs that the investigation began in January when an American soldier reported the abuse and turned over evidence that included photographs. "That soldier said: 'There are some things going on here that I cannot live with,'"

The U.S. Army confirmed that the General in charge of the jail is facing disciplinary measures and that six low-ranking soldiers have been charged with abusing and sexually humiliating detainees.

Lawyers for the soldiers argue they are being made scapegoats for a rogue military prison system in which mercenaries give orders without legal accountability.

A military report into the Abu Ghraib case — parts of which were made available to the London-based *Guardian* newspaper — makes it clear that private contractors were supervising interrogations in the prison, which was notorious for torture and executions under Saddam Hussein.

One civilian contractor was accused of raping a young, male prisoner but has not been charged because military law has no jurisdiction over him. Hired guns from a wide array of private security firms are playing a central role in the U.S.-led occupation of Iraq.

The killing of four private contractors in Fallujah on March 31 led to the cur-

rent siege of the city. But this is the first time the privatisation of interrogation and intelligence-gathering has come to light. The military investigation names two U.S. contractors, CACI International Inc and the Titan Corporation, for their involvement in Abu Ghraib.

Titan, based in San Diego, describes itself as a "a leading provider of comprehensive information and communications products, solutions and services for national security".

CACI, which has headquarters in Virginia, claims on its website to "help America's intelligence community collect, analyse and share global information in the war on terrorism". Neither responded to calls for comment yesterday. According to the military report on Abu Ghraib, both played an important role at the prison.

At one point, the investigators said: "A CACI instructor was terminated because he allowed and/or instructed MPs (military police) who were not trained in interrogation techniques to facilitate interrogations" by setting conditions which were neither authorised (nor) in accordance with applicable regulations/policy."

Colonel Jill Morgenthaler, speaking for central command, told the *Guardian* newspaper: "One contractor was originally included with six soldiers, accused for his treatment of the prisoners, but

we had no jurisdiction over him. It was left to the contractor on how to deal with him." She did not specify the accusation facing the contractor, but according to several sources with detailed knowledge of the case, he raped an Iraqi inmate in his mid-teens.

Col. Morgenthaler said the charges against the six soldiers included "indecent acts...; maltreatment, for non-physical abuse, piling inmates into nude pyramids and taking pictures of them nude; battery, for showing and stepping on detainees; dereliction of duty; and conspiracy to maltreat detainees".

One of the soldiers, Staff Sgt Chip Frederick, is accused of posing in a photograph sitting on top of a detainee, committing an indecent act and with assault for striking detainee — and ordering detainees to strike each other.

He told CBS: "We had no support, no training whatsoever. And I kept asking my chain of command for certain things ... like rules and regulations."

His lawyer, Gary Myers, told the *Guardian* that Sgt. Frederick had not had the opportunity to read the Geneva Conventions before being put on guard duty, a task he was not trained to perform. Mr. Myers said the role of the private contractors in Abu Ghraib are central to the case. — © *Guardian News-papers Limited 2004*

US shunts Brig Gen after torture of Iraqi prisoners

Photos show US forces posing with naked Iraqi POWs in Abu Ghraib jail

JAMES RISEN
WASHINGTON, APRIL 30

AMERICAN soldiers at a prison outside Baghdad have been accused of forcing Iraqi prisoners into acts of sexual humiliation and other abuses in order to make them talk, according to US officials.

The charges, first announced by the military in March, were documented by photographs taken by guards inside the prison, but were not described in detail until some of the pictures were made public. Some of the photographs, and descriptions of others, were broadcast on Wednesday night by the CBS News programme *60 Minutes II* and were verified by military officials. Six US soldiers have been charged and the commanding officer at Abu Ghraib prison, Brigadier General Janis Karpinski, has been reassigned, said an official.

Of the six people reported in March to be facing preliminary charges, three have been recommended for court martial trials, having completed the military equivalent of a grand jury proceeding, a senior Pentagon official said on Wednesday.

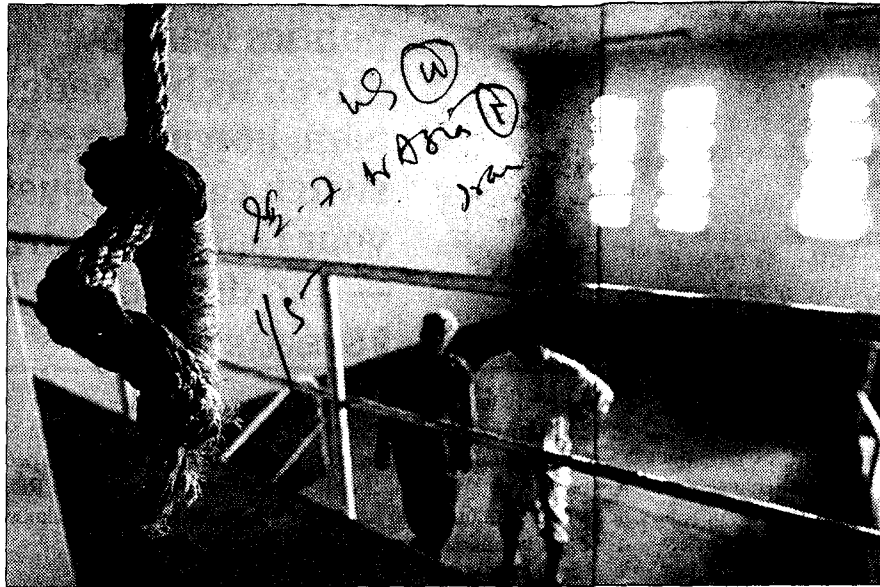
Gary Myers, the lawyer for one of the enlisted men charged, said in an interview that the military had treated the six enlisted soldiers as

scapegoats and had failed to address adequately the responsibilities of senior commanders and intelligence personnel involved in the interrogations.

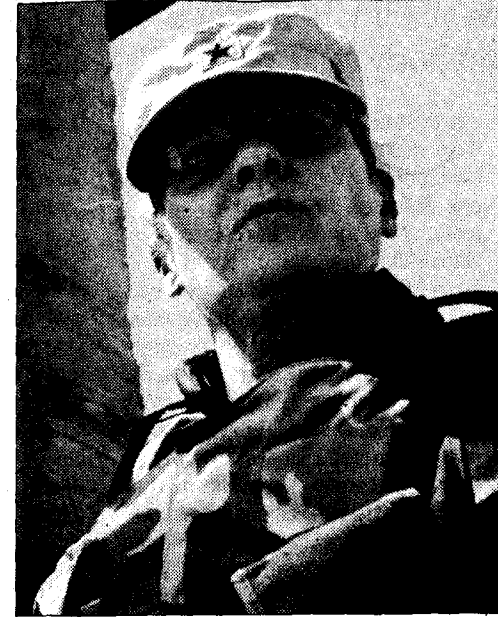
"This case involves a monumental failure of leadership, where lower level enlisted people are being scapegoated," Myers said. "The real story is not in these six young enlisted people. The real story is the manner in which the intelligence community forced them into this position."

In one photograph obtained by *60 Minutes II*, naked Iraq prisoners are stacked in a human pyramid, one with a slur written on his skin in English. In another, a prisoner stands on a box, his head covered, wires attached to his body. The programme said that, according to the US Army, he had been told that if he fell off the box, he would be electrocuted. Other photographs show male prisoners positioned to simulate sex with each other.

"The pictures show Americans, men and women, in military uniforms, posing with naked Iraqi prisoners," states a transcript of the *60 Minutes II* script, made available on Wednesday night. "And in most of the pictures, the Americans are laughing, posing, pointing or giving the camera a thumbs-up." *60 Minutes II* said the Army also has photographs showing a detainee with wires attached to his genitals and another that shows a dog attacking an Iraqi prisoner. In March, the US first announced that the six enlisted soldiers from the 800th Military Police Brigade were being charged in the case, but few details were released. An official confirmed that Brig Gen Karpinski, who ran the prison, had been reassigned. —NYT



A file photo of the Abu Ghraib prison; (right) Brig General Janis Karpinski. Reuters



US Marines hand Falluja control to former Baathist officer

AGENCIES
BAGHDAD, APRIL 30

US Marines handed control of Falluja to a former general in Saddam Hussein's feared Republican Guard on Friday in bid to end a month-long siege that killed hundreds in the city and infuriated Iraqis. In what appeared to be a reversal of Washington's policy of excluding members of Saddam's Baathist regime from power, Jasim Mohamed Saleh said his force would help police and other Iraqi security forces bring order to the town.

The commander of the Marines, who were pulling back from siege positions around the city of 300,000, was quoted as saying the former commanding general of

Saddam's 38th Infantry Division would lead a force of about 900 mostly former Iraqi soldiers to replace the US Forces.

"We have now begun forming a new emergency military force to help the forces of the Iraqi Civil Defence Corps and the Iraqi police in completing the mission of imposing security and stability in Falluja without the need for the American Army, which the people of Falluja reject," Saleh said. Hundreds of people cheered the former general, who lives in the city, as he made his way into the town centre in uniform in the early afternoon.

The *New York Times* reported on Friday that US Military commanders had proposed transferring the task of ending the Falluja insur-

gency to a new force of Iraqi soldiers, led by officers once loyal to Saddam. The newspaper said the plan appeared "tentative at best", with conflicting statements from commanders here and military officials in Washington.

News of the proposal emerged as fresh US airstrikes and skirmishes were erupting late on Thursday inside Fallujah. Pentagon officials, who often hear of decisions by battlefield commanders several hours later, said that negotiations had been under way to end the three-week siege here, and that the plan was one under discussion.

The top Marine Corps officer in Iraq, Lt. Gen. James T. Conway, explained in an e-mail message on

Thursday night that the new Iraqi unit, which he said was formally called the 1st Battalion of the Falluja Brigade, would be made up of "mostly former Iraqi Army officers and men".

Even as details of the plan leaked out, Marines pulled back from positions along the southern and western edges of the city. Under the new plan, Marine units would pull back from in and around Falluja, to be replaced in stages by some 900 Iraqis under direct command of former Iraqi officers.

The plan would seem to give a greater public role to Iraqi authorities, something US officials are eager to display amid doubts here about the true extent of power that will be ceded to Iraqis on June 30.

Meanwhile

US lawmakers consider reserve fund for Iraq war

WASHINGTON: Lawmakers are considering setting up a special reserve fund to pay for US military operations in Iraq, which would avert the need for President George W. Bush to formally request extra Iraq funds. "Some of us are talking about the prospect of a pool of emergency money that we would control," said Rep. Jerry Lewis.

Foiled Jordan attack not chemical: Qaeda tape

DUBAI: An audio tape purportedly from suspected Al Qaeda operative Abu Musab al-Zarqawi said his group had intended to attack Jordanian intelligence but denied the Amman government's accusation they planned a chemical attack. The tape, broadcast by Arab TV Al Arabiya on Friday, accused Jordanian authorities of extracting "false" confessions from militants under torture.

Gunmen wound member of Iraqi council

BAQUBA: Unknown assailants critically wounded a local Iraqi governing council member after raking his car with gunfire in north of Baghdad, witnesses said on Friday. They said, Najah Hamdoush was shot in the face during the attack late on Thursday. —Agencies

10 US soldiers killed in Baghdad attacks

Reuters
Baghdad/Fallujah, April 29

TEN US soldiers were killed in attacks around Baghdad on Thursday, eight of them in a car bomb explosion just south of the capital. This happened even as US Marines announced on Thursday an agreement to end a bloody, nearly four-weeks' siege of Fallujah, saying American forces will pull back and allow an all-Iraqi force commanded by a former Saddam Hussein-regime general to take over security.

The deaths took to 534 the number of US soldiers killed in action since US-led forces invaded Iraq 13 months ago.

The car bomb went off just south of Baghdad near Mahmudia at about 11.30 am, the US military said in a statement. "Initial reports indicate that eight US soldiers were killed and four were wounded," it said.

The soldiers were all from the 1st Armored Division and the wounded were flown to a Baghdad military hospital by helicopter, it added.

Thursday violence

- US Marines open fire on a minibus at a checkpoint on the outskirts of Fallujah, setting vehicle on fire. Four civilians died
- On Thursday, a foreign civilian was killed in a drive-by shooting near oil company offices in Basra
- At Najaf, US forces are tightening a squeeze on Mehdi army militia loyal to Muqtada al-Sadr, now sheltered in shrines

Shortly before dawn, a US soldier was killed in a rocket-propelled grenade attack in eastern Baghdad, a separate statement said.

At around 10 am, a roadside bomb killed a US soldier and wounded another in the town of Baquba, 40 miles north of Baghdad. Iraqi police said an Iraqi civilian was also killed in the attack.

With just weeks to go be-

fore the US hands over sovereignty to Iraqis on June 30, US-led forces face a growing insurgency. The US is rushing tanks to Iraq, including the besieged city of Fallujah, where sporadic clashes on Thursday followed President Bush's promise to do whatever was needed to retake the town.

United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan appealed to Bush to show restraint, saying bloodshed could turn Iraqis against the occupying forces just as the UN is working with Washington to restore an Iraqi government on June 30.

"The more the occupation is seen as taking steps that harm the civilians and the population, the greater the ranks of the resistance grows," Annan told a news conference in New York.

Local police chief Sabar al-Janabi said he was taking part in new talks with the Marines involving former Iraqi army officers and other citizens to reach a deal to let US troops join Iraqi police on patrol in town.

US unleashes fresh Falluja fire

Falluja, April 28 (Reuters): US marines launched fresh air and ground attacks against guerrillas in Falluja today, and President George W. Bush warned his troops would take whatever action was necessary to secure the Iraqi city.

Bush said there were "pockets of resistance" in the Sunni bastion, some 50 km west of Baghdad, but "most of Falluja is returning to normal".

"Our military commanders will take whatever actions necessary to secure Falluja," Bush said.

Black smoke rose above Falluja's palm-dotted Golan district from the fighting, as US commanders said they were holding back from an all-out storming of the city of 300,000 in hopes of guerrillas agreeing to hand over their heavy weapons. US forces, who have encircled Falluja for more than three weeks, are wary of causing civilian casualties because it could inflame public opinion across Iraq.

A year after the fall of Saddam Hussein, who spent his 67th birthday in the custody of US forces today, American troops are trying to quell twin threats to the new order in Iraq — from the Falluja guerrillas and Shia rebels in the south.

In the latest fighting in Falluja, just over two months before a planned US handover of power to Iraqis, US Cobra attack helicopters strafed the Golan district after shelling and fierce exchanges of gunfire broke out.

Despite the UN's Iraq envoy Lakhdar Brahimi warning of bloody consequences should talks fail in Falluja, a heavy AC-130 gunship — first used in Vietnam — blasted Golan overnight in the fiercest display of firepower yet in the confrontation. The Marines stormed an area around a railway station and called in air strikes elsewhere after snipers fired on them, the US military said.



A mother and her daughter leave a building in Falluja as US marines conduct house-to-house searches for insurgents. (Reuters)

Hospital staff said 10 local people had been wounded in the fighting. "This attack shows the frustration in the ranks of American soldiers in Iraq and the American political defeat," said Falluja resident Ali Abdullah. "We have uncovered the treachery and barbarity of the US army." Heavy fighting has flared frequently in Falluja this month despite truce efforts by Iraqi mediators and others.

Local doctors say some 600 people have been killed and many more have fled Falluja since the Marines launched a crackdown after the killing and mutilation of four American se-

curity guards in the city.

In Falluja a year ago, US soldiers killed and wounded dozens of demonstrators, angering Sunnis in a city that has become a byword for resistance to the US-led occupation. A fierce clash also occurred overnight in Khaldiya, west of Falluja, witnesses said, and US troops were out in force in other towns in the so-called "Sunni triangle" north and west of Baghdad, Saddam's home region and his main stronghold.

Some 115 US soldiers have been killed in combat in Iraq this month, compared with fewer than 100 in the three weeks it took to oust Saddam. At least 520

have been killed in combat since the US-led invasion of Iraq in March last year. At least three soldiers of the US-led occupying force died of combat wounds today in two incidents. US forces could face an even more delicate dilemma in the Najaf, where a radical cleric from Iraq's Shia majority, Moqtada al-Sadr, has taken refuge among the shrines with his several thousand strong Mehdi Army militia.

US commanders near Najaf said an AC-130 attack on Monday, which they believed killed some 60 Shia fighters, appeared to have demoralised Sadr's supporters and was part of a strate-

gy to persuade the cleric to give himself up.

But Sadr's forces vowed to resist any American incursions.

An aide to Sadr — wanted by an Iraqi judge in connection with the murder of another cleric — was quick to echo local accusations that many civilians died in Monday's attack near Kufa, outside the city, the heaviest in a three-week standoff.

Qais al-Khazali said a US incursion into Najaf itself would "transform the situation into a Shia confrontation with the Americans". Sadr has vowed suicide attacks if the Americans attempt to enter Najaf.

US firepower blasts Falluja

Falluja, April 27 (Reuters): US aircraft and tanks blasted targets in the Iraqi city of Falluja today, just hours after an American deadline expired for rebels to hand over their heavy weapons, witnesses said.

"I can hear more than 10 explosions a minute. Fires are lighting the night sky," one witness said as US forces pounded sections of the Golan district of the city, scene of heavy fighting between marines and rebels yesterday. "The earth is shaking under my feet," he said as live television pictures showed two large fires some 150 metres apart.

The action followed hard on the heels of an assault by US forces near the other Iraqi flashpoint city, Najaf, which spokesmen said killed dozens of fighters. A US spokeswoman declined comment on what triggered the fighting in Falluja, which lasted about 30 minutes, or what the American target was in the city of 300,000 people.

Local doctors say hundreds of people have been killed in the

marine siege of the town, a hotbed of insurgency against the US-led forces, which began on April 5 following the murder and mutilation of four American contractors there.

In the holy city of Najaf, 64 fighters loyal to radical Shia cleric Moqtada al-Sadr were killed hours after Washington issued an ultimatum to him to clear his militia and their arms from mosques there, a US spokesman said.

Officials said 57 of them were wiped out in a single assault against a lone anti-aircraft gun spotted during clashes on the ground. A Sadr aide said only 19 of those killed were members of the militia.

It was the bloodiest encounter since the firebrand preacher and his Mehdi Army militia launched a brief revolt against the US-led occupation three weeks ago before taking refuge in the city among Islam's

holiest Shia shrines. Staff at two hospitals counted at least 23 dead and 34 wounded and said some of the casualties did not appear to be guerrillas. At the funerals of five people killed, mourners chanted "Long live Sadr" and slogans against the US and its allies on Iraq's interim governing council.

Adding to the US burden, most Spanish troops in the occupying force who had been based in and near Najaf, left Iraq today in a withdrawal ordered by the new government in Madrid, where opposition to the occupation runs high. US troops, who make up the vast bulk of the 150,000-strong force in Iraq, have had to replace the Spaniards in Najaf.

Not long before the fighting erupted in Falluja, Brigadier General Mark Kimmitt, the chief US military spokesman, said American forces were in no hurry to launch an all-out assault on the town. Kimmitt said he was not sure any weapons were turned over today, but that negotiations were "going well".



A girl stares at a US soldier as she waits with her family for permission to enter Falluja. (AFP)

Explosions rock Damascus

Damascus, April 27 (Reuters): Explosions and gunfire rocked the Syrian capital today as security forces battled with militants, authorities and witnesses said.

There were widely conflicting reports of what had happened in the usually calm city. "There were at least two terrorists. One was killed and another one injured after they detonated an explosive device... and destroyed at least three vehicles," a diplomatic source said. He added that the blast set a UN building ablaze, but a Reuters witness who visited the scene said that while the building had long been used by the UN, it was now a civilian residence. Local residents said security services had fought a running battle with armed militants. Syria said its security forces had fought an armed group that opened fire in the upmarket Mazze diplomatic district.

5 US soldiers among 40 killed in Iraq carnage

Baghdad, April 24 (Reuters): Five US soldiers were among more than 40 people killed in bomb, rocket and mortar attacks in Iraq today, the latest spate of violence in the bloodiest month for US-led forces since Saddam Hussein's fall.

In one of the worst incidents, at least 13 Iraqis were killed and 30 were wounded when mortar bombs struck a busy market in the Shia area of Sadr City in Baghdad, witnesses and hospital sources said. "There was blood and bodies everywhere," said Bassam Abdul Rahim.

Angry residents of Sadr City — a powerbase of rebel Shia cleric Moqtada al-Sadr who US-led forces have vowed to kill or capture — held up bloodied human remains to television cameras and said US helicopters had fired at the market. They put a sign on a dead donkey saying: "This is Bush."

Brigadier General Mark Kimmit, the top US military spokesman in Iraq, "categorically" denied US involvement and said those responsible may have been aiming at an old cigarette factory nearby that was used by US-led forces. One woman was killed in a separate attack in the Sadr City area when a mortar bomb hit her home. Her daughter was wounded.

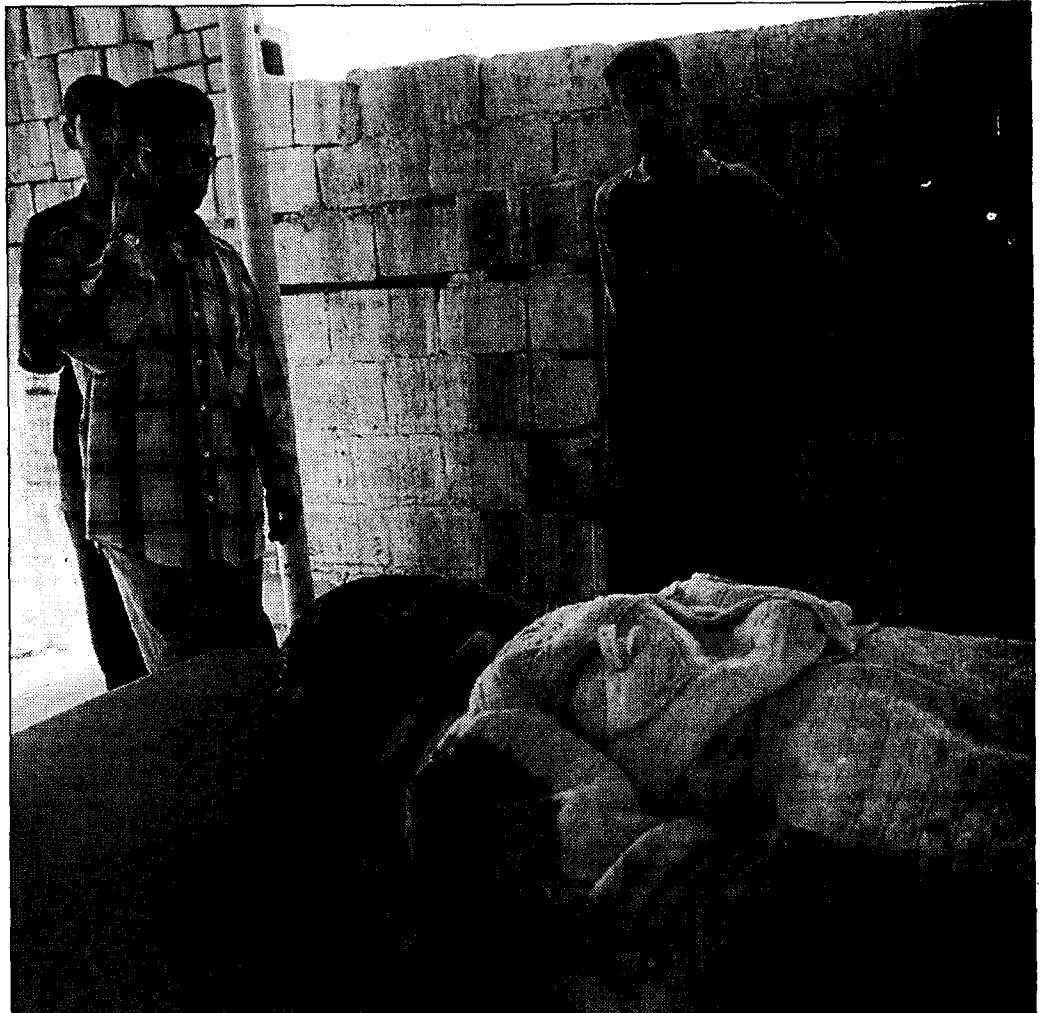
Sadr, who US officials say is wanted by an Iraqi judge in connection with the murder of another cleric, is holed up with his Mehdi Army militia in Najaf.

Yesterday, Sadr threatened to unleash suicide bombers if he was attacked by US forces poised just outside the city. US forces say they are allowing time for Iraqi mediators to resolve the standoff.

Fourteen Iraqis were killed when a bus, travelling to Baghdad just ahead of a convoy of six US military vehicles, was hit by a roadside bomb.

The five American soldiers were killed in a rebel rocket attack on a US base just north of Baghdad, a US military spokesman said. Six other soldiers were wounded.

US helicopter gunship



Iraqis look at the dead body of a two-year-old boy in a Falluja hospital. (AFP)

stroyed the truck from which the rockets were launched, but there was no word of casualties among the guerrillas.

Since US-led forces invaded Iraq in March last year to oust Saddam, 515 US soldiers have been killed in action — more than a fifth of them this month.

In Saddam's home town of Tikrit, a car bomb killed three policemen and wounded 16 people — 12 of them police. It appeared to be a suicide attack.

Polish soldiers killed five Iraqi gunmen who opened fire on their patrol in the holy city of Karbala, south of Baghdad, Polish military officials said.

West of Baghdad, US

marines were poised to resume an offensive in Falluja unless guerrillas turned over heavy weapons. Iraq's US governor Paul Bremer and General John Abizaid, commander of US forces in the region, visited Falluja today.

The visit was "part of our effort to reach a peaceful resolution", Dan Senor, spokesman for the US-led administration in Iraq, told a news conference.

Lakhdar Brahimi, the UN special envoy to Iraq who is trying to put together an interim Iraqi government to take over from US-led occupation authorities on June 30, urged the marines to hold off from a new

offensive. "I think that there is always a better solution than shooting your way into anywhere," Brahimi said.

Basra oil terminal hit

At least one boat attacked Iraq's main oil terminal offshore in the Gulf today.

Asked about an unconfirmed report that two boats exploded at the Basra terminal in suicide attacks, Major Ian Clooey said: "We are just getting reports that there has been an incident at the Basra offshore terminal. There are no firm details yet but we know of at least one vessel involved." Authorities shut down the terminal after the attack.

110-124

U.S. lifts most sanctions

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By Sridhar Krishnaswami

WASHINGTON, APRIL 24. In lifting most of the sanctions against Libya, the Bush administration has made it known that it is proceeding with a degree of caution when it comes to dealing with a country once reviled in many political quarters here.

On Friday the White House moved to relax most of the American sanctions against Libya especially as it pertained to investments and commercial activities but still keeping the ban on air travel and certain type of exports.

Officials have said that the move was after a number of steps that had been taken by

Libya on the terrorism front and in voluntarily coming forward to eliminate weapons of mass destruction.

"Through its actions, Libya has set a standard that we hope other nations will emulate in rejecting weapons of mass destruction and in working constructively with international organisations to halt the proliferation of the world's most dangerous systems," the White House said in Statement.

The lifting of sanctions means that most commercial businesses, investment and trade with Libya can now happen and the United States will also not 'punish' other countries doing business with that West Asian nation.

One report has it that Libya has already scheduled the loading of one million barrels of crude to an American company. But since Libya is still in the State Department's list of nations sponsoring terrorism, some restrictions in exports will apply.

"Restrictions will continue to apply to exports of dual use items with military potential including potential for WMD or missile applications. Exports to Libya of defence articles and services on the U.S. munitions list remain prohibited," the

White House has said.

The administration has also made it known that direct air links and third country code sharing are not yet authorised but this February Washington dropped its two decade old ban on Americans travelling to Libya and spending money in that country.

The lifting of commercial restrictions will also mean that Libyan students can now come to the United States for study subject to admissions and visa eligibility.

One of the things that has been made clear is that the lifting of sanctions does not detract Tripoli's obligations of compensation payment to the families of the victims of the Lockerbie bombing of Pan Am flight 103 in 1988.

The White House has also said that "in recognition of our deepening dialogue and diplomatic engagement on a broader range of issues," the State Department will be establishing a liaison office in Tripoli pending Congressional notification; and the administration has made it known that the "necessity of ending any tie to terrorist groups or activities will continue to be a central issue in relations with Libya."

US Congress to open hearings on Iraq war

Associated Press
Washington, April 20

DURING ONE of the worst months of the year-long Iraq campaign, senators are finding themselves with more questions and fewer answers.

With the rising death toll and increasing fear that the US lacks an effective plan for success in Iraq, lawmakers on Tuesday would start a series of hearings in which some hope to talk about how America got into the dangerous predicament and how it will get out.

It was unclear on Monday night how many administration officials will show up at the hearings.

At hearings on Tuesday and Wednesday, the Senate and House armed services committees are to hear about current Iraq operations from Deputy Defence Secretary Paul Wolfowitz, Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Gen. Richard Myers and State Department Undersecretary Marc Grossman. As of Monday, the Pentagon had not agreed to attend another hearing on Thursday on how it intends to transfer political power on June 30 to an as-yet unnamed Iraqi government. The hearing was to be the last of a three-day series before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. As of Monday, only former officials, an array of think tank witnesses and Grossman had agreed to attend.

Pentagon officials acknowledged on Monday that Wolfowitz and Myers would not go to that hearing, but had no immediate comment on why.

Throughout the week's hearings, officials are likely to face questions on what is being done to calm the increased violence in Iraq, whether troop levels are high enough and exactly how the administration intends to work with the United Nations.

US occupation authorities, who long shunned a substantive UN role in



President George W. Bush climbs into Marine One at the White House lawn on Tuesday.

By George, he's no intellectual!

US PRESIDENT George W. Bush is no intellectual, nor does he have any historical perspective to the way he conducts his administration, according to journalist Bob Woodward, whose book *Plan of Attack* has just been released.

Woodward's assessment, after interviewing Bush twice for the book and talking to 75 others, is that Bush is no intellectual and he is not part of

the intellectual elite.

Woodward said he asked Bush how he thought history would rate him. Bush's reply was: "We won't know. We will all be dead." Asked whether he consulted his father on the Iraq war, Bush replied that Bush Senior "is the wrong father to appeal to for advice in terms of strength" and that he looks up to a "higher father," namely God.

PTI, Washington

Iraq, are now counting on it to help devise a plan for forming a new Iraqi government to accept sovereignty on the turnover date. Democrats probably will focus on mistakes they say got American forces to this point. Their criticisms include: too few troops sent over in the first place; a lack of planning for post-war operations; unilateral action that has left the

United States bearing the bulk of the financial and human toll; and overly optimistic predictions on what it would take to oust Saddam Hussein and build a new democratic government in his place.

"Time is rapidly running out on getting it right in Iraq," Sen. Joseph Biden of Delaware, top Democrat on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, said.

22 die in Baghdad jail attack

Residents trickle back to Fallujah after truce

Agencies
Baghdad, April 20

TWELVE MORTAR rounds slammed into Baghdad's main prison on Tuesday, killing 22 prisoners and injuring 92, the US military said. The shells hit Baghdad's Abu Ghraib prison and all the casualties were security detainees, Col. Jill Morgenthaler said. Security detainees are Iraqis detained on suspicion of involvement in anti-US violence or in the remnants of Saddam Hussein's Ba'athist regime.

Twenty-five of the prisoners were medevaced for emergency treatment, Morgenthaler said. There were no reports that any of the casualties were prominent members of Saddam's regime. Insurgents fire mortars at US facilities in Baghdad on an almost daily basis.

Brig. Gen. Mark Kimmitt had earlier said 18 mortar rounds had hit the facility, but Morgenthaler said later investigations had shown 12 rounds struck the facility.

Meanwhile, civilians who had fled battles between US Marines and Sunni insurgents trickled back into Fallujah on Tuesday after a deal to end fighting in the Iraqi city. Witnesses said a few displaced civilians trudged into Fallujah, but Marine checkpoints turned back vehicles. Thousands of Iraqis had left the city, west of Baghdad, to escape fierce clashes in which hundreds of civilians and dozens of Marines were killed earlier this month. The returnees were venturing back a day after the US military said it would only resume offensive operations in Fallujah if gunmen failed to turn in their heavy weapons.

US troops, meanwhile, shot dead two employees of US-funded television station al-Iraqiya and wounded a third in the central city of Samarra. Correspondent Asaad Kadhim and driver Hussein Saleh were killed, while cameraman Bassem Kamel was wounded on Monday "after American



AP
HOMECOMING: Spanish soldiers after returning home from Iraq in Talavera la Real on Tuesday.

After Spain, Thailand may pull out troops

THAILAND'S TROOPS in Iraq will have to be withdrawn if the situation there becomes so dangerous that they are unable to carry out their mission, Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra said on Tuesday. "The safety of Thai troops in Iraq is my first priority, followed by their humanitarian mission", he said. "We went there to help them (Iraqis), but if we get killed, why do we have to stay?"

"If we're able to administer medicine or help in rebuilding, we'll maintain our presence. But we'll return if we can't carry out our duty", he added. Defence Minister Chettha Thanajaro said earlier on Tuesday that Thaksin would make a decision on the issue.

Spain has already begun the process of withdrawing its troops from Iraq after a change in government, and Japan has

warned that the move could prompt other nations to follow suit. Honduras has also pledged to pull out its forces. The new Socialist government expects little damage to Spain's foreign relations and no reprisal from the US for withdrawing troops from Iraq, Defence Minister Jose Bono said on Tuesday. "Spain is an ally and friend of the US. And the UK. And Italy", he said.

AFP, Bangkok/Madrid

forces opened fire on them while they were performing their duty," the station said.

In Washington, meanwhile, President George W. Bush has named career diplomat John Negroponte the first US ambassador to

Iraq since the overthrow of Saddam Hussein's regime last year. Negroponte, currently US envoy to UN, is expected to take over from American civilian administrator of Baghdad Paul Bremer, when the US hands

power to an interim Iraqi government by June 30. If confirmed by the Senate, Negroponte would head the largest US embassy in the world in terms of manpower and the most politically sensitive jobs in the world.

America backs Rantisi assassination

Agencies

WASHINGTON, April 18. — Even as the world condemned Israel's assassination of Hamas chief Abdelaziz Rantisi, a cautious White House yesterday defended the killing, saying Hamas is "a terrorist organisation". But it also warned that Israel should "carefully consider the consequences of its actions".

"Israel has the right to defend itself from terrorist attacks," the White House said in a statement. "Hamas is a terrorist organisation that claimed responsibility for the suicide attack today at the Erez Crossing. The United States is gravely concerned for regional peace and stability. And we again urge all parties to exercise maximum restraint at this time."

Meanwhile, the assassination met with worldwide condemnation today with leaders expressing concerns over the escalation of violence. UN Secretary-General Mr Kofi Annan said the killing was a violation of international law that could trigger more violence in West Asia. Britain too dubbed the killing illegal. "The government has made it repeatedly clear that so-called 'targeted assassinations' of this kind are unlawful, unjustified and counter-productive," foreign secretary Mr Jack Straw said. European Union foreign policy chief Mr Javier Solana didn't rule out Israel's right to protect its citizens from terror attacks, but said "actions of this type are not only unlawful, they are not conducive to lowering tension."

Egypt expressed dismay over the incident calling it a "stupid act" that will lead to "catastrophe". It "reaffirms that Israel uses the chance to fool the world, kill all chances of peace and drive the region to the abyss," Egypt's foreign minister Mr Ahmed Maher said.

China, Russia, France, Germany, Japan, Malaysia, Syria, Yemen and Iran too joined in condemnation with Yemen warning that the killing will "stir up revenge." Jordan, whose King Abdullah II is scheduled to meet President George W Bush on Wednesday, termed the killing an



Palestinians touch the body of assassinated leader of Hamas, Abdelaziz Rantisi, on the way to his funeral in Gaza City on Sunday. — AFP

"ugly crime". A spokesman for the Arab League, Mr Hossam Zaki, accused the USA of endorsing the attack to put an end to all peace efforts. "This is state terrorism again," he said in Cairo.

Lebanon also termed the killing as "a terrorist act par excellence for which the US and the Israeli governments must be held responsible." Palestinian Prime Minister Mr Ahmed Qorei had yesterday called the assassination a "direct result" of US partisan attitude. Hezbollah, in a statement, vowed that "armed struggle is the only way to stop the Zionist aggression." "We think that Hamas will continue the armed struggle until victory," it said.

Israel on its part re-iterated its resolve to carry on with targeted killings. "Israel... struck a mastermind of terrorism, with blood on his hands," foreign ministry

spokesman Mr Jonathan Peled said.

EU pushes for early Quartet meeting

The killing of Rantisi shows the need for an early high-level meeting of the Quartet — the European Union, the USA, Russia and the United Nations — to put the West Asia peace process back on track, the EU said today. "Continuing violence in the region means neither Israelis nor Palestinians can hope to soon live next to each other in peace and security," said Irish foreign minister Mr Brian Cowen, whose country now holds the EU presidency.

The Quartet members are to meet in early May to see what can be salvaged of their 2002 "road map" for peace in West Asia that provides for an independent Palestinian state.

Thousands throng funeral

Associated Press

GAZA CITY, April 18. — Hundreds of thousands of Palestinians calling for revenge thronged the streets of Gaza City on Sunday during the funeral for slain Hamas leader Abdel Aziz Rantisi. Israel killed Rantisi and two of his bodyguards Saturday in an air strike on his car as it drove near his house in the Sheik Radwan neighborhood in Gaza.

Hamas supporters chanting "God is great" and "revenge, revenge" threw flowers at the three men's stretchers as they were carried through the streets in a funeral procession.

"You can see (the future of) the movement in the sea of people here today," said Mahmoud Zahar, who had been Rantisi's second in command. Hamas chose a new Gaza leader Sunday, but kept it secret fearing another Israeli attack. Army Radio reported Zahar was the new leader.

During the funeral procession through the streets, Rantisi was covered in a green Hamas flag with his face exposed and a green Hamas headband around his forehead. His bodyguards, who were badly mangled in the explosion, were completely covered by green flags.

About 200 armed Hamas militants lined both sides of the road and gave the bodies a military salute as they approached Rantisi's house. Outside the house, a large green and blue mourning tent was set up and his brothers and children stood nearby greeting mourners. Armed men fired into the air and many in the gathered crowd raised their fists in anger. Women threw candy and flowers to the crowd. Mourners carried Hamas flags and pictures of Rantisi. One picture showed Rantisi and Yassin sitting together and laughing. Loudspeakers blasted Rantisi's former speeches.

"You got what you've always dreamed of Abu Mohammed, you won," read graffiti on a nearby wall, referring to Rantisi by his nickname. Quotes from Rantisi covered the wall of his house and green Hamas flags and black mourning flags hung from nearby homes. After the funeral service at the mosque, the bodies were carried through a sea of people in the Gaza streets to the cemetery, where a huge Hamas flag hung from a water tow-



A Palestinian girl cries as she watches the funeral procession in Gaza City on Sunday. — AFP

Israel on high alert

JERUSALEM, April 18. — The army, police and intelligence services were on high alert today as Israel braced itself for revenge attacks after the assassination of Hamas leader Abdelaziz Rantisi. A lockdown of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, already sealed off from Israel after the 22 March killing of Hamas founder Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, was tightened further in a bid to prevent any infiltrations by would-be suicide bombers. Hamas' armed wing, the Ezzedine al-Qassam Brigades, has vowed to wreak revenge against Israel in retaliation. — AFP

er. In the West Bank city of Nablus and neighboring town of Jenin, thousands of Palestinians demonstrated in support of Rantisi. In Nablus, crowds hung up effigies of Israeli Prime Minister and US President, shot them and then burned them as they chanted "revenge, revenge."

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U.S. turning to Iran, Syria to defuse crisis

By Atul Aneja

MANAMA, APRIL 16. Encountering stiff resistance in Fallujah and obstacles in mounting an offensive in the Shia stronghold of Najaf, the U.S. is turning to arch-foe Iran and Syria to defuse the crisis.

Poland, a key American ally, has opposed any U.S. move to undertake a military offensive in Najaf. The top commander of a Polish unit said his forces had been deployed to stabilise the situation in Iraq and not to participate in actions that could escalate tensions and lead to more bloodshed. Polish troops have been positioned in southern Iraq, including the Shia holy city of Karbala. The U.S. forces have surrounded Najaf, where Moqtada Al Sadr, an Iraqi cleric who has steered an anti-American uprising in Iraq has been residing.

The wave of abductions sweeping Iraq saw a U.S. businessman kidnapped from his hotel in the southern city of Basra. The kidnappers were disguised as policemen, Basra police chief said on Friday. Col. Khalaf al-Maleki said the abduction of the American, who was of Jordanian origin, took place on Thursday night. He gave no further details.

Denmark's Foreign Ministry said a Danish businessman was believed kidnapped while travelling from Basra to Baghdad.

Stressing that the U.S. troops should not enter Najaf, the top Shia spiritual leader in Iraq, Grand Ayatollah Syed Ali Al Sistani has also warned that they should not pursue Mr. Al Sadr inside the city. Ayatollah Sistani has a wide following in Iraq, and it is widely believed that the U.S. forces can ill afford to defy him.

Mr. Al Sadr has himself sternly warned the U.S. on Friday that the use of force against him would lead to unimaginable consequences. In an interview with Lebanon's *Al Safir* daily, Mr. Al Sadr said: "If I am killed or detained the Iraqi public will know how to respond with a force and severity whose extent no one will have imagined." Indicating that they might not choose military action in Najaf

anytime soon, the U.S. commanders said they expected to soon rotate some of the troops surrounding the southern Iraqi city.

Major Neal O'Brien of the U.S. forces said the units at Najaf "will not complete this operation" and are likely to be replaced by other troops. With the military option in Najaf not on the horizon, the U.S. authorities have sought Iranian mediation to defuse the crisis.

The Iranian Foreign Minister, Kamal Kharrazi, has said that Teheran and Washington have been holding behind-the-scenes talks on how to restore order in Iraq. After meeting Massoud Barzani, the rotating head of the U.S. appointed Iraqi Governing Council (IGC) on Thursday, Hossein Sadeghi, an Iranian envoy was in Najaf for talks with Mr. Al Sadr's group. Iran has enormous influence

over Shias in Iraq.

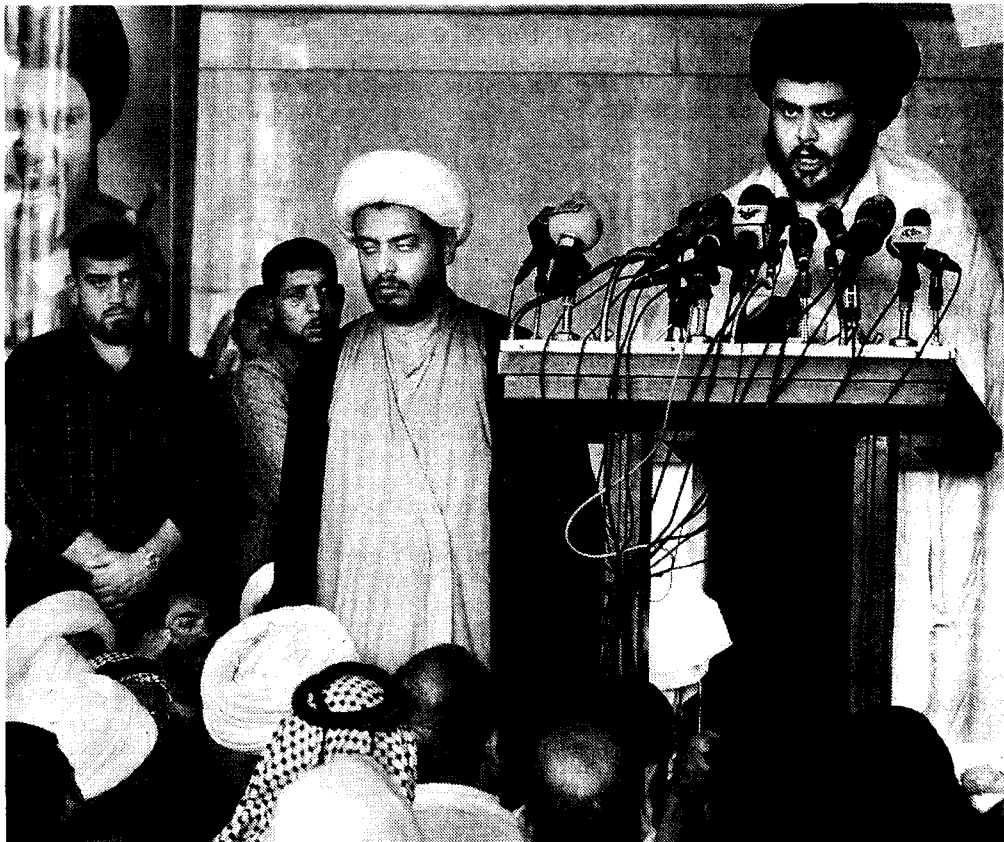
Top leaders of the Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI), which is represented on the IGC, were in exile in Teheran for 22 years. Mr. Al Sadr himself has close links with Grand Ayatollah Kadhim Hussein al-Hairi, a leading Shia cleric based in the Iranian holy city of Qom. Ayatollah Sistani traces his origin to Iranian city of Mashhad and most of his nine charitable organisations, engaged in providing housing for pilgrims and theology students, are in Iran.

Apart from Iran, the U.S. appears to be engaging Syria in its peace bid in Iraq. Syrian news agency, SANA has reported that the U.S. Secretary of State, Colin Powell, has sent a letter to his Syrian counterpart, Farouk Al-Sharaa explaining "the dangers of the developments in Iraq." Mr. Powell in the letter has

urged Syria "to give any possible help that could contribute to easing the situation there in a way that serves the country's unity and preserves its security and stability."

The U.S. President, George Bush, has also sent a separate letter to the the Syrian President, Bashar Al Assad. The news agency, however, did not reveal the contents of Mr. Bush's message. In a televised address on Tuesday, Mr. Bush said Iraq's neighbours "have responsibilities to make their region more stable." Elsewhere in Iraq, an uneasy calm prevailed over Fallujah, but short bursts of fighting have been taking place.

In a pre-dawn raid, U.S. AC-130 gunships struck guerilla hideouts in the city. Iraqi resistance fighters also fired mortar rounds, one of which landed on the roof of a building that is under the U.S. control.



The Shia cleric wanted by the U.S., Moqtada Al Sadr, addresses supporters at the grand mosque of Kufa on Friday during his first public appearance in two weeks. — AFP

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GUANTANAMO BAY / TRIAL DATES NOT SET

Two charged with war crimes conspiracy

By Sridhar Krishnaswami

WASHINGTON, FEB. 25. For the first time, the United States has brought formal charges against detenus at the Guantanamo Bay Naval base. Two suspected Al-Qaeda members — from Yemen and Sudan — have been charged with conspiracy to commit war crimes.

The Defence Department has said that the charges were made on Saturday and the two detenus would be brought before a military tribunal, a process not seen since the World War II. If convicted, the two could get life in prison and even death sentences though the Pentagon has said that military prosecutors will not be seeking death penalty.

The trials are expected to be held at the Guantanamo Bay base, but no dates have been set nor the panel of American military officers has been selected. The two have been charged with wilfully and knowingly conspiring with Osama bin Laden and others to commit terrorism and murder.

An unnamed Defence official has also been quoted as saying that the decision to file formal charges against Ali Hamza Almed Sulayaman al Bahlul of Yemen and Ibrahim Ahmed Mahmoud al Qosi of Sudan did not mean that they were the most dangerous of the 650-odd prisoners being held at the naval facility. Rather that these two cases were "ready for charging" now.

The Pentagon has said that al Qosi was at one time a key accountant for Osama when the Al-Qaeda chief was living in Sudan; he has also been the hand-



U.S. Army military police escort a detenu to his cell in Camp X-Ray at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba in this January 2002 file photo.

picked bodyguard and driver for Osama; and al Bahlul has been called a "key Al-Qaeda propagandist".

In the aftermath of the terror attacks of September 11, 2001, the U.S. President, George W Bush, authorised military trials of non-American citizens captured in the war against terrorism.

While the Pentagon has promised "full and fair" trails, critics say that aside from hold-

ing the prisoners without charges, the trials can be manipulated to bring about convictions.

At the Senate Intelligence Committee, the CIA Director, George Tenet, argued that while the Al-Qaeda may have been damaged seriously including on the financial front, it has spread its radical agenda to other groups and remains committed to attack American interests.

"The steady growth of Osama

bin Laden's anti-American sentiment throughout the wider Sunni extremist movement and the broad dissemination of Al-Qaeda destructive expertise ensure that a serious threat will remain for the foreseeable future with or without Al-Qaeda in the picture," Mr. Tenet told the panel where Democrats were especially keen on knowing the kind of intelligence mistakes made in the run up to 9/11 and in Iraq.

Obsessed with Iraq, Bush 'ignored' terror threat

The Times, London

WASHINGTON, March 22. — Mr George W Bush has been accused by a former White House official of ignoring the terrorist threat to USA before the 9/11 attacks, and of being over-eager to attack Iraq after them.

Mr Richard Clarke, who served as the US President's counter-terrorism co-ordinator and previously worked for the Clinton administration, said Mr Bush was vastly over-selling his achievements. Mr Bush had done "a terrible job on the war against terrorism", according to Mr Clarke, who is publishing a book on the subject this week. "Frankly, I find it outrageous that the President is running for re-election on the grounds that he's done such great things about terrorism. He ignored terrorism for months when maybe we could have done something."

Mr Clarke said he had written to Ms Condoleezza Rice, Mr Bush's National Security Adviser, on 24 January 2001 seeking an urgent Cabinet-level meeting "to deal with the impending Al-Qaida attack". A meeting did take



'Iraq! Saddam! Find out if there's a connection (with the 9/11 attacks)...'

place in April, yet the discussion was dominated by Iraq.

After 9/11, Mr Clarke said, the Bush administration's instinct was to target Iraq. Mr Bush asked him to find out if Iraq was involved. "He never said, 'Make it up,'" said Mr Clarke of Mr Bush. "But the entire conversation left me in absolutely no doubt that Mr Bush wanted me to come back with a report that said, 'Iraq did this.' He came back at me and said, 'Iraq! Saddam! Find out if there's a connection,' and in a very

'Tone down'

WASHINGTON, March 22. — Mr Bush and his Democratic rival, Mr John Kerry, have been warned to tone down their presidential polls attacks or risk a vote boycott by alienated Americans.

With a new poll showing Mr Bush and Mr Kerry neck-and-neck in the race, senior members of the Republican and Democratic parties appealed to the rivals to change their tactics.

"Let's keep it civil so we don't get so nasty that we discourage people from voting in a very important election," a Democratic Senator said.

— AFP

intimidating way."

Mr Donald Rumsfeld, Defence Secretary, went further, suggesting that the USA retaliate against Iraq. Mr Clarke said: "Mr Rumsfeld was saying we needed to bomb Iraq. We all said, 'But no, Al-Qaida is in Afghanistan.' And he said: "There aren't any good targets in Afghanistan, but there are lots of good targets in Iraq."

Mr Paul O'Neill, whom Mr Bush dismissed as Treasury Secretary, has said that from the outset the White House was focused on Saddam Hussein.

Bush urges world to fight terror

Associated Press

WASHINGTON, March 19. — One year after ordering the war against Iraq, Mr George W Bush marked the anniversary today by urging resolve in the war against terrorism by and saying that it was "the duty of every government to fight and destroy this threat to our people".

The US President said terrorists have killed innocent people around the world, most recently last week in Madrid where bombings claimed the lives of more than 200 people.

He said: "There was no neutral ground in the fight between civilization and terror... There can be no separate peace with the terrorist enemy. Any sign of weakness simply validates terrorist violence and invites more violence for all nations."

Mr Bush's speech concluded a weeklong effort to boost support for the war on terrorism at a time when cracks are forming in the US-led alliance that toppled Saddam Hussein. Ambassadors and diplomats from 84 countries joined members of the military and others in the audience.

Mr Bush acknowledged that the US-led war had caused bitter divisions among allies. He,

however, added: "Those differences belong to the past."

The President's speech was given added impetus by rising criticism from Massachusetts Sen. John Kerry, the presumptive Democratic presidential nominee. On Wednesday, Mr Kerry accused Mr Bush of stubbornly holding to policies that he said have driven away potential allies at the cost of lives and money.

Meanwhile, the *Washington Post* today reported that Islamic extremists, both indigenous and foreign, have taken over leadership of Saddam Hussein's Baath party cells and emerged dominant organisers and financiers of attacks on US and Iraqi security personnel, adds PTI.

Terror nukes: UN atomic energy agency chief Md ElBaradei today said successful terrorist attacks such as the train bombings in Spain heighten concern that one day terrorists could go nuclear, AFP adds from Vienna. "There's obviously a high level of sophistication in the terrorist community," Mr ElBaradei told reporters while flying from Washington. "That heightens the sense of concern that they (terrorists) might get their hands on any nuclear device or nuclear material."

Powell pays surprise visit to Baghdad

BAGHDAD, March 19. — US Secretary of State Gen. Colin Powell visited Baghdad unannounced on the first anniversary of the Iraq war. He told several hundred American soldiers and civilian workers today that America must maintain its fight against anti-democratic forces here "because we cannot let them win".

Speaking in a huge reception room in a palace built by Saddam Hussein, Gen. Powell spoke disparagingly of the those who, he said, are trying to stop through terrorism what the United States and its allies are trying to build. "We will fight against it. We will guard against it. They will not win. They will not win because you are here to make sure they lose," he said, drawing cheers and applause.

Assurance for India

The USA has said its grant of special military status to Pakistan will not have any impact on its ties with India, with which it has a "good" and "close" relationship, PTI adds from Washington. The announcement follows Gen. Powell's assurance to designate Pakistan as a major non-Nato ally. "No, it shouldn't," State Department spokesman Mr Adam Ereli said yesterday when asked at a media briefing whether the US decision would



Gen. Powell in Baghdad. — AFP

heighten tensions between them. **Jamaat unhappy:** Expressing apprehension about the US decision to reward Pakistan with the status of a "major non-NATO ally", the headline Jamaat-e-Islami party today said any such arrangement with Washington would "alienate the country from its best allies like China and Muslim countries". — Agencies

ইরাক থেকে স্পেনের সেনা প্রত্যাহারে ক্ষুব্ধ বৃশ প্রশাসন

ওয়শিংটন, মাদ্রিদ ও কায়রো, ১৮ মার্চ— মাদ্রিদে বিস্ফোরণে ২০০ জনের মৃত্যু হওয়ার পরেই নির্বাচনে ক্ষমতাসীন পপুলার পার্টির শোচনীয় হার এবং বিজয়ী সমাজতন্ত্রী দলের ভাবী প্রধানমন্ত্রীর তরফে ইরাক থেকে সেনা প্রত্যাহারের ঘোষণায় প্রচণ্ড চটেছে বৃশ প্রশাসন। মার্কিন কংগ্রেসে রিপাবলিকান দলের সবচেয়ে প্রবীণ সদস্য ডেনিস হ্যাটসার্ট মন্তব্য করেছেন, স্পেন ভোট দিয়ে সন্ত্রাসবাদীদের (আল কায়দা) তোয়াজ করছে। স্পেনের ভাবী প্রধানমন্ত্রী অবশ্য এই অভিযোগ উড়িয়ে দিয়েছেন। একটু ঘুরিয়ে মোটামুটি একই কথা বলেছেন মার্কিন সেনাবাহিনীর প্রধান রিচার্ড মায়ার্স। ইউরোপীয় দেশগুলিকে সতর্ক করে দিয়ে তাঁর বক্তব্য, সন্ত্রাসবাদের সামনে মাথা নত করা কোনও কাজের কথা নয়। জঙ্গিদের ঘটানো বিস্ফোরণে গত সপ্তাহে দু'শোরও বেশি মানুষের মৃত্যুর পরে স্পেনের ভাবী প্রধানমন্ত্রী যে ইরাক থেকে সেনা সরিয়ে নেওয়ার কথা বলেছেন, তার পরিপ্রেক্ষিতেই এই মন্তব্য করেছেন মায়ার্স। ইরাক-যুদ্ধের বর্ষপূর্তির সময়ে বিদেশনীতি নিয়ে নতুন করে প্রশ্নের মুখোমুখি হতে হচ্ছে আমেরিকাকে। স্পেনের নির্বাচনের ফলাফলও যে তাদের সেনা প্রত্যাহারের সিদ্ধান্তকে প্রভাবিত করেছে, সে প্রসঙ্গে মায়ার্স কিন্তু স্পষ্টই বলেছেন, “দুর্বলতা দেখানো খুব সহজ। কিন্তু তাতে তো সমস্যার সমাধান হয় না।”

এ দিকে, স্পেনের বিস্ফোরণের দায় স্বীকার করেছিল যে-সংগঠন, সেই আবু হাফস আল-মাসরি হুমকি দিয়েছে যে, তারা নতুন করে আঘাত হানার জন্য তৈরি হচ্ছে। জাপান, আমেরিকা, ইতালি, ব্রিটেন, সৌদি আরব বা অস্ট্রেলিয়ার মতো দেশ হিন্দুর পরবর্তী আক্রমণের লক্ষ্য হতে পারে। লন্ডনের একটি আরবি সংবাদপত্রকে পাঠানো বিবৃতিতে আল কায়দার ওই শাখা সংগঠনটি আমেরিকা ও তার বন্ধু দেশগুলিকে হুমকি দিয়েছে। কায়রোর একটি আরবি কাগজকে আল-মাসরি জানিয়েছে, স্পেনের নতুন সরকার ইরাক থেকে সেনা প্রত্যাহারের সিদ্ধান্ত নেওয়ায় তারা আপাতত স্পেনে কোনও গোপনীয় বাধাবে না। আল-মাসরি বিবৃতিতে বলা হয়েছে, “স্পেনের দু'খণ্ডে সমস্ত কাজকর্ম রক্ত রাখার সিদ্ধান্ত নিয়েছেন আমাদের নেতৃত্ব। ইরাক থেকে সেনা সরিয়ে আনার প্রতিশ্রুতি দিয়েছে নতুন স্প্যানিশ সরকার। এই সরকারের মনোভাব বুঝতে চাইছি আমরা।”

স্পেনের ব্রায়টার্স, এ পি

26 released from Guantanamo

AFP and IANS

WASHINGTON, March 16. — Twenty-six detainees were released in Afghanistan and Pakistan after being transferred from a US military detention centre in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, Pentagon officials said.

Those released yesterday included 23 Afghans and three Pakistanis, the Pentagon said in a statement.

"They no longer were deemed a threat and they no longer had intelligence value," said Major Michael Shavers, a Pentagon spokesman.

The Pentagon would provide no other information on the detainees or the transfer, citing operational and security reasons.

But they were the latest in a series of detainees who have been either released

or turned over to authorities of their home countries for further detention.

It came less than a week after five Britons were turned over to British authorities, flown to London and quickly released without charges.

The released Britons have charged in newspaper interviews and through lawyers that they were beaten and mistreated during their two years in US military custody.

The Pentagon yesterday dismissed those allegations as "lies" and said they would not be investigated because they lacked credibility.

"These allegations are fabrications. These are lies," said Maj. Shavers. "All the detainees were treated humanely and to the extent appropriate consistent with military necessity in accordance with the third Geneva Convention of 1949."

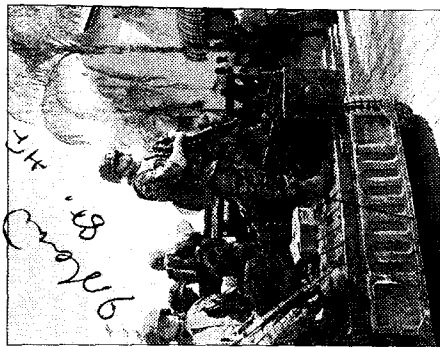
After the release, about 610 prisoners remain in detention in Guantanamo Bay.

THE STATESMAN

17 MAR 2004

**Former Haitian
exile sworn
in as new PM**

in as new PM



REUTERS
US Marines patrol outside a Toyota showroom at a Port-au-Prince suburb on Friday.

AP & AFP
Port-au-Prince (Haiti), March 13

Associated Press
Kabul, March 13

THE US military on Saturday announced a sweeping new operation across troubled southern and eastern Afghanistan, with the aim of destroying al-Qaida and the Taliban and ultimately reeling in Osama bin Laden.

The announcement came as the Americans stepped up their hunt for the al-Qaida leader and his top deputy, Ayman al-Zawahiri, believed to be hiding out in the border area between Afghanistan and Pakistan.

"We believe this will help bring the heads of the terrorist organisations to justice, by continuing to place pressure on them," said Lt. Col. Bryan Hilferty, a US military spokesman. The operation, however, was "about more than one person," he said.

Hilferty said American forces were confident they would even-

tually catch the al-Qaida leader, as well as Taliban chief Mullah Mohammed Omar, but not necessarily during the new operation. Hilferty said US forces are involved in what he described as a "small-scale air assault" in southern Afghanistan, but would not say where it was taking place.

A senior Afghan army commander in the southern Kandahar province, Haji Granai, said that US aircraft attacked a pickup truck carrying 12 suspected Taliban in Kandahar on Thursday, killing them all. The American planes swooped down on the truck near Sami Ghar in Maruf district, some 260 km east of Kandahar city.

Meanwhile, suspected Taliban militants killed seven Afghan soldiers in a raid on a border post in Maruf on March 3. The US military had no immediate comment.

US military relaunches operation against al-Qaida

The overall operation, dubbed 'Mountain Storm' was opened, Hilferty said. He said the entire 13,500-strong US-led coalition was involved. Hilferty said the operation was in effect a continuation of tactics already being used, such as intensive patrolling, village searches and impromptu checkpoints.

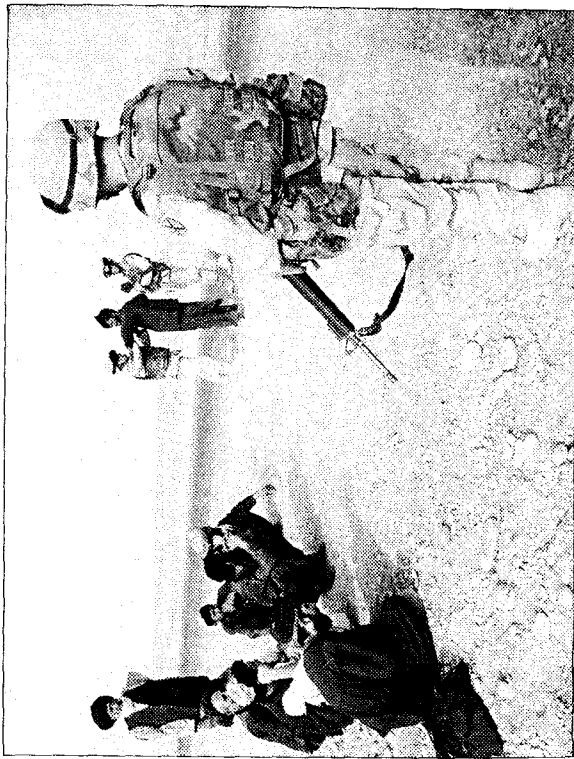
He declined to give specifics, but an AP reporter at Kandahar noted what base personnel said was heavier than usual air traffic. The base served a lobster and steak dinner on the eve of the new operation. The army traditionally serves special meals to kick off large offensives.

Some 70,000 Pakistani troops have moved into semi-autonomous tribal regions to take away maneuver room for al-Qaida and Taliban fugitives.

A February 24 operation in Wana in Pakistan's South Waziristan region, netted 24 suspe-

cts, but none were believed to be important al-Qaida operatives. But Afghans say they haven't done enough to seal the border, and complain that Taliban commanders have been organising operations from Quetta and Peshawar. On Saturday, tribal elders in South Waziristan gave a 24-hour deadline to a tribe accused of sheltering terrorists to hand over the fugitives or expect an armed force of 600 men to search the area forcibly.

Meanwhile, tribal elders in the South Waziristan region, which borders Afghanistan, have promised authorities help in the hunt for seven local tribesmen who are accused of sheltering terrorists. Elders from the Ahmedzai Wazir tribe, which has assembled some 600 armed men to begin the search, on Saturday set up a 10-member delegation to locate the fugitives and persuade them to surrender.



AP
US soldiers guard a group of Afghans at a roadside checkpoint in Kandahar on Friday.

Kerry's foreign policy

By C. Raja Mohan

412-10 11/3

I WOULD have been prepared to send troops immediately, period." That was John F. Kerry, the Senator from Massachusetts who has tightened his grip on the Democratic Party's presidential nomination, criticising the incumbent, George W. Bush, for avoiding a deeper military commitment in Haiti. What is going on here? Were not the Democrats supposed to end the interventionist policies of the Bush administration? The debate between the "unilateralists" of the Bush administration and the "multilateralists" of a potential Kerry Presidency is not about whether to intervene in the rest of the world. It is about when, where and how to use military force.

Mr. Kerry will disappoint many in the United States and the world who were hoping that the Democrats might offer a radically different foreign policy platform than that of Mr. Bush's "war party." There is no doubt that the Senator's campaign will offer a robust critique of the Bush foreign policy that has become so controversial at home and abroad. In democracies, elections are rarely won or lost over foreign policy issues. But thanks to September 11 and the American occupation of Iraq, national security issues will be at the top of the agenda of the 2004 U.S. elections.

In invoking the horrific images of September 11, Mr. Bush is presenting himself as a successful "war time President," offering the slogan of a steady stewardship in times of trouble. In turn, Mr. Kerry will showcase his own record as a Vietnam War veteran and his 19 long years in the Senate Foreign Relations Committee to argue that he has the necessary experience to deal with the new threats to the U.S. He has insisted that he will pursue "collective" and "internationalised" policies instead of the "imperial" approach of the Bush administration.

In terms of the basic premises, the Republicans are betting that September 11 has changed America irrevocably. The Democrats are hoping that there are enough opportunities to attack Mr. Bush for his failures in the war on terrorism and for misleading America into a costly occupation of Iraq. By quickly fending off his opponents in the Democratic Party, Mr. Kerry has created both time and space for himself to engage Mr. Bush in an extended debate on a full range of policy issues.

John Kerry will disappoint those who were hoping that the Democrats might offer a radically different foreign policy platform.

As the American foreign policy debate unfolds, there is great international interest in assessing whether the bold and unpopular departures that Mr. Bush has engineered in the U.S. approach to the world represent only a passing phase of America's post-Cold War political evolution or reflect enduring tendencies. The deeply polarising effect of the Bush administration at home also provides a rare edge to the political debates in this election, which is no longer seen as a cakewalk for the incumbent. Some opinion polls have already begun to give the challenger a small lead over the incumbent.

Now back to Haiti, which might, from a distance, seem somewhat inconsequential to the great debate under way in America. But in many ways Haiti provides an understanding of the

WORLD VIEW

fundamental fault line in the American foreign policy discourse in recent years — the definition of a framework for military intervention. Mr. Kerry argues that the American reluctance to intervene in Haiti in favour of President Aristide elected on a popular mandate sends a terrible message to the region and fragile democracies everywhere. The liberal internationalists who dominate the Democratic Party argue that America must be prepared to intervene in defence of universal values. Mr. Kerry has no desire to present his platform as a knee-jerk "anti-war" party as many radicals and pacifists in the U.S. want him to. He is closer to the internationalism of Woodrow Wilson, Franklin Roosevelt, Harry Truman and John Kennedy, all enthusiastic interventionists.

The Republicans argue that it is unwise for America to send its troops to every corner of the world. They have criticised the tendency in the Democratic administration under Bill Clinton (1993-2001) to spread American military resources too thin without achieving any political objectives. They insist that the U.S. must intervene only when its core national security interests are involved and not in defence of the loosely defined agenda of promoting democracy. To be effective, the Republicans say, American interven-

tions must use overwhelming power. Although a section of the Republicans such as the neo-conservatives have often demanded an expansive interventionist policy, the main line internationalists remain cautious in considering the use of force and decisive in applying it where real stakes are involved.

The form of intervention, too, is a critical part of the debate. For Mr. Kerry, it is important to take allies on board for any intervention. He would like the American interventions to take place within the framework of international law and the United Nations. Mr. Kerry believes no nation, however powerful it might be, can do without friends. He criticises Mr. Bush for alienating friends and allies around the world and for undermining the U.N.

Republican ideologues deeply distrust the U.N. They insist that American security cannot be made hostage to the interests of others who have the power to block decisions at the U.N. They would like the U.S. to pursue its interests, without the encumbrance of the U.N. and the burden of a backbiting committee that the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation has become.

But Mr. Kerry is careful not to rule out unilateral interventions. After all Mr. Clinton did so outside the U.N. framework in Kosovo in the late 1990s. Mr. Kerry's argument is that interventions must be done in a framework that strengthens the hands of the U.S. Mr. Bush's "arrogant, inept, reckless and ideological" foreign policy, Mr. Kerry insists, has cost the U.S. valuable friends abroad, diverted attention from the hunt for the Al-Qaeda, and established a precedent for others to invoke.

On Iraq, Mr. Kerry sounds tougher than Mr. Bush, when he accuses the President of considering a "cut and run" strategy to reduce the role of U.S. because of the impending elections in November. "It would be a disaster and a disgraceful betrayal of principle," says Mr. Kerry. Asked about the way out of Iraq, Mr. Kerry says "My exit strategy is success." The key to stabilising Iraq, he believes, lies in the U.N. and NATO, a

view that Mr. Bush has willy-nilly veered around to.

On terrorism and weapons of mass destruction, Mr. Bush and Mr. Kerry agree that they pose the biggest threat to American security. But the means they want to employ are different. The Republicans emphasise missile defence, pre-emption and regime change. The Democrats want to strengthen international law, universalise the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, focus on multilateralism and diplomacy. Mr. Kerry says he will reject the doctrine of pre-emption unveiled by Mr. Bush and use force only as a last resort.

Without denying the importance of military power in countering terrorism, Mr. Kerry underlines the importance of utilising America's "soft power." He declares that the "triumphalism" of Mr. Bush has inflamed Muslim opinion across the world and fuelled the fire of the *jihadis*. His emphasis will be on addressing the root causes of terrorism and on public diplomacy in the Middle East to promote the values of modernism. "The final victory in the war on terror depends on a victory in the war of ideas, much more than the war on the battlefield," Mr. Kerry says.

He has embraced the broad lines of criticism of the Bush administration that have come from many parts of the world and from within the U.S. His emphasis will be on American leadership through consultation with the allies, rather than an attempt to dominate the world. He is vulnerable, however, to the criticism that he flip-flops too often and has no conviction of his own on any issue. His Republican critics point to his support for the war against Iraq and contrast it against his criticism now. But then that is a risk any leader hugging the centre of a political spectrum incurs.

Mr. Kerry, from what he has said so far, is no less of an interventionist than Mr. Bush. The trick he has to perform in the campaign is to attack the incumbent for his failures while differentiating himself from the slogans of the Bush administration. But he does not want to be seen as going too far off the golden mean in the American foreign policy discourse. That debate, both on the left and the right, has shifted increasingly in favour of exercising American military power, within the U.N. framework where convenient and without it if necessary.

Kerry races ahead with more wins

Press Trust of India
New York, March 10

JOHN KERRY has swept the primaries in four southern states, getting an average of about 66 per cent votes, facing little opposition for Democratic nomination to challenge Republican President George W Bush in the November US presidential elections.

Kerry won over 70 per cent votes in Florida and Mississippi, more than 64 per cent in Texas and around 70 per cent in Louisiana.

"Next week Illinois has the opportunity to give me the delegates that actually make me the nominee of the party," he told some 3,000 cheering supporters in Chicago's Union Station.

'Arafat an outlaw to peace process'

JOHN KERRY says he no longer considers the Palestinian leader, Yasser Arafat, to be a statesman, but rather "an outlaw to the peace process" in West Asia who has been rightly shuffled aside. In a 1997 book, Kerry described "Arafat's transform-

GNS, Tampa

He had virtually wrapped up nomination in last week's primaries, which led to exit of John Edwards, the last serious candidate in the field.

Bush, who had virtually no challenger, wrapped up an almost non-existent race for the Republican presidential nomination, winning

more than needed delegates in the four southern states that held primary elections.

Addressing cheering supporters in Chicago after sweeping the nominating contests in the four states yesterday, Kerry criticised Bush over issues ranging from economy to health

care, foreign policy, fight against terrorism and the war in Iraq.

"This President doesn't have a record to run on, he has a record to run away from," Kerry claimed, adding, "That's why voters said change is coming to America. Let's send George Bush back to Texas and take back the White House."

Kerry also challenged Bush to a monthly debate ahead of the November vote, saying "if the President wants to have a debate a month on just one subject and we go around the country, that would be a great idea. Let's do it."

For the Vietnam hero, the major issue now is to select a running mate who would become Vice-President in case he wins the White House.

Mugabe seizes US plane with 'mercenaries'

Associated Press
Harare, March 8

ZIMBABWE seized a US-registered cargo plane at Harare's main airport late on Sunday night. Home Minister Kembo Mohadi said the Boeing 727-100 was detained because it was carrying 64 suspected mercenaries and military equipment.

Mohadi said the plane's owners had made "a false declaration of its cargo and crew". But it was not clear where the plane had come from, or what its purpose was.

The minister said full details about the plane seizure would be released once officials have established "the true identities of the men and their ultimate mission". Journalists were not shown the plane, which Mohadi said had been moved to a nearby military base.

US embassy officials said they had not been informed of the incident and were trying to get details from Zimbabwean officials. President Robert Mugabe has repeatedly accused the US and the UK of plotting to overthrow his government.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

9 MAR 2008

Outsourced US falls back on foul mouth

K.P. NAYAR

Washington, March 5: Outsourcing of American jobs to India is rapidly igniting sentiment here similar to anti-Japanese feelings in the 1980s when Japan flooded this country with their cars and consumer goods closing down US factories.

Captain Neil Telford of San Bruno police in California told reporters yesterday that hate calls to an Indian American candidate in the Democratic primaries for the US Congress were being investigated.

Andres Ramirez, campaign manager for Rohit Khanna, told the police that Khanna's office yesterday received 40 to 50 "very vulgar, angry and aggressive calls", some of them threatening to eliminate Khanna and his staff.

Some calls asked Khanna to "go back to India", others screamed: "Stop taking all our jobs". The police considered the calls serious enough to shield Khanna from going to his campaign office.

Last night, Khanna lost by a landslide to sitting Congressman Tom Lantos who, incidentally, relies heavily on Indian Americans for his work on Capitol Hill.

At the height of anti-Japanese sentiment in the 1980s, Vincent Chin, a Chinese American in Detroit, was mistaken for a Japanese and murdered by an auto worker who had lost his job.

The vitriolic phone calls to Khanna came on a day when both supporters and opponents of outsourcing girded their loins for what promises to be a long fight involving this latest aspect of globalisation, ardently promoted by Americans only

as long as it benefited them.

Yesterday, the US Senate, in a convincing vote of 70 against 26, passed an amendment to a bill aimed at stopping companies from sending government work outside the US, if those jobs were previously done within the country. It has to go through several stages before becoming law, if at all.

In the House of Representatives this week, Congressman Bernie Sanders and as many as 50 others put forward a bill that will prohibit companies from access to federal grants, loans and loan guarantees if they lay off more American workers than in other countries.

"The American people also have a right not to give corporate welfare to those companies that are leaving the US for India, China or Mexico," Sanders argued.

Anger against outsourcing will increase following a US labour department report today showing that private-sector employment was stagnant in February, and government jobs rose by a mere 21,000.

The report also revised downward earlier job creation figures published for December and January.

In a prospectus filed before the Securities and Exchange Commission in New York, General Electric, meanwhile, warned that "the political climate in the US could change so that it would not be practical for us to use international operations centres, such as call centres".

The company, which faces a resolution on outsourcing from its trade union, warned shareholders that profits could be affected by curbs on overseas operations.

US (2) GM 6/3



Khanna

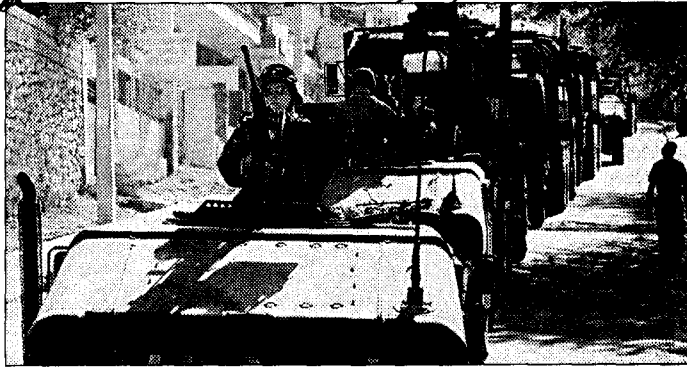
After Iraq, US polices Haiti

The New York Times
Port-Au-Prince, March 4

US MARINES took to the lawless streets of the capital on Wednesday, patrolling in light armoured vehicles and Humvees late in the afternoon in their first direct attempt to quell the violence that has racked the city since the former President, Jean-Bertrand Aristide, fled on Sunday.

The rebel leader, Guy Philippe, announced that he would disarm his men and leave the city, effectively ending a power struggle over who would control the streets. He agreed to disarm after a 10-minute meeting with US military commanders in the capital.

Haiti's interim President, Boniface Alexandre, spoke to the nation for the first time since Sunday, urging Haitians to unite to defuse the nation's crisis. "I call on all sides," Alexandre said in a radio address in Creole, "on all citizens of goodwill, to join us in a reconciliation process and to help each



REUTERS

A US Marine convoy patrols a street in Port-au-Prince on Thursday.

other in rebuilding our nation."

But the political crisis deepened. Prime Minister Yvon Neptune declared a state of emergency, which effectively suspended many of the rights guaranteed by Haiti's Constitution. He said the government was struggling to perform its most basic functions.

"I have remained in my post to ensure an orderly transition," Neptune said. "However, this is not the case for the ministers of

my government. Those who did not leave the country had to go underground for fear of violence to them and their families."

Alexandre said he had fired the police chief and named an interim chief, and had frozen all state accounts except the one controlled by Neptune.

On Thursday, Rebels and the police battled Aristide loyalists with volleys of gunfire in the squalid slums that sent thousands of people fleeing.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

7 5 MAR 2004

US Marines enter Haiti as Aristide quits

Reuters
Port-au-Prince, February 29

HAITI'S PRESIDENT Jean-Bertrand Aristide quit his chaotic Caribbean country on Sunday, driven out by a bloody revolt that put rebels near the capital and by pressure from the US and France.

President George Bush ordered deployment of US Marines to Haiti to serve as the "leading element" of an international stability force that would help bring stability. Canadian troops took control of the main airport in the capital on Sunday as part of an operation to restore order, RDI TV said.

Aristide said he resigned to avert "a bloodbath," but turmoil persisted in Port-au-Prince where shooting rang out as armed Aristide supporters roamed the streets and looters ransacked a police station.

Aristide, 50, whose role in a popular uprising that ended decades of the Duvalier dictatorship in the 1980s once made him a hero

of Haitian democracy, left early on Sunday morning, 24 days after the uprising began in the poorest country in the Americas.

"At his request, we facilitated his safe departure," a State Department official said in Washington.

Within hours, Chief Justice Boniface Alexandre was named to replace Aristide as laid out in the Constitution.

Aristide's destination was unclear but Haiti's consul in the capital of the neighbouring Dominican Republic said that he travelled to the eastern Caribbean nation of Antigua and Barbuda to refuel and then was planning to travel to Morocco. But Morocco said it would not grant him asylum.

Prime Minister Yvon Neptune read a statement by Aristide in which he said, "today is a very difficult day ... I am determined to respect the constitution. If tonight my resignation is the decision that can avoid a bloodbath, I consent to leave with hope there will be life, not death." It was evidently written on Saturday night.

With the rebels closing in on Port-au-Prince, many had feared a bloody battle for control between them and Aristide's supporters. The revolt, which flared in the city of Gonaives on February 5, has already killed nearly 70 people.

Speaking at a ceremony at Neptune's home, US Ambassador James Foley urged the rebels to lay down their arms. Rebels in Cap-Haitien, their stronghold, celebrated in the streets.



Jean-Bertrand Aristide
Beating the retreat

US rewards Libya, lifts travel curbs

WASH 5-3 2004

Washington, Feb. 26 (Reuters): The US today lifted a travel ban on Libya and will allow some American firms to negotiate deals in the country as it welcomed Tripoli's progress on getting rid of illicit weapons.

The Bush administration took the further step of allowing Libya to set up a diplomatic presence in Washington.

The moves came a day after Libya retracted statements by Libyan Prime Minister Shokri Ghanem, who had denied his country's guilt in the 1988 Lockerbie airliner bombing.

After Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi in December pledged to disclose and dismantle all his country's nuclear, chemical and biological programs, the US has held out the prospect of fully normalised ties at some point.

The comments from Ghanem had caused the announcement on the lifting of travel restrictions to be delayed by two days but the extent of the steps taken by the Bush administration

showed the US wants to respond in kind to the pace of Libyan efforts.

"Over the course of the last two months, Libya has taken significant steps in implementing its commitment to disclose and dismantle all weapons of mass destructions programme," the White House said in a statement.

The US said "more remains to be done" but it praised Libya's actions as "serious, credible and consistent" with Gaddafi's pledges.

Lifting the travel ban will allow US oil companies to travel to Tripoli to negotiate deals for the day that US trade sanctions are lifted. Libya is eager to bring US companies back, especially in the oil industry, its main source of foreign earnings.

Ghanem had angered US officials by denying Libya's guilt in the 1988 Lockerbie airliner bombing and saying Tripoli had only agreed to pay damages to victims in order to buy peace.

Libya was forced to issue a retraction yesterday, reverting to

their position as stated last August. At the time Libya had sent a letter to the UN saying Libya helped bring two suspects charged with the bombing to justice and "accepts responsibility for the actions of its officials."

"Libya's retraction yesterday clarified that their statement of August 15 still stands," said Sean McCormack, spokesman for the White House National Security Council.

But the clarification did little to soothe the anger of some of the families of the Lockerbie victims, who have been outraged by talk of normalising ties with Libya. "For the Bush administration, Lockerbie is just an issue to get around. It is typical of the Libyans to say one thing one day and another the next," said Susan Cohen, whose daughter died in the bombing. She accused the administration of trying to "whitewash" Lockerbie and of making Gaddafi into a hero.

African leaders gather tomorrow for a summit to adopt a

common defence policy and give the 53-nation African Union (AU) the right to intervene in armed conflicts across the continent, AU officials said.

But they said the two-day meeting in Gaddafi's hometown of Sirte would reject a Libyan proposal to disband all national armies in favour of one continental force.

With fragile peace efforts in the continent's many troublespots, there is international pressure on the AU to take an active lead in peacekeeping.

African defence ministers who met this week in Sirte to prepare for the extraordinary summit finalised a document on African Common Defence and Security policy and Non-Aggression which heads of state and prime ministers will adopt with minor changes, diplomats and AU sources said. The document says wars and civil strife are the main obstacles to development and turn would-be consumers and producers into millions of uprooted refugees.



Libyan Prime Minister Shokri Ghanem (Reuters)

USA lifts travel ban on Libya

Associated Press



Col Gaddafi: Relieved

WASHINGTON, Feb. 26. — The USA lifted a long-standing ban on travel to Libya today after Colonel Muammar Gaddafi's government affirmed that it was responsible for the bombing of an American jetliner over Lockerbie, Scotland in 1988.

The White House announcement lifted travel curbs that have been in place for 23 years against Libya, a country which the USA had long branded a sponsor of state terrorism.

Allowing US travel to Libya would give American corporations an opportunity to do lucrative business legally in Libya's rich oil fields. It also would help Col Gaddafi emerge from semi-isolation.

The lifting of the travel ban came after the Jamahiriya news agency disavowed assertions by the Libyan prime minister that Libya had not acknowledged it blew the Pan Am Flight 103 out of the skies in 1988, killing 270 people, including 181 Americans.

The statement, which appeared at midday on Libya's web site, said Libya had helped bring two suspects to justice "and accepts responsibility for the actions of its officials".

The USA has been moving toward improved relations with Tripoli since Col Gaddafi renounced the development of WMD and allowed weapons inspectors to verify that his country was abandoning nuclear, chemical and biological programmes.

The administration already has decided to send a US diplomat to Tripoli after a quarter-century of icy distance, officials said.

Rebels trigger suicide blast as Rumsfeld arrives

Reuters
Kirkuk, February 23

A SUICIDE bomber rammed a car into a police station in the northern city of Kirkuk on Monday, killing 13 people and wounding 51 others, shortly before US Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld flew into Baghdad on an unannounced visit to assess security in the troubled country.

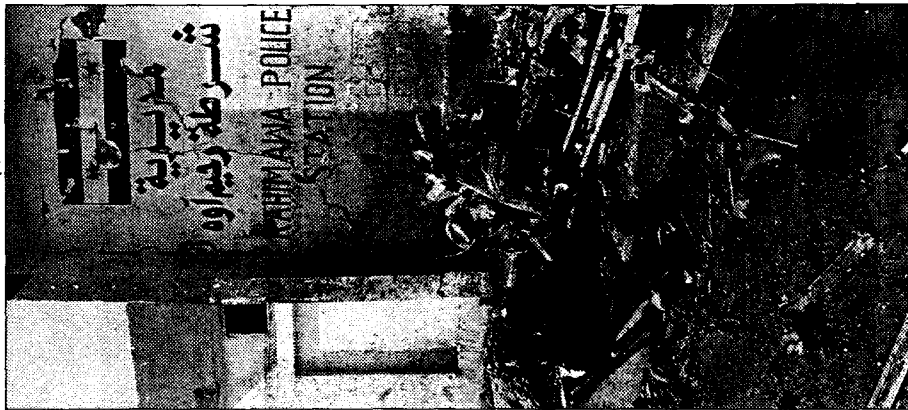
Police said all of those killed in the blast were policemen. "The bomber took us by surprise. We didn't even manage to fire a single bullet at him," said policeman Saman Ali.

The US is banking on Iraqi police and security forces taking over control of the country once American soldiers leave, but Iraqis can barely protect themselves from guerrillas who have attacked police stations to discourage them from cooperating with the coalition. More than 300 Iraqi policemen have been killed since Saddam Hussein was ousted in April.

A police official said the attack was carried out by a suicide bomber driving a car in a Kurdish section of Kirkuk, an oil-rich city 250 km north of Baghdad where ethnic tensions are running high. "Parts of the bomber, his legs and hands, were scattered inside the police station," said a wounded policeman whose skin was blackened. The explosion badly damaged 13 cars and sent car parts flying over 100 metres away.

The bomber struck when police were vulnerable while changing shifts and loading their weapons, a pattern seen in other bombings. Pools of blood covered ice and snow patches after the bomber drove his car into the gate of the unfortified police station.

Armed only with AK-47 assault rifles, Iraqi police often complain that US troops do not provide them with protection. The latest carnage erupted at a time when the Kurds are pressing for greater autonomy and competing



The remains of the car that the bomber drove into the Rahimawa police station.

with Arabs and Turkmen for influence over the city of Kirkuk.

The US military has repeatedly said Osama bin Laden's al-Qaida has infiltrated Iraq to carry out attacks aimed at turning the country's sects against each other and trigger civil war. The Americans also blame the violence on Saddam loyalists.

Al-Qaida hand in Iraq attacks: US

Reuters
Baghdad, February 23

US DEFENCE Secretary Donald Rumsfeld flew into Iraq on Monday to gauge security risks ahead of a planned handover of power to Iraqis and to weigh the ongoing insurgency. Rumsfeld, making his fourth visit to Iraq since the war, was greeted at Baghdad airport by US civilian administrator Paul Bremer. Protected by tight security, he met senior officers of the more than 100,000 American contingent in Iraq.

Rumsfeld is assessing whether Iraqi police and security forces will be able to take over more security responsibilities from US soldiers after a handover of power to Iraqis on June 30. The Kirkuk carnage on Monday morning underlined the problems they face. Acknowledging this, Bremer told the Defence Secretary that the chief threat to stability is evolving away from pro-Saddam guerrillas to suicide bom-



US Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld in Baghdad on Monday.

bers and other terrorists, including members of the al-Qaida.

Rumsfeld also met military commanders on plans to shift security responsibilities to Iraqis in the face of intensified attacks.

S Korea sends troops to Kirkuk

A 3,000-STRONG unit of South Korean troops to be sent to Iraq in Seoul's first overseas deployment of combat forces since the Vietnam War was officially launched on Monday.

The force of 1,400 troops and 1,500 engineers and doctors was named the 'Zaytun' unit, which means olive branch in Arabic and symbolises peace. The troops will be deployed in the Kurdish town of Kirkuk.

Reuters, Seoul

US cloud on Iraq handover

NSD
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 WJ

Transfer of power in Baghdad linked to American Presidential elections

The New York Times
 Washington, February 19

IN THE George Bush Administration, it is considered heresy to suggest postponing the planned return of sovereignty to Iraq. Turning over control by June 30, officials say, is crucial to assuaging Iraqi distress over living under US occupation.

Yet in recent weeks, diplomats and even some in the administration have begun to worry that the date reflects more concern for US politics than Iraqi democracy. Their fear is that an untested government taking power on June 30 may not be strong enough to withstand the pressures bearing down on it.

"When we went into Iraq, our plan was to have a government, build a structure and write a constitution that would be a source of long-term stability," said an administration official. "Now that's out the window."

Many in the administration say that while they have no proof that the urgency to install a government is politically

an interim government.

Annan reportedly endorsed the view on Thursday that the interim Iraqi government to take office this summer cannot be chosen by direct elections, but he will not make his recommendation on Iraq's political future for at least a week, senior UN diplomats said.

The US wants that government to rule while elections are held later in the year or in 2005 for a constitution-writing legislature. Eventually, elections are to be held to ratify the constitution and establish a permanent government. US officials say that Brahimi was told that one option he must not accept is postponement of the June 30 date. "It is holy writ," said an official.

Two US soldiers killed: A roadside bomb killed two US soldiers and one Iraqi in Khadiyah on Thursday, while insurgents on Wednesday night pounded Baghdad's main prison with mortar bombs and rockets before US troops shot dead one and arrested 55, AFP reports.

Iraqi elections: Who wants what

BUSH OFFICIALS: Would like transfer to Iraqis to show progress being made. But wants to avoid a theocracy or a Shia-Sunni civil war

SHIA CLERGY: Impatient for elections to take place. Know they will come to power in any fair poll. Reports say they have indicated September is also okay

SUNNI ARABS: Not at all enthusiastic about elections as they will surely hand over power to Shias. Worried about loss of minority rights, but equally against US staying on

UNITED NATIONS: Kofi Annan has said Iraq is not ready for polls, fears civil war. The US seems to agree to this. The UN needs to persuade Shias

motivated, it feels to them like part of a White House plan to permit Bush to run for re-election while taking credit for establishing self-rule in Iraq.

"I can make all kinds of arguments about why we need to establish democracy in Iraq on an urgent basis," said another administration official. "But when you hear from on high that this is what we must do, and there can be no questioning of it, it sounds like politics."

This week, the Administration is in the odd position of insisting on Iraqi self-rule by June 30, while awaiting a recommendation from UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, on how the interim government should be chosen and the form it should take. Annan's special envoy, Lakhdar Brahimi, went to Iraq to meet Iraqi leaders, including Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, to work out some sort of consensus on the shape of

US restores diplomatic presence in Tripoli

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London, Feb. 10 (Reuters): The US, responding to Libya's change of heart on banned weapons, has restored its diplomatic presence in Tripoli after decades of hostility, Libyan and US officials said today.

Libya's once-shunned leader Muammar Gaddafi edged further towards international acceptance with a visit to his home town by Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi and a promise of a meeting with British Prime Minister Tony Blair.

"Yes, Americans came to Libya to work inside the Belgian embassy in the US interests section in Libya and Libyans will go to America to work in the Libyan interests section there," Libyan foreign minister Mohamed Abderrhmane Chalgam said in London.

A US official confirmed a diplomat had returned to the Libyan capital for the first time,

but did not say when. "We presently have one US diplomat in Tripoli to assist the US WMD experts," the official said.

The US official, who asked not to be named, said other American diplomats were expected to go to Tripoli later this month. Libya, whose quest for ties with the US and its allies is driven by economic necessity, pledged in December to scrap its WMD programmes in cooperation with foreign experts.

A state department official, who asked not to be named, said the US diplomat would remain in Tripoli "for a while", but said this fell short of a permanent diplomatic presence. "We have not established an official, permanent, diplomatic presence in Libya. That presumes we have a level of relations that we have not established," the official added.

Washington recalled its last

ambassador in 1980 after a mob sacked the embassy in Tripoli.

Britain for talks

British foreign secretary Jack Straw said at a news conference with Chalgam that Blair planned talks with Gaddafi "as soon as convenient", but no date had been fixed. Blair earlier met Chalgam, making the first visit to Britain by a Libyan foreign minister since Gaddafi seized power in 1969.

Talks between Blair and Gaddafi would set the seal on Libya's reintegration, though Berlusconi's meeting with the unpredictable colonel in his home town of Sirte was the first by a western leader since Tripoli's December 19 weapons pledge. Berlusconi and Gaddafi were expected to discuss joint efforts to stem the flow of illegal migrants from Libyan shores across the Mediterranean.



MODERN TIMES: Two persons wearing costumes wait for a parade on San Marco square in Venice on Saturday, as the city kicked off its famous carnival with a festival of eastern delights featuring street theatre, parades and concerts on an 'Orient Express' theme. — AFP

Bush defends Iraq invasion WSJ h. 10.1

Associated Press

WASHINGTON, Feb. 8. — Defending his decision to invade Iraq, Mr George W Bush said although stockpiles of biological and chemical weapons have not been found, Saddam Hussein had the capacity to produce such arms and could have developed a nuclear weapon over time.

The US President denied he led the USA into war

under false pretenses, but he acknowledged that some prewar intelligence apparently was inaccurate. He did not directly respond to election-year allegations that his administration exaggerated intelligence to bolster a march to oust Saddam.

“We will find out about the weapons of mass destruction that we all thought were there,” Bush said in the interview taped yesterday in the Oval Office with Tim Russert, host

of NBC’s *Meet the Press*. It was broadcast today.

Mr Bush said he decided to go to war based on the intelligence he had at hand about Saddam, but said CIA director Mr George Tenet’s job is not in jeopardy. “I strongly believe the CIA is ably led by Mr George Tenet... Intelligence is a vital part of fighting and winning the war against the terrorists.”

Charles in Iraq: Prince Charles paid a surprise visit to Iraq today, strolling

around one of Saddam former palaces to inspect British troops and share a traditional Arabic coffee with local dignitaries, AFP adds from Basra.

Japan troops: Japanese ground troops crossed the Kuwaiti border into Iraq today, launching the first deployment of the Self-Defence Forces to a combat zone since World War II, a Japanese commander said, AFP adds from Navistar at the Iraqi-Kuwaiti border.

9 FEB 2004

Powell has doubts on war stand: Post

WS (1) HC (6) RW

Agence France Presse

WASHINGTON, Feb. 3. — US secretary of state Gen. Colin Powell has said he does not know if he would have called for an invasion of Iraq if he had been told it had no stockpiles of banned weapons, the *Washington Post* reported today.

Gen. Powell made public his doubts virtually a year to the day after he made the US case for war in a crucial speech to the UN Security Council. But he insisted the United States was still right to launch the invasion last March.

The secretary of state said that even without weapons of mass destruction, Iraq's President Saddam Hussein still wanted them. He told the *Post* the administration's claims that Saddam already had chemical, biological and nuclear arms had just made the case for war more urgent.

Asked if he would have rec-

ommended an invasion if he had known Iraq had no banned weapons, Gen. Powell replied: "I don't know, because it was the stockpile that presented the final little piece that made it more of a real and present danger and threat to the region and to the world." He said the "absence of a stockpile changes the political calculus; it changes the answer you get." The *Washington Post* said that throughout the interview yesterday, Gen. Powell "tried to balance the administration's rationale for going to war with the reality that no weapons of mass destruction have been uncovered in Iraq". President George W Bush yesterday ordered an independent investigation into the intelligence failure over Iraq's arms.

The administration has faced mounting pressure over Iraq since former chief US weapons inspector Mr David Kay said last week that no banned weapons would be found in Iraq.

Britain to probe 'flawed' intelligence about Iraq

LONDON, Feb. 3. — The British government today announced that it would launch an inquiry into the intelligence about Iraq's alleged weapons of mass destruction that underpinned its decision to go to war.

"There are issues to deal with intelligence" that need to be looked at, Prime Minister Mr Tony Blair said, appearing before a committee of senior parliamentarians.

Lord Robin Butler of Brockwell, former Cabinet secretary and head of the civil service between 1988 and 1998, will lead the inquiry committee, foreign secretary Jack Straw told the House of Commons later.

The committee, which would report to Mr Blair before July, would have access to all intelligence assessments and would be able to call witnesses to give oral evidence in private, he said.

It will also include a Labour and a Conservative lawmaker. The Liberal Democrats have refused to participate in the inquiry. — PTI



Mr Jack Straw arrives at 10, Downing Street on Tuesday. Mr Tony Blair (left) appears before the parliamentary committee. — AFP & PTI

ইরাকে অস্ত্র নিয়ে চাপে বৃশ, তদন্তাদেশ

ওয়শিংটন ও লন্ডন, ২ ফেব্রুয়ারি— ইরাক যুদ্ধের প্রধান কারণ হিসাবে সাদ্দাম হুসেনের যে গোপন গণবিধ্বংসী অস্ত্রভাণ্ডারের কথা বলা হয়েছিল, তা তুল ছিল বলে মনে নেওয়ার পরে বৃশ ও ক্রয়ার সরকার নিজের নিজের দেশে প্রবল চাপের মধ্যে পড়েছে। গোয়েন্দা দফতর কী ভাবে এত বড় তুল করল তা জানার জন্য এই সপ্তাহেই মার্কিন প্রেসিডেন্ট জর্জ ডবলিউ বৃশ নিরপেক্ষ তদন্ত কমিটি গঠনের কথা ঘোষণা করবেন বলে ইঙ্গিত। একই ধরনের তদন্তের জন্য ব্রিটিশ সরকারের উপরও চাপ বাড়ছে। বিরোধীরা চলাতি সপ্তাহেই ব্রিটিশ পার্লামেন্টে এ জন্য তদন্তের দাবি জানিয়ে প্রস্তাব আনছে। প্রধানমন্ত্রী টনি ক্রয়ানের মুখপাত্র ইঙ্গিত দিয়েছেন, সরকার এ নিয়ে শীঘ্রই তাদের সিদ্ধান্ত জানাবে। মুখপাত্রটি বলেন, ইরাকে গোপন অস্ত্রভাণ্ডার খুঁজে না পাওয়ার ফলে যে সমস্যা দেখা দিয়েছে, তা এড়িয়ে যাওয়া হচ্ছে না। তবে কী ভাবে এই সমস্যার মোকাবিলা করবে তা নিয়ে সরকারের মনোভাব জানিয়ে শীঘ্রই পার্লামেন্টে বিবৃতি দেওয়া হবে।

ইরাকে ওই গোপন অস্ত্রভাণ্ডার খুঁজে

বার করার কাজে নিযুক্ত বৃশ প্রশাসনের নিজস্ব অস্ত্রপরীক্ষক দলের প্রধান ডেভিড কে গড সপ্তাহেই ইস্তফা দিয়ে জানিয়েছেন, ইরাকে সে রকম কোনও অস্ত্রভাণ্ডার নেই। তাঁর সিদ্ধান্ত, ইরাকে রাসায়নিক ও জীবাণু অস্ত্রের কোনও ভাণ্ডার ছিল না। উল্লেখ্য, এর আগে রাষ্ট্রপঞ্জের অস্ত্রপরীক্ষক দলের প্রধান হান্স ব্লিঙ্ক ও রাষ্ট্রপঞ্জের পরমাণু অস্ত্র সংক্রান্ত বিশেষজ্ঞ আল বারাদেই ইরাকে গণবিধ্বংসী অস্ত্রভাণ্ডার পাওয়া যায়নি বলে জানিয়েছিলেন। এখন হোয়াইট হাউসও তা স্বীকার করে নিয়েছে। অথচ, যুক্ত স্তর করার আগে বৃশ প্রশাসন রাষ্ট্রপঞ্জের নিরাপত্তা পরিষদের কাছে ইরাকের রাসায়নিক ও জীবাণু অস্ত্রের ভাণ্ডার সম্পর্কে 'খুঁটিনাটি তথ্য' দিয়ে বিশ্বকে বোঝানোর চেষ্টা করেছিল যে ইরাক আক্রমণ করাটা কত জরুরি।

সম্ভ্রতি মার্কিন কংগ্রেসের সামনে হাজির হয়েও মার্কিন অস্ত্রপরীক্ষক দলের পদত্যাগী প্রধান ডেভিড কে জানিয়েছেন, নব্বইয়ের দশকের মাঝামাঝিই ইরাক বৃশ কিছু গণবিধ্বংসী অস্ত্র নষ্ট করে ফেলেছিল। তদন্ত করতে গিয়ে যে সব সাক্ষ্যগ্রহণ তাঁর

হাতে এসেছে তা থেকে তিনি এই সিদ্ধান্তে এসেছেন যে, বৃশ ইরাকে আক্রমণের তোড়জোড় করার অনেক আগেই সাদ্দাম হুসেন ওই সব অস্ত্র নষ্ট করে ফেলতে শুরু করেছিলেন। তা সত্ত্বেও ইরাকে বিধ্বংসী অস্ত্রভাণ্ডার রয়েছে বলে ঘোষণা করেই আমেরিকা সে দেশে আক্রমণ করে। ইরাক যুদ্ধে একদিকে কয়েক হাজার ইরাকি ও অন্তত ৫০০ মার্কিন সেনা প্রাণ হারিয়েছে। এই তুলের জন্য কারা দায়ী খুঁজতে নিরপেক্ষ তদন্ত করা উচিত বলে ডেভিড কে কংগ্রেসকে জানিয়েছেন। কে-র এই বক্তব্য হোয়াইট হাউসকে এতটাই ধাক্কা দিয়েছে যে, বৃশের জাতীয় নিরাপত্তা সংক্রান্ত বিষয়ের দীর্ঘ উপদেষ্টা কন্ডোলিজা রাইস টিভির সামনে স্বীকার করতে বাধ্য হয়েছেন, ইরাকের অস্ত্রভাণ্ডার সম্পর্কে গোয়েন্দাসূত্রে পাওয়া তথ্য ভুল ছিল।

গোড়ায় বৃশ প্রশাসন নিরপেক্ষ তদন্তের দাবি উত্থিয়ে দিয়েছেন এবং মার্কিন কংগ্রেসের রিপাবলিকান ও ডেমোক্রেট সদস্যদের প্রবল চাপের মুখে পড়ে বৃশ এই সপ্তাহেই সম্ভবত এ ব্যাপারে চূড়ান্ত একটা সিদ্ধান্ত নিতে চলেছেন। নির্বচনী বছরে বৃশকে কোণঠাসা করার এই সুযোগ

ডেমোক্রেটরা হাতছাড়া করতে চান না। ডেমোক্রেট দলের প্রেসিডেন্ট পদপ্রার্থী হওয়ার অন্যতম দাবিদার হোয়াইট হাউস বৃশের বিরুদ্ধে ইরাক নিয়ে দেশবাসীর কাছে শিখ্যা কথা বলার অভিযোগ এনেছেন। গত শুক্রবার বৃশ সাংবাদিকদের এই প্রশ্নে বলেন, "আমি আমেরিকার নাগরিকদের জানাতে চাই যে, আমিও প্রকৃত তথ্য জানতে চাই" এখন তদন্তের শর্তাবলী নিয়ে মার্কিন কংগ্রেসের বরিষ্ঠ সদস্যদের সঙ্গে হোয়াইট হাউসের বেশ কিছুটা দর কষাকষি চলছে। পরে একজন প্রবীণ ডেমোক্রেট সদস্য বলেন, সরকারের নীতি নির্ধারণেরা গোয়েন্দাসূত্রে পাওয়া তথ্যের অপব্যবহার করেছিলেন কি না, সেটাও তদন্তে দেখা উচিত।

ইরাক যুদ্ধে বৃশের ঘনিষ্ঠতম মিত্র ক্রয়ারকেও তাঁর দেশের মানুষের সমালোচনার মুখে পড়তে হচ্ছে। ব্রিটিশ বিচারপতি লর্ড হাটন সম্ভ্রতি এক তদন্ত কমিশনের রিপোর্টে ইরাক যুদ্ধের আগে গোয়েন্দা তথ্য ফাঁপিয়ে ফুলিয়ে দেখানোর দায় থেকে ক্রয়ারকে অব্যাহতি দিলেও ব্রিটেনে নিরপেক্ষ তদন্তের দাবি ক্রমশই জোরালো হচ্ছে।

— রয়টার্স

25 JAN 2004

Kay quits, says Iraq has no arms stockpiles

Washington, Jan. 24 (Reuters): Former chief US arms hunter David Kay, who stepped down from his post yesterday, has concluded that Iraq had no stockpiles of biological and chemical weapons, a potential embarrassment for President George W. Bush and ammunition to his election-year Democratic rivals.

But a senior US official said today that Vice-President Dick Cheney, attending the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, still believed "the jury's still out" on whether Iraq had chemical or biological weapons or missiles, as contained in official US intelligence estimates.

Undercutting the White House's public rationale for the war on Iraq, Kay said that he had concluded there were no such stockpiles to be found.

"I don't think they existed," Kay said. "What everyone was talking about is stockpiles produced after the end of the last (1991) Gulf War, and I don't think there was a large-scale production programme in the 1990s," he said.

"I think we have found probably 85 per cent of what we're going to find," said Kay, who re-



Former US chief arms hunter David Kay. (Reuters)

turned from Iraq in December and told the CIA that he would not be going back.

"I think the best evidence is that they did not resume large-scale production and that's what we're really talking about," Kay said.

In his annual State of the Union address on Tuesday, Bush again insisted that former Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein had actively pursued dangerous

weapons programmes right up to the start of the US-led invasion in March.

"Had we failed to act," Bush said, "the dictator's weapons of mass destruction programmes would continue to this day."

The UN's top nuclear watchdog said today he was not surprised at Kay's conclusion. "I am not surprised about this," International Atomic Energy Agency chief Mohamed El Baradei said

on the sidelines of the Davos meeting. "We said already before the war, that there was no evidence of this, so this is really not a surprise."

White House firm

Yesterday, the White House stood firm. "We remain confident that the Iraq Survey Group will uncover the truth about Saddam Hussein's regime, the regime's weapons of destruction programs," spokesman Scott McClellan said.

The CIA announced that former UN weapons inspector Charles Duelfer, who has expressed his own doubts that unconventional weapons would be found, would succeed Kay as Washington's chief arms hunter.

Duelfer, 51, a former deputy executive chairman of the UN Special Commission that was responsible for dismantling Iraq's weapons of mass destruction, previously expressed doubts that unconventional weapons would be found.

But after his new job was announced, Duelfer said he was keeping an open mind and his past comments had been made from the sidelines.

London, Jan 24 (Reuters): British Prime Minister Tony Blair yesterday stuck by his stance weapons of mass destruction would eventually be found in Iraq, despite the top man hunting them saying they did not exist.

"It is important people are patient and we let the Iraq Survey Group (ISG) do its work," a spokesman for Blair said. "There is still more work to be done and we await the findings of that. But our position is unchanged."

However, Donald Anderson, a member of Blair's ruling Labour Party and chairman of parliament's foreign affairs committee, told BBC television: "It looks increasingly forlorn that there are any chances now of finding those stockpiles."

David Kay, stepping down on Friday as head of the US-led ISG hunt for banned Iraqi weapons that replaced earlier UN inspections, said no arms would be found.

Blair position unchanged



Tony Blair

Blair joined US President George W. Bush in ordering the war to oust Saddam Hussein on grounds Iraq possessed weapons of mass destruction and was a threat to world peace.

Although no such weapons have been found since Saddam was toppled last April, Blair says he will be proved right.

"What they have found already is a whole raft of evidence about clandestine operations that should have been disclosed to the UN," he said in a

recent interview. "What was the point of having all these elaborate concealment mechanisms if there was nothing to conceal?" Britain's minority Opposition Liberal Democrats said Kay's remarks cast severe doubt on the government's reasoning for the Iraq war.

"This is yet another massive blow to the credibility of the British government's case that Iraq presented such a serious threat to the UK that only military action would do," said the party spokesman.

Iraq blast

A car bomb exploded at the entrance to an American military base in Iraq today, killing three US soldiers just hours after separate blasts elsewhere left two servicemen and at least four Iraqis dead.

Witnesses said they saw a car ram a checkpoint outside the base in Khalidiya and explode as a number of soldiers were getting out of a vehicle.

Assassin strikes at America's Iraq gate

W. Hussein T. 9 19/1

Baghdad, Jan. 18 (Reuters): A suicide bomber detonated half a tonne of explosives outside the US seat of power in Iraq today, killing at least 20 people in the deadliest attack since the capture of Saddam Hussein.

The explosion in the heart of the Iraqi capital came a day before a key meeting in New York between the UN, Iraq's governing council and US and British officials on the political future of the country.

The bomb exploded at what the Americans call the Assassin's Gate, the main entrance to the "Green Zone", formerly Saddam's Republican Palace complex and now the top-security civilian and military headquarters of the US-led administration.

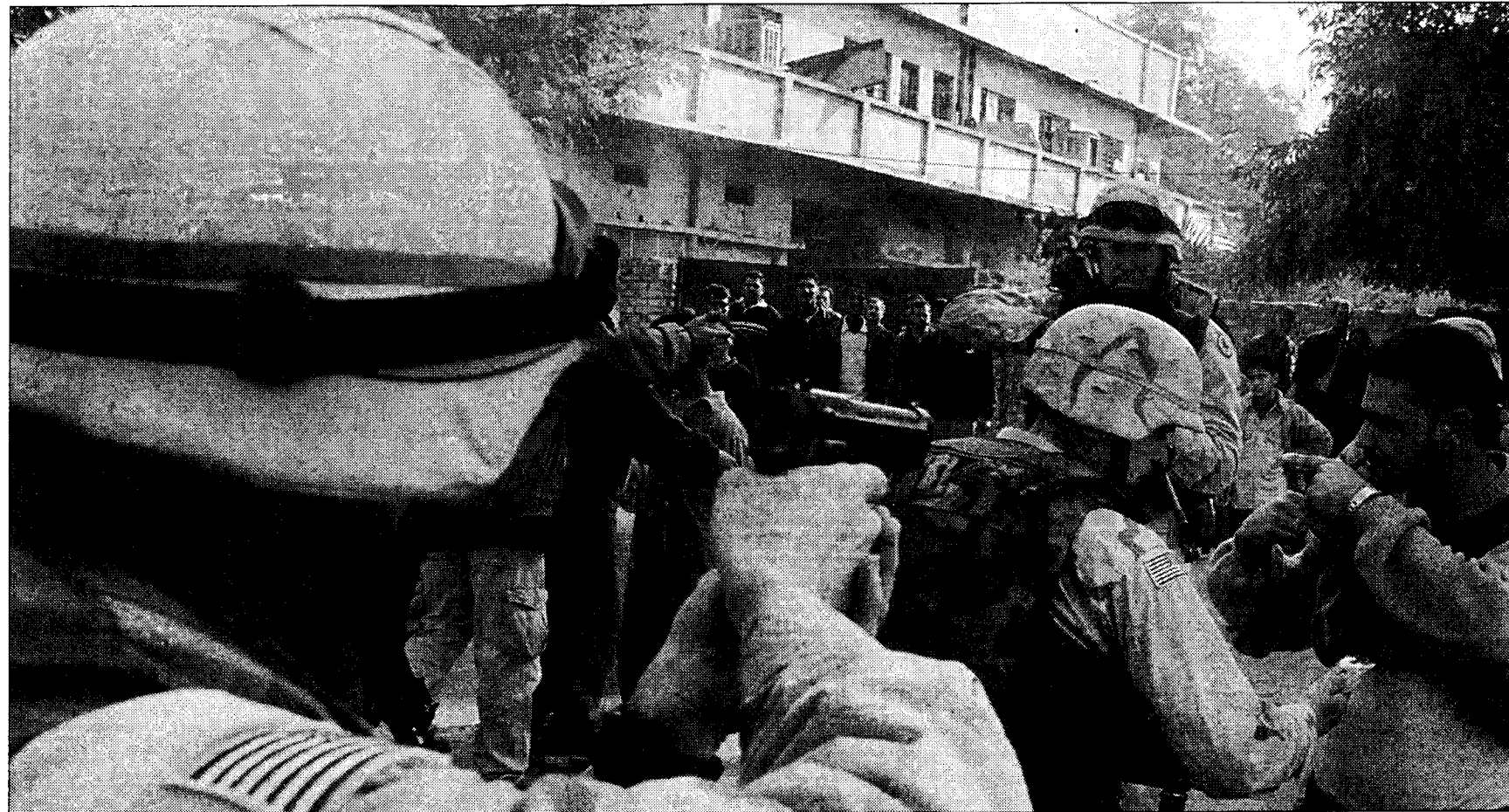
The US confirmed at least 20 deaths, but the toll looked likely to rise. More than seven hours after the blast, soldiers were pulling bodies from the wreckage as bulldozers shovelled debris and moved shattered cars.

Officials said many of the bodies were too badly burnt or wounded to identify immediately.

Iraq's US governor Paul Bremer has repeatedly said Washington will hand over sovereignty to Iraqis on June 30. But many Iraqis, including the most influential Shia cleric, disagree strongly with a US plan to let regional caucuses select a government rather than have direct elections.

Bremer and members of Iraq's governing council will meet UN Secretary General Kofi Annan tomorrow to try and enlist his support for the US plan. Continuing violence 10 months after the coalition invasion of Iraq poses a serious concern for President George W. Bush, who faces an election in November.

SADDAM'S PALACE LIVES UP TO NAME GIVEN BY NEW OCCUPANTS



A US soldier aims his weapon at an Iraqi being searched by another soldier near the site of the blast on Sunday. (AFP)

A US military spokesman said at least two American contractors were believed to have been killed in the blast, which also wounded more than 100 people, almost all Iraqis.

The explosion shook central Baghdad and sent plumes of black smoke into the mist of the winter morning along the Tigris river. Cars blazed in the street

and victims lay in pools of blood. A stream of ambulances ferried away the wounded.

US Colonel Ralph Baker said a pickup truck packed with 454 kg of explosives blew up outside the gate, where vehicles and people were lined up waiting to enter.

A Reuters Television cameraman saw a woman lying in the

road, one foot blown off and a high heeled shoe still on the other. Others lay slumped on the kerb or in the roadway.

Hospitals around the capital said they had treated at least 110 people for injuries. US military officials said three US soldiers and three US civilians were among the injured.

Sunday is a working day in

Iraq and the bomb went off just after 0500 GMT, when many people would have been on their way to work. Most of the victims were employees waiting to be searched before entering the complex, one witness said.

"I was passing by when the explosion happened," Wissam Muhammad Shaker said. "People were thrown aside, three

here, five there. The dead people were workers."

Danish troops in south Iraq said today they had shot dead an Iraqi civilian who drove on when they tried to stop his car.

In Tikrit, US soldiers said two Iraqis were killed when a bomb they were planning to use against Americans exploded prematurely.

Bremer in US, meets Bush

Pressure from top Shia cleric forces rethink on Iraq's future

The New York Times
Washington, January 17

THE TOP US administrator for Iraq, L. Paul Bremer, said late on Friday that the USA was willing to consider changes to the way Iraqis would select an interim government in an effort to reassure the powerful Shia clergy, whose objections have threatened to derail plans for a return to Iraqi sovereignty.

But Bremer, who met President George Bush at the White House, and other Bush Administration officials suggested that any changes would be limited and said the US intended to stick by its basic approach of using caucuses rather than direct elections to choose interim rulers.

Bremer also said the Administration remained committed to transferring the government back to Iraqis by June 30, a deadline that would allow the US to begin reducing its profile as the presidential campaign heats up at home.

The cleric, Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, who holds considerable sway over Iraq's Shia majority, has been pressing for direct elections, a step that administration officials have said would be logistically difficult to accomplish by June 30. His objec-



President Bush with Paul Bremer in the Oval Office of the White House.

tions - and his ability to mobilize large demonstrations against the US-backed plan, as he did on Thursday - have left the administration scrambling two months after it settled on the approach after negotiations with the Iraqi Governing Council.

Some US officials have also expressed concern that elections this year could concentrate power with the Shias, while Washington wants Iraq to adopt a constitution that guarantees rights of Kurdish and Sunni minorities.

The plan, which was agreed to on November 15, calls for caucuses to be held this spring in all 18 of Iraq's states, some of which are predominantly Sunni or Kurd. The caucuses would choose delegates to an interim national assembly, which would assume sovereignty from the occupying force while a constitution is written. The plan calls for polls in 2005.

Bremer said he would on Monday meet UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan. Accompanied by Adnan Pachachi, chairman of the Iraqi Governing Council, Bremer would seek to persuade An-

nan to put the UN's expertise in monitoring elections and writing constitutions to work in Iraq.

US to reduce troop strength

The US will reduce its troops strength in Iraq by about 20 percent over the next few months, but its capacity to fight insurgents will remain undiluted, a senior Army official said in Baghdad. Most of the 130,000 troops currently serving in Iraq will begin returning over the next four to six months. They will be replaced by a less heavily armed force of about 105,000, reports Reuters from Baghdad.

Three US soldiers killed

Three US soldiers and two Iraqi civil defence officials were killed on Saturday in a bomb attack on their Bradley armoured vehicle north of Baghdad.

In another development, Lebanese security officials in Beirut on Thursday seized a plane that had arrived from Baghdad carrying 19.5 billion in new Iraqi dinars, or about 12 million equivalent in US dollars. The officials then detained three Lebanese businessmen for questioning on possible smuggling charges, the journalists said.

Bush gives Vajpayee govt poll-eve present

**Announces civilian
nuclear, space deal**

**India plays up tech
deal, US plays it down**

By Chidanand Rajghatta
TIMES NEWS NETWORK

By Siddharth Varadarajan
TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Washington: President George W. Bush on Monday announced the long-anticipated agreement with India on deepening cooperation in civilian nuclear and space activities and hi-tech trade, calling the deal the next step in the US' strategic partnership with India.

For reasons that remained unclear, Mr Bush unveiled the landmark agreement on the margins of a summit of the Americas in Monterrey, Mexico. Prime Minister A.B. Vajpayee also issued an identical statement in New Delhi.

A senior administration official, who briefed reporters in Washington on the deal, said New Delhi had insisted it be released on January 12. He denied the deal was in any way linked to talks between India and Pakistan or any possible movement on Kashmir.

Calling the agreement an "important milestone" in transforming the relationship between the US and India, Mr Bush said the cooperation "will deepen the ties of commerce and friendship between our two nations and will increase stability in Asia and beyond".

Mr Bush suggested that the agreement, and the realisation of its full potential, was premised on actions by India to tighten its domestic export control laws and other steps. "The proposed cooperation will progress through a series of reciprocal steps that will build on each other," the statement read.

New Delhi: The joint statement issued on Tuesday by Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee and President George W. Bush on the 'Next Steps in Strategic Partnership' between India and the US may have been identical but officials from the two countries differ sharply about its significance.

MEA officials hailed the statement as "unique" and "completely out of the ordinary". In Washington, however, a State Department official said this was merely the beginning of a process and that India would receive no substantial technology unless the US was satisfied it had tightened export controls.

Thanks to its domestic laws and international agreements like the Nuclear Suppliers Group and Missile Technology Control Regime, the US bans the sale of a variety of space, nuclear and "dual use" technologies vital for India's civilian scientific programmes. Insofar as the Bush-Vajpayee statement says the "cooperative efforts will be undertaken in accordance with our respective national laws and international obligations", the US is unlikely to allow the export of key technologies—eg, electronic components for ISRO's launch vehicle—any time soon.

Although Indian officials refuse to give a time-frame for the last remaining post-Pokhran sanctions on ISRO being lifted, they emphasise Tuesday's statement should be seen "in the larger vista". "Here you have the US President himself talking about the next steps in the strategic

Forward march: forget the past, look ahead



It is an important milestone in transforming the relationship between India and the US.

will increase stability in Asia
—George W. Bush

The vision of the India-US strategic partnership that Mr Bush and I share is now becoming a reality



—Atal Bihari Vajpayee

US made India, Pak shake hands: Powell

By Chidanand Rajghatta
TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Washington: External affairs minister Yashwant Sinha will arrive in Washington next week for a wrap-up bilateral visit towards the tail end of what is being widely regarded as a fulfilling term for the NDA government on the foreign policy front.

Mr Sinha will meet Secretary of State Colin Powell for talks under the terms of the vision statement of 2000 between the two countries that enjoins an annual meeting between the top people of the foreign policy establishment. The meeting, between January 19-21, has no specific agenda, but the two sides are expected to take stock of the latest developments on the India-Pakistan front. Washington has taken keen interest in the process and nudged the two countries along.

In an interview with the US

Double act



Colin Powell Yashwant Sinha

World and News Report magazine this week, Mr Powell took credit for the work the US had done with India and Pakistan for the "breakthrough over the last several days" but added that "there's more work to be done, and we offered our good offices to the Indians and the Pakistanis over the last couple of days".

"We've been working with the Indians and Pakistanis for almost two years, from a period of, 'We're going to nuclear war this weekend,' to, you know,

this is a historic change. And so I think a lot of these seeds that were planted are now germinating and you'll see us harvesting crops," Mr Powell said.

This is the first time Washington has sought to publicly and aggressively take credit for the rapprochement between India and Pakistan. On previous occasions, administration officials have usually suggested that while the US encourages both sides to talk, the initiative has come entirely from the parties concerned.

Mr Sinha's interaction with Mr Powell will possibly be the last high-level exchange between the two sides before both countries enter an election cycle this year. While there is all-round acknowledgment that Indo-US relations changed profoundly during the almost concurrent term of the NDA government and the Republican Bush administration, a few wrinkles remain.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

13 JAN 2004

13 JAN 2004

'Bush planned to remove Saddam before 9/11'

US War 11-12/11

New York: US President George W. Bush had decided to remove former Iraqi president Saddam Hussein within days of assuming office and much before the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on the United States, former treasury secretary Paul O'Neill has claimed.



Paul O'Neill

In an interview to CBS Television, Mr O'Neill, who was fired by Mr Bush following differences over the President's tax cut plans, said the administration started making plans for an invasion of Iraq, within days of Mr Bush's inauguration and not eight months later after the September 11, 2001 attacks as previously reported.

Mr O'Neill made the claim in the first interview since he left the White House. However, the Bush administration officials have dismissed Mr O'Neill's statements as remarks of a "disgruntled" official, saying he had no expertise in foreign affairs.

White House press secretary Scott McClellan said on Saturday, "We appreciate his service. While we're not in the business of book reviews, it appears the world according to Mr O'Neill is more about justifying his own opinions than looking at the reality of the results we're achieving on behalf on the American people."

"From the very beginning, there was a conviction that Saddam Hussein was a bad person and that he needed to go," Mr O'Neill said in the interview. "For me, the notion of pre-emption, that the US has the unilateral right to do

whatever it decides to do, is really a huge leap."

Analysts say this is likely to become a major issue during the presidential election campaign.

Mr O'Neill is the main source for an upcoming book, *The Price of Loyalty*, authored by Ron Suskind. Suskind says Mr O'Neill and other White House insiders he interviewed gave him documents which show that in the first three months of 2001, the administration was looking at military options for removing Saddam Hussein from power and planning for the aftermath of the Iraqi president's downfall.

"There are memos," Suskind told CBS, "one of them marked 'secret' says 'plan for post-Saddam Iraq'." A Pentagon document, said Suskind, titled 'Foreign Suitors for Iraqi Oilfield Contracts', outlines areas of oil exploration. "It talks about contractors around the world from...30, 40 countries, and which ones have what intentions on oil in Iraq," Suskind said.

Mr O'Neill is quoted as saying in the book that he was surprised no one in a national security council meeting questioned why Iraq should be invaded. "It was all about finding a way to do it. That was the tone of it. The President saying, 'Go find me a way to do this'," says Mr O'Neill in the book.

Mr O'Neill, who was asked to resign because of his opposition to the tax cut, said he did not think his "tell-all account" in this book would be attacked by his former employers as sour grapes. "I will be really disappointed if the White House reacts that way," he told CBS. "I can't imagine that I am going to be attacked for telling the truth." PTI

US team visits N. Korea nuke plant for first time

11-9
11/11/09
WSW B Xin

Beijing, Jan. 10 (Reuters): A US delegation has visited North Korea's Yongbyon nuclear complex, the first time outsiders have been allowed into the plant since UN inspectors were expelled a year ago.

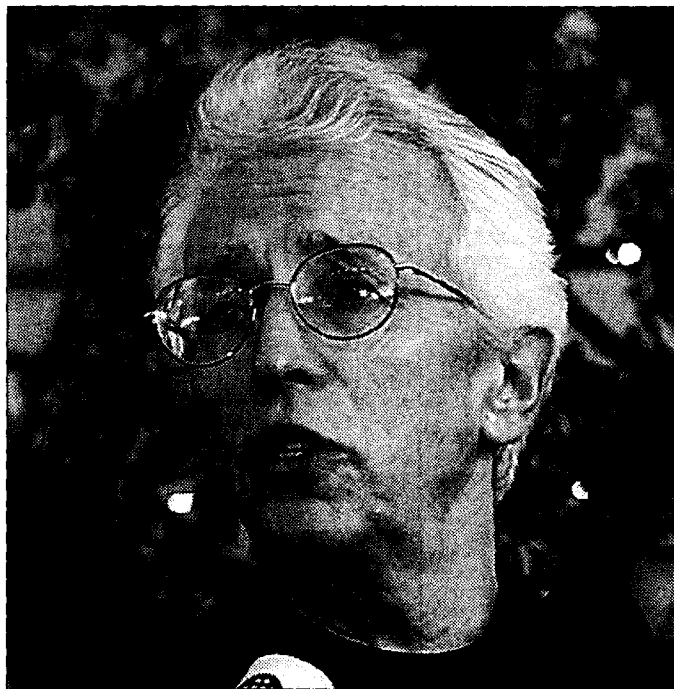
The US suspects North Korea may have resumed reprocessing spent nuclear fuel rods from Yongbyon into plutonium for use in nuclear weapons, and analysts said the trip to the facility may shed light on the North's nuclear capabilities.

"We did go to Yongbyon," delegation head John Lewis, who is a professor emeritus at Stanford University, said in Beijing upon arrival from the North Korean capital, Pyongyang.

Lewis and others on the unofficial delegation said they did not wish to comment on what they saw or discussed with officials until they had briefed the US government.

The five-day visit by a group that also included two US Senate aides, a nuclear specialist and a former state department envoy for North Korea, came as the US and its allies tried to reconvene talks with North Korea to end its suspected nuclear arms programme. Frank Jannuzi, a Senate Foreign Relations Committee aide, characterised the trip as "a good visit, a productive visit". But it was not yet clear if, or how, it would benefit the process of talks on North Korea's nuclear weapons ambitions, analysts said.

China hosted an inconclusive round of six-party talks on the nuclear issue in August with the



Nuclear scientist Sig Hecker speaks to the press at Beijing airport after returning from North Korea. (AFP)

US, the two Koreas, Japan and Russia. In Tokyo a leading Japanese daily reported today that China has offered North Korea \$50 million in aid if it takes part in the talks.

The *Asahi Shimbun* quoted diplomatic sources in Washington as saying the offer was made by Wu Bangguo, chairman of China's parliament, during a visit to North Korea in October.

They added the help was likely to take the form of financial aid rather than fuel oil or food, but no details were given.

Piao Jianyi, a North Korea expert at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, said the Yongbyon visit probably indicated how far along North Korea's nuclear programmes had developed. "It has a definite significance... I think, after more than a year, North Korea's nuclear development may have made some definite progress," he said.

Freeze offer

A western diplomat who closely follows the issue said it was interesting the authorities allowed

a visit to Yongbyon, but not necessarily significant or helpful to the process.

"We are still at a very difficult step and that kind of visit wouldn't necessarily change the fundamentals of the equation," the diplomat added.

This week, North Korea offered to freeze its nuclear activities, a move that has raised hopes for a second round of talks, which analysts say may happen in February.

China's special envoy for Korean nuclear issues and another top Asian affairs diplomat will travel to Washington early next week for consultations on the next round of talks. US secretary of state Colin Powell told Japan's NHK today he wanted the next round of talks to produce concrete results.

The US said in October 2002 North Korea had admitted to a clandestine uranium enrichment programme to build nuclear weapons, which US officials say violated a 1994 agreement by the north to freeze its nuclear programme.

North Korea subsequently said it would restart its reactor at Yongbyon to generate electricity, disabled surveillance cameras at the complex and expelled UN inspectors, leading to US fears that it had resumed a nuclear arms effort. Lewis said the delegation met military, foreign ministry, economic and science officials. Jannuzi said the touchy subjects of human rights and Japanese abducted by North Korea were among a spectrum of issues discussed.

USA dismisses Palestine's single state proposal

Press Trust of India

10/1/04
W. P. S. S. C.

WASHINGTON, Jan. 9. — Dismissing Palestinian Authority's warning to push for a single-state solution if Israel takes unilateral peace moves, USA has said more responsible action was needed on its part to bring terrorism under control.

"What we need is, I believe, more responsible action on the part of the Palestinian Authority in order to bring terrorism under control, make sure that violence is being brought to an end," US secretary of state Mr Colin Powell said here yesterday. He said the US was committed to a two-state solution.

the comments we have received from colleagues, that security assurances (to North Korea) are appropriate."

"They also have to make it clear that what they are doing (to abandon their nuclear weapon programme) is permanent."

Mr Powell also said USA plans to stay the course in Afghanistan. "We will work with our friends. We thank NATO for taking on a new mission in Afghanistan, a unique mission for NATO." With regard to Libya, he said the USA wants to make sure that "we get verified removal of those weapons and programmes of mass destruction, and then we will be in conversation with the Libyans as to what the nature of our relationship will be in the future."

Israel condemns Palestinian PM: Palestine-Prime Minister Mr Ahmed Qorei's suggestion that the Palestinians could call for a bi-national should current negotiations fail is a threat to the very existence of the Jewish state, an Israeli official said today.

"This is nothing less than a threat to put an end to the state of Israel as a Jewish state, and we categorically reject it," the high-ranking official said.

Hammas' terms for truce

DUBAI, Jan. 9. — Hamas spiritual leader Sheikh Ahmad Yassin said today he would not agree to a new truce that is not be respected by Israel and that it would not cease attacks on Israeli civilians as long as the Jewish state targets Palestinian civilians. "Hammas will not commit the same mistake in agreeing on a new truce with Israel which will not be respected by the latter," Yassin told Saudi magazine Al-Majalah. — AFP

Mr Powell was however, critical of Cuba, which he said "continues to oppress its people...deny its people a better life, and given the opportunity." On Sudan, he said "there

are just one or two outstanding issues, difficult issues, having to do with disputed territories. But the key here is that after 20 years of the most terrible war, Sudanese leaders have come together and are just one or two steps short of having a comprehensive peace agreement that will bring peace to Sudan."

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10 JAN 2004

THE STATESMAN

Bush hyped WMD claims: Carnegie

Pre-war intelligence 'wildly off the mark'

The Guardian
Washington, January 8

THE BUSH Administration has been accused of "systematically misrepresenting" the threat posed by Iraq's weapons of mass destruction in a comprehensive report on post-war findings.

The report, by four experts on weapons proliferation at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, is likely to re-ignite calls for a commission to look into the government's pre-war intelligence claims. It says the absence of any imminent threat from Saddam Hussein's chemical or nuclear programmes was "knowable" before the war. And the greater uncertainty over Iraq's biological weapons was no evidence strong enough to justify war.

The authors say the intelligence reports of Iraq's capabilities grew more shrill in October 2002 with the publication of a National Intelligence Estimate, which included several dissenting views. The intelligence community, the report says, began to be unduly influenced by policymakers' views "sometime in 2002". Repeated visits to the CIA by the US Vice-President Dick Cheney and demands by top officials to see unsubstantiated reports, created an atmosphere in which intelligence analysts were pressed to come to "more threatening" judgments of Iraq.

The report concludes that "Administration officials systematically misrepresented the threat from Iraq's ballistic missile and WMD programmes".

On Wednesday a White House official responded by pointing to Bush's comment on December 15 when he was pressed on the absence of Iraqi WMDs. He claimed evidence had been found that contravened UN Resolution 1441 calling for Saddam to disarm, a possible reference to signs that Iraq had been trying to extend the range of its missiles beyond UN limits.

9 killed in copter crash

A US *Black Hawk* helicopter "on a routine mission" crashed near the restive town of Fallujah west of Baghdad killing all nine aboard, but it was not immediately clear if it had been shot down. There are no survivors.

The crash was the deadliest helicopter incident since November 15, when two *Black Hawks* collided near Mosul, killing 17 soldiers.

A US soldier was killed and 35 were wounded in a mortar attack on a US military base west of Baghdad on Wednesday night.

Reuters, Baghdad

Joseph Cirincione, lead author of the Carnegie report, said: "This is the first thorough review of intelligence threat assessments, official statements, findings of UN inspectors and nine months of searches in Iraq. It shows the threat assessment process is broken. The NIE was wildly off the mark."

Amnesty for 500 Iraqis

Paul Bremer on Thursday announced the immediate release of more than 500 Iraqi prisoners held without charge, in what he called was a gesture of goodwill. The move follows pressure from British officials in Baghdad who have been alarmed at the large numbers of Iraqis scooped up by the US military during routine operations.

In a move apparently designed to deflect growing criticism of the US human rights record in Iraq, Bremer said the release was in the interests of "reconciliation". Over 9,000 prisoners are being held and many more have been detained and released since the war.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

9 JAN 2004

9 JAN 2004

America rethink on Iraq contracts

7-3
7/11

Washington, Jan. 6 (Reuters): With bidding likely to open this week on US-funded contracts to rebuild Iraq, the Pentagon yesterday appeared to soften its stand on barring companies from countries that opposed the war and said a list of eligible nations for the business might be revised.

A Pentagon ruling last month excluded firms from nations that did not support the war, a decision that riled traditional allies such as France and Germany, which opposed America's decision to invade Iraq without UN approval.

The Pentagon told prospective bidders via a government procurement website yesterday (www.fedbizopps.gov) that a formal list of eligible countries for projects funded by \$18.6 billion in US funds was being reviewed. "This list is under further consideration, however, and may be revised," said the document issued by the office of the secretary of defence, which said the original list of 63 countries remained valid in the meantime. A document released on the same website earlier yesterday said contracts were open only to the US, coalition partners, Iraq and troop-contributing nations.

Diplomatic sources in Washington said they had noticed signs of a softening by the US government over who could apply for prime contracts following a mission by ex-US secretary of state James Baker to Europe last month to seek forgiveness of Iraq's crippling debt. The Pentagon and White House denied

publicly there was a shift in policy, but diplomatic sources and some officials said the US was trying to adopt a more liberal definition of who belonged to the coalition, suggesting countries that agreed to restructure Iraq's debt might be eligible.

White house spokeswoman Claire Buchan said the Pentagon document reflected President George W. Bush's sentiments that "circumstances can change" as to who is eligible to participate in the contracts. Last month, the Pentagon listed 63 countries eligible for contracts funded by Congress, ranging from usual trading partners such as Britain, Australia and Denmark to nations such as Eritrea, Palau and the Solomon Islands. A defence official said the

France deaths

Paris, Jan. 6 (Reuters): Two French nationals have been killed in a gun attack on their vehicle near the Iraqi town of Faluja, west of Baghdad, the French foreign ministry said today.

The two, who were not identified, worked for US companies involved in reconstruction work in Iraq, ministry spokesperson Herve Ladsous said.

A third French national was wounded in the attack late yesterday.

list of countries was always open for review and nations who provided forces, funding or showed political will in Iraq would be eligible. "We have said this is an open list and it is up to countries to determine whether they want to be part of the coalition," said the official. Asked specifically whether France, Germany, Russia and Canada would be included on an updated list, the official said he did not know.

During his week-long tour, Baker visited France, Germany, Italy, Great Britain and Russia, where he said he made progress obtaining commitments to substantially reduce Iraq's \$120 billion debt. Countries barred from prime contracts funded by the US taxpayer have complained the US government cannot expect them to make generous gestures such as forgiving Iraq's debt while at the same time excluding their companies from lucrative rebuilding work.

Bidding is likely to open up this week on a slew of US-government contracts to rebuild Iraq, starting off most likely with about \$5 billion in construction projects. The Pentagon document said requests for proposals, or formal tenders, were expected to be advertised by January 7 and deals would likely be awarded by March 3. However, the Pentagon said this schedule could be adjusted if the January 7 deadline was not met.

7 JAN 2004

THE TIMES OF INDIA

7 JAN 2004

Bush touch to Iran help offer

Member of First Family on team

ROBIN WRIGHT

Washington, Jan. 2: The US has approached Iran about dispatching a high-level humanitarian mission to Tehran, headed by Senator Elizabeth Dole (North Carolina) and include a member of the Bush family, US and Iranian officials said yesterday.

The delegation would carry additional assistance for survivors of last week's earthquake that killed more than 28,000 Iranians. The overture, made by Washington on Tuesday, awaits a response from the government of President Mohammad Khatami, US officials said.

The mission would be the first public US official visit since the 1979-81 hostage ordeal, when Iranian students held 52 Americans hostage for 444 days.

The only diplomacy since then was during the arms-for-hostages swap in the mid-1980s, when President Reagan's former national security adviser, Robert McFarlane, and Lieutenant Colonel Oliver North of the National Security Council staff secretly visited Tehran.

The idea for the trip grew out of two simultaneous moves earlier this week, according to US officials. In conversations with senior advisers on Sunday, President George W. Bush asked if there was anything more the US could do to help Iran cope with a natural disaster that destroyed the 2,000-year-old city of Bam and killed or left homeless its population of 80,000 people.

At the same time, Dole, former head of the American Red Cross, independently contacted the state department about travelling to Iran with a Red Cross delegation to provide additional aid material, US officials said.

The administration embraced the proposal and began exploring the idea of expanding the mission to include an as-yet unspecified member of the Bush family, and others, US officials said yesterday.

Secretary of state Colin Powell said, "At this time of great emergency, we must do everything we can to help people in desperate need." US officials insisted the

Iran says no

Washington, Jan. 2 (Reuters): Iran told the US today it does not want a humanitarian mission led by US Senator Elizabeth Dole at present after last week's earthquake in Bam, the state department said.

"We heard today from the Iranians that given the current situation in Bam and all that is going on there now, it would be preferable to hold such a visit in abeyance. Therefore we are not pursuing it at the moment," spokesperson Adam Ereli said.

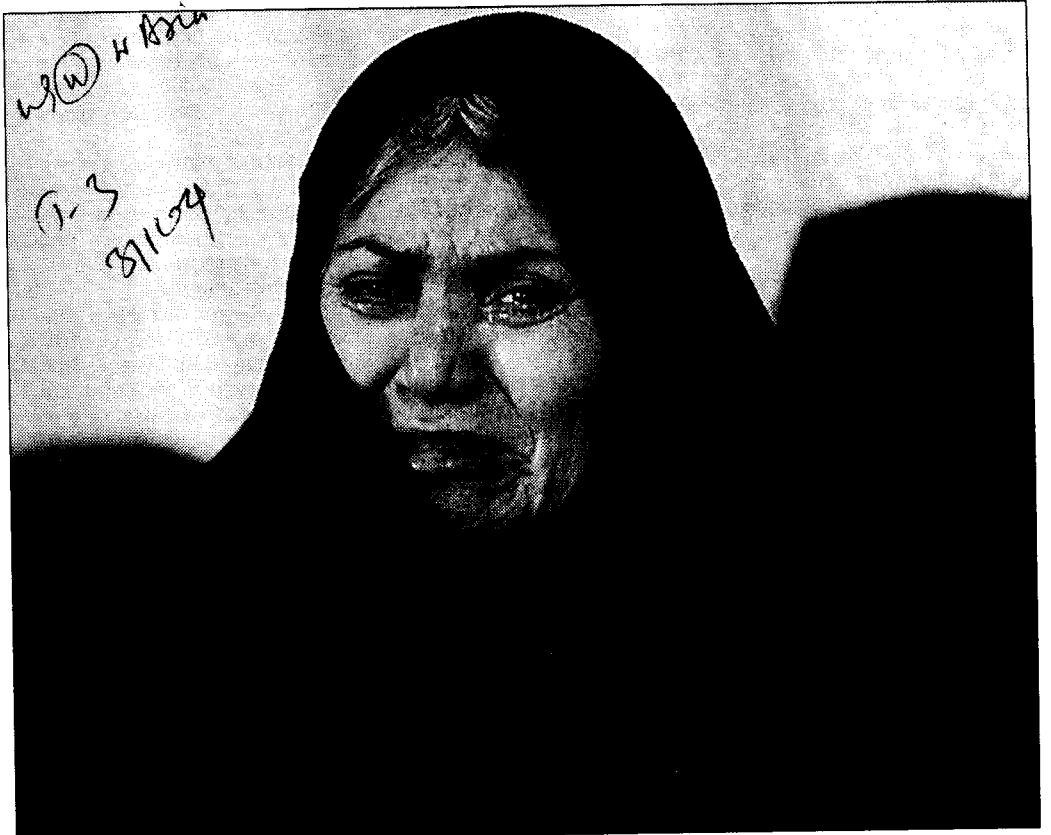
mission would be humanitarian, not diplomatic, despite the unavoidable symbolism of any official American delegation visiting the Islamic republic.

After hunting quail yesterday, Bush was asked by reporters whether easing the aid restrictions represented an easing of the US relationship with Iran.

"What we're doing in Iran is we're showing the Iranian people the American people care and that we've got great compassion for human suffering. I eased restrictions in order to be able to get humanitarian aid into the country," Bush said.

He said the US still has serious differences with Iran. "The Iranian government must listen to the voices of those who long for freedom, must turn over al Qaida that are in their custody and must abandon their nuclear weapons programme. In the meantime, we appreciate the fact the Iranian government is willing to allow our humanitarian aid flights into their country."

THE LOS ANGELES TIMES-
WASHINGTON POST NEWS SERVICE



A woman weeps during Friday prayers in the partly-damaged Jameh Saheb al-Zaman mosque in quake-hit Bam. (AFP)

Survivor trickle dries up

Bam, Jan. 2 (Reuters): Relief workers turned their attention to building more permanent shelter today for thousands of Iranians whose homes were razed in an earthquake in the city of Bam a week ago.

While more than 30,000 corpses have been pulled from the ruined city, a hope-inspiring trickle of survivors pulled alive appeared to come to an end today after one man, one child and a pregnant woman were saved yesterday.

At least six others have been rescued since Tuesday despite long odds after 72 hours under debris without food or water.

The "miracles" have been rare, with the local mud-brick construction leaving few air pockets for survivors.

Frederick Lyons, the UN resident coordinator, said search and rescue was over and the UN would appeal for funds next week to address primary needs

of shelter, food and water.

"That's the natural thing to do now after the search and rescue phase is completed," he said in Bam, where large tents were going up.

With international aid pouring in to the affected area in southeast Iran, relief workers said that health fears had abated.

"There's been no outbreak of contagious disease," Lyons said.

State television tried to counter some of the gloom weighing on the nation with heart-warming reports and images of babies, born in field hospitals, in the arms of Bam women.

The quake, which measured 6.8 on the Richter scale, struck beneath Bam while most of its 100,000 people slept.

Seven survivors died from injuries after being evacuated to the central city of Isfahan and

several others in the city were in critical condition, the official IRNA news agency reported.

At Bam airport, foreign cargo aircraft filled with supplies continued to stream into Iran.

"This is the eighth or ninth aid flight we've brought and we will keep coming," said a crew member of a Pakistani Hercules C-130 carrying tents and kerosene lamps.

THE TELEGRAPH

3 JAN 2004

Iraq, Afghanistan to remain on US agenda

Press Trust of India

5/2 2/11/04 WJW

WASHINGTON, Jan. 1. — Iraq and Afghanistan will remain the focus of US foreign policy in 2004, even as efforts would be made to turn the goal of a “free and democratic” Middle East into a reality, US secretary of state Gen. Colin Powell said today.

“We are also resolved to support the young democracies that have risen in Asia, Latin America, Europe and Africa,” Gen. Powell wrote in the New York Times. “We will expand the Middle East partnership initiative to encourage political, economic and educational reform throughout the region,” he said, adding, the struggle will not be confined to the Middle East.

The secretary of state said Libya’s renunciation of terrorism and weapons of mass destruction was the result of “bold British and American diplomacy”. He said Iran also felt “our sustained pressure... to come clean on its nuclear weapons programme, and has begun to do”.

Now that Saddam’s Hussein’s oppressive regime is no more in Iraq, “we are working to return sovereignty to the Iraqi people through a fair and open process”, he said. Gen. Powell said US efforts will apply to individuals as well as nations. “The US President’s plan for HIV and AIDS relief will help five million worldwide.”

THE STATESMAN

2 JAN 2004

US ends Cheney firm's Iraq oil deal

Reuters
Washington, December 31

A US military energy unit announced on Tuesday that it was taking over the task of providing fuel for Iraq, ending a Pentagon deal with Vice-President Dick Cheney's former company Halliburton amid allegations of price gouging by the Texas-based energy services giant.

The Pentagon's Defence Energy Support Centre said it had been directed to assume control of rebuilding Iraq's oil industry and that it would award new contracts through a competitive bidding process.

On Wednesday, *The Washington Post* quoted Pentagon officials as saying that the change had been under discussion for months and that the timing

was not related to allegations against Halliburton subsidiary Kellogg Brown & Root (KBR), which was awarded a no-bid contract in March to rebuild Iraq's oil industry. The Defence Energy Support Centre said the agency had been directed to "support the Iraqi Ministry of Oil and Task Force-Restore Iraqi Oil (TF-RIO) by importing and distributing fuel to the Iraqi population".

"The centre will strive to put competitively awarded contracts in place as quickly as possible for this mission," DESC director Richard Connolly said.

Earlier this month, the Pentagon said that a draft audit found evidence that KBR may have overcharged US taxpayers \$61 million to supply fuel to Iraq from Kuwait.

Halliburton strongly denies wro-

ngdoing. Cheney was chief executive of Halliburton from 1995 to 2000.

In response to questions posed by Pentagon auditors, KBR's president and chief executive, Randy Harl, said the firm "delivered fuel to Iraq at the best value, the best price and the best terms". Harl also said that the US military had approved the delivery of fuel from Kuwait, even though it was at a higher cost than that available via Turkey. KBR was the first to suggest ways of cutting costs and had suggested Turkey was a better source than Kuwait for getting fuel into Iraq, adding that the recommendation resulted in a \$164 million savings for American taxpayers.

The work given to KBR in Iraq has been criticised by Democrats, who al-

Ashcroft ducks CIA leak probe

US ATTORNEY-GENERAL John Ashcroft has stepped aside from the politically charged probe into the leak of an undercover CIA officer's name in the build-up to the Iraq War.

Deputy A-G James Comey said Ashcroft had decided "in an abundance of caution" to step aside from the investigation, and he named the attorney in Chicago, Patrick Fitzgerald, to lead the probe. The Justice Department is conducting an investigation into who disclosed the identity of a CIA officer whose husband had challenged Bush's claims about Iraqi WMDs.

\$4bn for Iraq deferred: The Bush Administration will delay about \$4 billion in Iraq reconstruction work until the US cedes political control to an interim, the *Wall Street Journal* said.

Reuters, Washington

Thailand major US ally, says Bush

The Nation/ANN

WS @ S E Asia

S.E. 27 1/11/04
BANGKOK, Dec, 31. — President Bush today designated Thailand a major ally of the USA, opening the door for greater military cooperation between the two countries. The designation is meant for close friends of the USA not belonging to the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (Nato).

The "major non-Nato ally" status grants countries greater access to US foreign aid and defence assistance, a higher priority for receiving military equipment, and participation in weapons research and development programmes. Other countries with the designation are Argentina, Australia, Egypt, Israel, Japan, the Philippines and South Korea.

US officials have praised Thailand for its efforts in the war on terror, especially since the August arrest of alleged terrorist mastermind Hambali, suspected of masterminding attacks on the behalf of Jemaah Islamiyah, a South-east Asian terror outfit believed to have close ties with Al-Qaida. Thai authorities quickly turned Hambali over to the US and he remains in US custody at an undisclosed location.