

U.S. to make progressive troop reductions in Iraq

Move follows progress in the training of Iraqi forces: Rumsfeld

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BAGHDAD: U.S. Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld said on a visit to Baghdad on Friday that the United States would withdraw 7,500 troops from Iraq early next year as six Sudanese, including a diplomat, were reported kidnapped in the strife-torn country.

"Six Sudanese, including the second secretary at the Sudanese embassy in Baghdad, were kidnapped today in Baghdad shortly after Friday prayers," Al-Jazeera television said.

"One of the hostages then made contact with the embassy, which informed the Foreign Ministry" in Khartoum, said the Qatar-based satellite channel.

Sudanese Foreign Ministry spokesman Jamal Mohammad Ibrahim told Al-Jazeera that he did not know who had kidnapped the six and appealed for their immediate release.

Blair hints at pullout

Mr. Rumsfeld's announcement, which means the number of U.S. troops will drop back under the level of 138,000 for the first time since April 2004, came a day after British Prime Minister Tony Blair raised the prospects of starting a British troop pullout next year.

The Prime Minister refused to be drawn on a timetable, but Friday's edition of British tabloid *The Sun* said the process would begin in May.

London's *The Times* claimed 1,000 troops had already been pulled back from frontline duties as the first stage of withdrawal.

Both Mr. Rumsfeld and Mr. Blair were making surprise visits to their troops ahead of Christmas.

Mr. Rumsfeld, who arrived in the country from Afghanistan on Thursday, held talks with Iraqi President Jalal Talabani and Prime Minister Ibrahim Jaafari on Friday after a brief morning side trip to neighbouring Jordan to inspect a training facility for Iraqi security forces.

The Secretary had earlier announced that the U.S. reduction



JOINING FORCES: United States Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld meets troops at the Al Faw Palace in Baghdad on Thursday. — PHOTO: AP

followed "the recognition of progress in the training of Iraqi forces".

The United States has maintained that it would reduce its military presence in Iraq in line with the build-up of Iraq's newly formed security forces.

Washington has announced the withdrawal of reinforcements sent to Iraq to ensure that the October 15 referendum on the constitution and the December 15 general elections went off smoothly.

"The effect of these adjustments will reduce forces in Iraq by the spring 2006 below the current level of 160,000 during the elections period and below the 138,000 baseline that existed prior to the most recent elections," Mr. Rumsfeld said.

The Defence Secretary also alluded to further reductions during the course of the year.

"We anticipate future coalition force-level discussions at

some point in 2006, after the new Iraqi Government is in place and is prepared to discuss the future," he added.

A new government is expected to be installed early next year in the wake of the general elections whose final results are not yet known.

No deadline set

Speaking at a joint news conference, Mr. Jaafari refused to be drawn into setting a deadline for the withdrawal of foreign forces from his country, saying this could not be "an emotional decision", but one based on when national forces could "protect the country from terrorist violations".

In the latest insurgent strike, gunmen attacked an army checkpoint in Odhaim, 100 km north of Baghdad, with rocket-propelled grenades and automatic weapons, killing eight soldiers and wounding 17, police

said. The early morning attack was the bloodiest since the December 15 general elections.

Meanwhile, the likely difficulty of forming a new coalition government was highlighted when several thousand Sunni Arab demonstrators took to the streets of several Iraqi cities on Friday alleging widescale electoral fraud by the ruling Shia-based religious parties.

Early election results suggested these Shiite parties could win a majority in Parliament.

Several parties, including the main Sunni-Arab coalition, have threatened to boycott the new Parliament if the electoral commission fails to throw out some of the tainted election results.

And a court in the Netherlands sentenced former chemicals trader Frans van Anraat to 15 years in jail for aiding war crimes by selling chemicals to the regime of deposed leader Saddam Hussein. — AFP

24 DEC 2005

THE HINDU

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Iran is a real threat, says Bush

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

WASHINGTON, DEC 15

DESCRIBING Iran as a "real threat", US President George W Bush has insisted that the Gulf nation was a part of the "axis of evil."

"I called it (Iran) part of the axis of evil for a reason," Bush said in an interview to a news channel. "It's a real threat."

Bush first clubbed Iran along with North Korea and Saddam Hussein's Iraq as an "axis of evil" in his state of the union address to Congress in 2002. Washington has slammed Tehran for the comments of Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad that Israel had no right to exist.

The Bush administration is also stepping up the heat on Tehran accusing it of using a civilian nuclear programme to hide the urge to produce nuclear weapons.

"We continue to work the diplomatic front," Bush replied when asked how he will deal with Iran. "I'm concerned about theocracy that has got little transparency, a country whose president has declared the destruction of Israel as part of their foreign policy, and a country that will not listen to the demands of the free world to get rid of its ambitions to have a nuclear weapon," Bush said yesterday.

INDIAN EXPRESS

21/11/05 WP

11/21/05

washingtonpost.com

Bush's Asia Trip Meets Low Expectations

By Peter Baker and Philip P. Pan
Washington Post Staff Writers
Monday, November 21, 2005; A01

BEIJING, Nov. 20 -- When President Bush was flying toward Asia a week ago, his national security adviser, Stephen J. Hadley, predicted to reporters in the back of the plane that the four-nation trip would yield no "headline breakthroughs." He turned out to be right.

As Bush wrapped up his stay in Beijing on Sunday and prepared to head home Monday after a brief stop in Mongolia, the trip has produced no real breakthroughs of any sort. On a wide variety of issues, from trade to security to human rights, Bush won no concrete agreements from any of his summit partners.

White House officials said that did not mean the trip was unsuccessful, because they never expected to bring home any major agreements in the first place. Such trips, they said, reflect a more mature diplomacy aimed at building relationships and achieving steady progress that will produce gains at some later date. Yet at the same time, it means that a politically weakened Bush returns home without anything high-profile to brag about when he could use some good news.

"I know that it's not like a deliverable or big breakthrough, but when breakthroughs are made you'll be able to point back" at the trip as paving the way, White House counselor Dan Bartlett said. "Some of these things aren't things that happen with the snap of a finger. What these summits do provide is an opportunity to move forward."

Bush wanted Japan to drop its two-year ban on U.S. beef imports, but although Japan seems likely to do so soon, it did not declare its readiness while the president was in town. Bush wanted to propel free trade during an economic summit in South Korea, but the general statement drafted by Pacific Rim leaders drops no tariffs and merely sets the stage for further talks.

In another setback, South Korea's cabinet on Monday backed a proposal to withdraw one-third of the country's 3,200 troops from Iraq.


In China, Bush's meetings with President Hu Jintao and Premier Wen Jiabao produced little progress toward resolving long-standing differences. Hu pledged "to gradually achieve balanced trade between China and the United States" and to "unswervingly press ahead" with plans to allow the Chinese currency to float more freely. But he offered no plan for how he would achieve either goal.

Hu also vowed "to step up" efforts to combat Chinese piracy of American movies and software. Wen insisted at length that Beijing was already waging a vigorous campaign to enforce intellectual property rights. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said there was "very important movement" that indicated the Chinese were "taking the issue . . . seriously."

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But neither Rice nor other U.S. officials could point to any specific evidence of that. The Bush administration recently gave Beijing a list of 25 factories manufacturing pirated DVDs in China, and there has been no word on whether the Chinese have shut down any of them.

On human rights, Bush's team handed Hu's aides a list of political prisoners when the two met in New York two months ago and had expressed hope that at least some of them would be released by the time the president arrived here, as has been customary in the past. Instead, in the weeks before the visit, Chinese authorities sentenced an underground Christian pastor to three years in prison for illegally printing Bibles and closed down the firm of a prominent human rights lawyer.

Chinese police detained a group of 30 people who tried to see Bush to complain about the lack of political freedoms here, according to a member of the group who called the Associated Press after police stopped them outside the church where the president worshiped Sunday morning.

Rice said U.S. officials complained "quite vociferously" about the crackdown and acknowledged that the Chinese had not acted on the U.S. list. "We've certainly not seen the progress that we would expect, and I think we'll have to keep working on it," she said.

Still, Bush did not directly raise the list with Hu, according to U.S. and Chinese officials, and his words on human rights were muted. "Honestly, human rights issues made up a tiny, tiny, tiny part of the meeting between the leaders of the two countries," said Kong Quan, a Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman.

The government did keep a promise to allow news coverage of Bush bicycling with Chinese Olympic athletes. But state television refrained from reporting even the mild comments Bush made encouraging China "to continue making the historic transition to greater freedom" during a session with Hu, much less his appearance at a church urging greater religious freedom.

Instead, the national evening news led with extended footage of a welcome ceremony during which Bush walked past a Chinese military guard and an account of his meetings with Hu and Wen that focused on Bush's desire for good relations with China and his support for maintaining the status quo in the Taiwan Strait. The only time viewers heard Bush's voice was during a segment on his visit with the Olympic athletes as he joked with them to "take it easy" on him.

Bush's words received far less coverage on state television than during his last trip here in February 2002, when the government allowed live broadcasts of a speech to university students and a 37-minute news conference with then-President Jiang Zemin. This time, reporters were not even allowed to ask questions during Bush's appearance with Hu. Bush later met with reporters alone to take questions.

The meeting was Bush's fifth with Hu and the first in Beijing since the Chinese leader was named to head the ruling Communist Party in late 2002. Aides said the relationship was developing. The meeting was "more comfortable" with "less set-piece reading of points," according to an administration official.

The Bush team is investing in Hu as the best option within the Chinese establishment even though he has presided over a crackdown on the media, religion, academia and other elements of civil society. "He's no Thomas Jefferson," the official acknowledged, "but there are a lot of people in the political world who are more reactionary."

Bush was particularly struck by Hu's description in New York of the challenges entailed in managing a nation of 1.3 billion, including mass unemployment, rising social unrest and a widening income gap,

officials said. Hu's vision of "peaceful development" raising the prosperity of his people impressed Bush, they added.

The conversation will continue early next year when Hu comes to Washington for a trip making up for one canceled in September because of Hurricane Katrina. And for Bush, aides insisted, that was the real achievement of this trip.

"China is a big, growing, strong country," the president said. "And it's very important for me to maintain a good working relationship with the leadership here."

Correspondent Anthony Faiola in Tokyo contributed to this report.

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US embassy in Malaysia closed

Star/ANN

KUALA LUMPUR, Dec. 30. — The US Embassy in Malaysia was closed today because of an unspecified security threat, but there were no reports of threats to private American interests, the mission said.

A consular notice said the sprawling mission in Malaysia's main city, Kuala Lumpur, "was closed until further notice in response to a security threat" against the embassy.

"At this time the embassy has no information of specific, credible threats against private American interests in Malaysia," it added. US Embassy spokeswoman Ms Kathryn Taylor said the threat was specifically linked to the embassy and "not to American interests in Malaysia in general."

"Hopefully, we'll be able to reopen on Tuesday, but that would depend on the security posture that is taken at that time," Ms Taylor said.

Mr Abdul Aziz Bulat, the chief of Kuala Lumpur's police criminal investigations, said information about the threat definitely did not come from the Malaysian police.

31 DEC 2005

THE STATESMAN

Defiant Bush ready to go to war again

AGENCE France-Presse
Washington, December 14

ONE DAY before Iraq's historic parliamentary elections, US President George W. Bush on Wednesday defiantly defended his case for war and said he would preemptively attack another country if he deemed it necessary.

In remarks aimed at shoring up faltering US support for the conflict, Bush also accepted responsibility for relying on "wrong" intelligence about Saddam Hussein's alleged weapons programs to order the March 2003 invasion.

Still, "in an age of terrorism and weapons of mass destruction, if we wait for threats to fully ma-

terialize, we will have waited too long," Bush said in the fourth and final speech in a series ahead of Thursday's elections.

The US President, who embraced preemptive war as US strategy after the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, did not name any potential targets but said the vote would put pressure on the governments of Iran and Syria. "We are living through a watershed moment in the story of freedom," he said. Iraq "will be a model for the Middle East. Freedom in Iraq will inspire reformers from Damascus to Tehran."

Bush's job approval ratings have sunk sharply since his November 2004 reelection because of high

gas prices, concerns about the economy and growing concerns about Iraq as the US death toll has risen beyond 2,140 soldiers.

Bush said victory will have been achieved in Iraq when extremists are no longer a threat to

IN ATTACK MODE

democracy, when Iraqi security forces are self-sufficient and when Iraq is not a "safe haven" for terrorists. "These objectives, not timetables set by politicians, will drive our force levels in Iraq," he

said. "We cannot — and will not — leave Iraq until that is achieved."

Bush did acknowledge however that the Intelligence about Saddam's weapons programmes had proven false, but sharply rebuked "irresponsible" charges that he had deliberately misled the country. "These charges are pure politics. They hurt troop morale," he declared, saying that even countries which opposed the war agreed that Saddam possessed weapons of mass destruction.

"As President, I'm responsible for the decision to go into Iraq — and I'm also responsible for fixing what went wrong by reforming our Intelligence capabilities," he said. But US media have quoted

French and German intelligence officials in recent weeks as saying that they repeatedly warned Washington that crucial parts of its case for war were flawed.

German Intelligence officials warned their US counterparts that accounts from an Iraqi defector code-named Curveball, a critical US source for charges that Iraq possessed mobile germ weapons labs, could not be confirmed and, in many cases, were deeply suspect.

A former French Intelligence official has been quoted as saying that Paris tried for months to warn the CIA that there was no evidence to support the allegation that Iraq had tried to purchase nuclear weapons material in Africa.



EPA
George W. Bush speaks at the Woodrow Wilson Center in Washington on Wednesday.

Bush defines terms of debate on Iraq

Americans should insist on a debate "that brings credit to our democracy, not comfort to our adversaries."

David E. Sanger

PRESIDENT GEORGE W. Bush issued a stark warning to Democrats on Tuesday about how to conduct the debate on Iraq as mid-term elections approach, declaring that Americans know the difference between "honest critics" and those "who claim that we acted in Iraq because of oil, or because of Israel, or because we misled the American people."

In a speech to the Veterans of Foreign Wars in Washington, Mr. Bush appeared to be trying to pre-empt a renewal of arguments about whether to begin a withdrawal immediately, as Rep. John Murtha argued in November, or whether to keep a large presence in Iraq through the year.

Democrats themselves have been deeply divided on that issue, even while criticising Mr. Bush's conduct of the war.

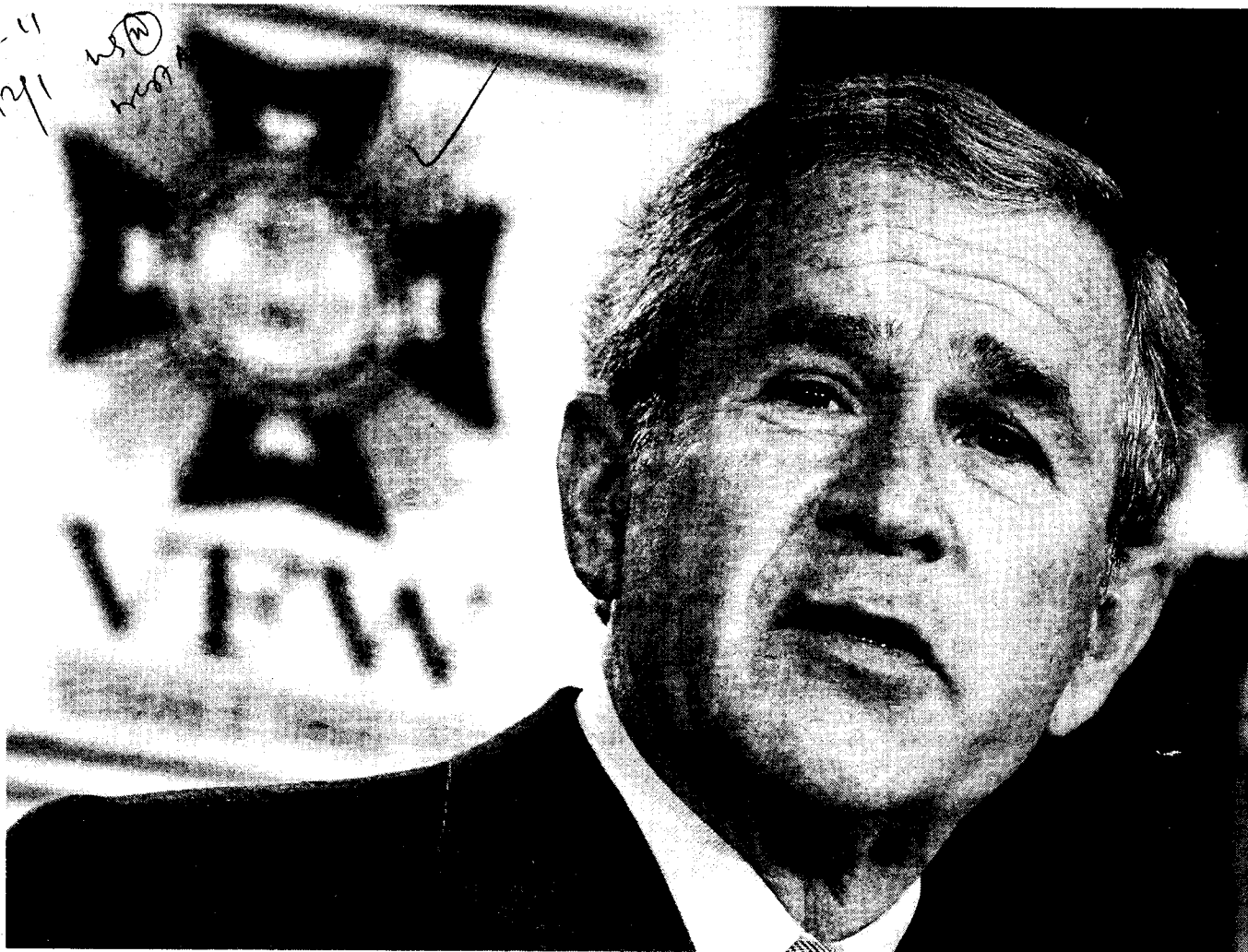
In some of his most combative language yet directed at critics, Mr. Bush said Americans should insist on a debate "that brings credit to our democracy, not comfort to our adversaries." That follows a theme that Vice President Dick Cheney set last week, when he said critics of the administration's conduct of the war risked undercutting the effort to defeat the insurgency.

At a meeting at the White House on Thursday with former Secretaries of State and Defense, Mr. Bush was warned several times that if he neglected to build support at home, he could face the problems that the Kennedy, Johnson, and Nixon administrations faced with Vietnam.

Mr. Bush's response was to insist that he had a strategy to win the war in Iraq — something administration officials say they do not believe their predecessors had in Vietnam — and he repeated that in his speech on Tuesday.

"We have a responsibility to our men and women in uniform, who deserve to know that once our politicians vote to send them into harm's way, our support will be with them in good days and in bad days," Mr. Bush said. "And we will settle for nothing less than complete victory."

By referring to a vote, Mr. Bush was ap-



TALKING TOUGH: U.S. President George W. Bush told Veterans of Foreign Wars: "We will see more tough fighting and we will see more sacrifice in 2006 because the enemies of freedom continue to sow violence and destruction. We'll also see more progress toward victory." — PHOTO: REUTERS

parently alluding to the Congressional resolution authorising the use of force against Saddam Hussein, if necessary. Part of the White House strategy in recent months has been to note how many of the administration's critics voted for that resolution, and turned against the war only after it became difficult.

Mr. Bush was speaking in the same hotel ballroom where last month he described the effort to reconstruct Iraq, admitting to major mistakes in the early part of that process. But in that speech, he faced a sceptical audience: the Council on Foreign Relations, whose members greeted him with tepid applause.

Tuesday, in front of 425 members of the

VFW, Mr. Bush received standing ovations. The group, which recently passed a resolution supporting the Iraq action, interrupted Mr. Bush repeatedly as he predicted that progress would be made in fighting the insurgency and in stabilising the newly elected government.

At the same time, he acknowledged the charges of human rights violations by the Iraqi police, who he said have been "accused of committing abuses against Iraqi civilians."

"That's unacceptable," he said. The U.S. was adjusting how it trains the Iraqi officers, including the establishment of an ethics and leadership institute in Baghdad to establish a curriculum for the nine police academies.

Mr. Bush made no reference to the revelations over the past year to Americans' abuses of detainees, in Iraq and elsewhere.

He also acknowledged the slow progress in restoring basic services, but argued that the problems paled in comparison to the progress he sees in Iraq.

But it was Mr. Bush's warning to Democrats that led him into new territory.

"There is a difference between responsible and irresponsible debate, and it's even more important to conduct this debate responsibly when American troops are risking their lives overseas," he said.

But he never specifically named his critics. —New York Times News Service

U.S. policies in the Eurasian region

M.K. Bhadrakumar

HERE IS a preponderance of storms around the Black Sea. Its ancient beaches are littered with shipwrecks from the classical world. Some American geologists insist the great Biblical flood occurred there.

The storms in the geopolitics of the region may not be apocalyptic, but could cause turbulence in Eurasia. Two events highlight this. First, U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice visited Bucharest on December 6 for signing "a historic military access agreement," reportedly establishing four American military bases near the Black Sea. Ms. Rice promptly hailed Romania as "one of our strongest friends, a friend with whom we share common values ... not just friends ... [as] our forces are brothers and sisters in arms in Iraq, Afghanistan, in the Balkans."

The Americans are wading into the Black Sea for the first time. It is a defining moment for Russia's tryst with the Black Sea — a region embedded in the Russian consciousness, its literature, folklore, customs, and culture.

Secondly, a new regional grouping with the ambitious title Community of Democratic Choice (CDC) took form at a conclave in Kiev on December 2. It comprised nine countries from the Balkan, Baltic, and Black Sea regions. The Presidents of Ukraine, Georgia, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Romania, Moldova, Slovenia, and Macedonia attended the conclave, apart from government delegations from Azerbaijan, the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland, and observers from the United States. The CDC's stated objectives are promotion of democratic values, regional stability, and economic prosperity.

But Georgia's State Minister Giorgi Baramidze claimed the CDC would confront Russia, or at least counterbalance Russian influence in Eurasia. The CDC member-countries are to meet again in March 2006 in Bucharest, and in Vilnius and Tbilisi later in the year.

Curiously, these developments bypassed two major regional powers — Turkey and Germany. Considering that Turkey, a major NATO power, is stretched along the Black Sea's southern shores, besides "controlling" the Bosphorous, there was no real need of American military bases. Also, as the region's oldest democracy, Turkey ought to have been mentoring the CDC.

American strategic thinkers seek the projection of U.S. power into Eurasia on a permanent footing. The central issue involved is Russia's unquestioned emergence as the 21st century's energy superpower.

This calls attention to the phenomenal transformation of Russo-Turkish relations. Never before in their tumultuous history have the two countries found themselves at ease with each other as today. Their growing importance for each other is underlined by the fact that Russian President Vladimir Putin visited Turkey twice in the past 11 months. Russia and Turkey have become friendly competitors and stakeholders.

The 'German question' is even more glaring. For, minus Germany, what is Central Europe and the Balkans worth? But Germany does not fit into the CDC's anti-Russia bias. Germany supports a rapprochement between Russia and the Central and Eastern European states. It would prefer a unified and constructive European Union agenda for Russia so that Russia's future relations with the West would be predictable. The noted scholar, Alexander Rahr, Director of the Russia/CIS Koerber Centre at the German Council of Foreign Relations, wrote recently: "The Christian Democrats will do more to dismantle Central and Eastern European fears of a 'German-Russian axis'... [But] the Russia policy of a new government will be guided by practical considerations. The German economy will not want to give up the chance to conquer one of the biggest growth markets of the 21st century, and will not wait until Russia has adopted Western values before becoming active on the Russian market."

American strategic thinkers have been arguing for the projection of U.S. power into Eurasia on a permanent, long-term footing. A report, "Regional Security in the South Caucasus: The role of NATO," by a task force of prominent American specialists, under the auspices of the Central Asia-Caucasus Institute of the Johns Hopkins University, last year stressed: "The Western world has long regarded the Black Sea as a boundary separating Europe from Asia ...

Today's strategic imperatives have consigned that perception to history ... The Caucasus forms the hub of an evolving geo-strategic and geo-economic system that stretches from NATO Europe to Central Asia and Afghanistan. It provides unique transit corridors for Caspian energy supplies and Central Asian commodities to the Euro-Atlantic community, as well as direct access for allied forces to bases and operational theatres in the Greater Middle East and Central Asia. Thus the Black Sea and Caspian basins ... comprise a functional aggregate, now linked directly to the enlarged Euro-Atlantic Alliance ... This region has already begun functioning as a rear area or staging ground in terms of projecting Western power and values along with security into Central Asia and the Greater Middle East. This function is likely to increase in significance as part of U.S. and NATO strategic initiatives."

The CDC provides a fig leaf without which American power projection would look a brazen attempt to establish hegemony. What emerges is that though Georgia, Ukraine, and Kyrgyzstan brought discredit to the dogma of "colour revolutions," Washington, after some quick rethink, is going ahead with a schematic programme of regime changes in the former Soviet republics. A confrontation may arise in Belarus during the presidential elections in July. To the disbelief of those who believed history ended with the Cold War, ideology is returning with a vengeance.

But Washington will be pragmatic. The litmus test of the "colour revolution" will be how U.S. business interests are affected by political instability. As a Xinhua commentary noted on the elections in Kazakhstan last week, "The U.S. has invested 10 billion dollars in Kazakhstan's booming energy sector. Besides, the 4-billion dollar Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline, a major American-backed energy initiative, needs pumping Kazakh oil reserves. So the U.S. rheto-

ric became more moderate." The same pragmatism characterised the U.S. approach toward parliamentary elections in Azerbaijan recently.

Wherever possible, the ideology of democracy, freedom, human rights and so on that "colour revolutions" tirelessly invoke will be pitted against a perceived spiritual and economic devastation and bankruptcy, and a total absence of the institutions, traditions, and political culture of liberal capitalism and democracy that allegedly prevails in the Eurasian heartlands, including Russia.

Of course, the U.S. strategic community understands that there are no signs of an economic crisis and the consequent political upheaval that could change the power constellation in Moscow as had happened in Ukraine and Georgia. But a Helsinki Declaration-like mechanism will be useful for internationalising Eurasia's "frozen conflicts" such as Chechnya or Transdniestria or Ossetia. Besides, the dream of Western integration must be fostered in Eurasia despite the uncertainties about the European Union's further expansion.

Americans' reasoning

Senior American officials have laboured to rationalise the geopolitical and security context of these far-reaching U.S. foreign policy moves to get embedded in the vast region enjoining four major powers — Russia, China, India, and Iran. They say the countries of Central Asia and the Caucasus constitute the front line *vis-à-vis* extremism, drug trafficking, and terrorism. And, countering authoritarianism, unresolved ethnic and nationalist conflicts, human rights violations and economic stagnation, which fuel domestic unrest, extremism of various kinds and international terrorism, is the key to protecting U.S. interests.

Secondly, the region's tremendous oil and gas reserves alone add to its importance to the U.S. (To quote from a Congressional testimony in September focussing on U.S. foreign policy towards Eurasia, "The proven oil reserves of just two states in the Caspian Sea basin, Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan, are only slightly less than those of the United States.")

Thirdly, extremism threatens to destabilise several areas within Eurasia. In particular, therefore, the U.S. must monitor the role of political and radical Islam and the conditions that permit Islamic extremism to flourish. Fourthly, the U.S. cannot ignore the countries of the post-Soviet space struggling to escape the debilitating legacy of communism, as a failing or failed state anywhere in the world can pose dangers to the security of the U.S.

Fifthly, the U.S. and its NATO allies have demonstrated their capacity to successfully intervene with military, diplomatic, humanitarian, and technical assistance in somewhat comparable circumstances in the Balkans (accompanying the collapse of the former Yugoslavia), to protect human rights, establish peace and lay the foundation for sustainable democracies and open market economies. But there are simply no matching assets available for stabilising Eurasia. Finally, U.S. officials acknowledge that the U.S.' most important foreign policy and security interest in Eurasia is its complex relationship with Russia itself.

The central issue here is Russia's unquestioned emergence as the 21st century's energy superpower. Does the U.S. indeed have vested interests in Russia's renaissance, as it claims, or does *realpolitik* demand the annihilation of Russia's status as an independent centre so as to incorporate it into the periphery of the Western community? The alacrity with which the bar of eligibility of NATO membership is being lowered for accommodating countries in Russia's neighbourhood appears to signify a structured expression of U.S. strategy.

The establishment of U.S. military bases in the Black Sea effectively makes the Caucasus a direct neighbour to the institutionalised West. As the task force report of Johns Hopkins University summed up, "with the U.S.-led anti-terrorism coalitions projecting power into Central Asia, Afghanistan and Iraq, the South Caucasus has *de facto* been drawn into the perimeter of Euro-Atlantic strategic security interests ... Thus, while remaining a permanent neighbour of Russia, the South Caucasus has in effect become a Euro-Atlantic borderland. This American-spearheaded development is so recent that its full implications have not yet sunk in."

12 DEC 2005

THE HINDU

US nears deadlock over Kyoto protocol

W311
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Charles J Hanley

MONTREAL 10 DECEMBER

After two contentious weeks, the United States neared agreement with an array of other countries late on Friday to join in global talks about possible new steps to combat climate change, the chief US negotiator said. "We're getting very close. I'm quite confident we will have a successful outcome," Harlan Watson told as the UN climate conference entered its final hours.

Any agreement would probably be only a small step forward, however, by a Bush administration that for days resisted Canadian and other efforts to draw it into multilateral talks on mandatory reductions in greenhouse-gas emissions in the period after 2012. —AP

11 DEC 2005

The Washington Times

US seeks China's help on Iran, Iraq

Washington: Two days of discussions between the United States and China indicated the pair have common ground on contentious issues but they sometimes will use differing policies to reach mutual goals.

US officials emerged from the sessions seemingly convinced that the Chinese government has made a policy decision to exercise its emerging economic and political power as a "responsible stakeholder" in world affairs. The phrase was used in a September speech by Robert Zoellick, the US state department's No 2 official, that laid out US strategies in its future relationships with China. Zoellick headed the US side in the talks that ended Thursday. His counterpart for China was Dai Bingguo, China's executive vice foreign minister.

"During this week's dialogue we discussed how China could work with the United States and others on challenges such as Iraq, Afghanistan, Iran and North Korea," Zoellick said in a statement about the talks. "Without always pursuing the same policies, we can still pursue the same policy goals with complementary approaches. We discussed our overlapping interests in fighting terrorism, preventing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, building energy security and reducing the risks of pandemic disease."

US officials said Dai replied to every statement in Zoellick's September speech, apparently eager to show China's decision to be a major player in world affairs in concert with the US and others. AP

10 DEC 2005

THE TIMES OF INDIA

Rice defends anti-terror policy

Colin Brown in London

Dec. 5. — Secretary of State Ms Condoleezza Rice turned the tables on European critics of tough US tactics in the war on terror today, maintaining that intelligence gathered by the CIA has saved European lives.

Assurances by Ms Condoleezza Rice, the US secretary of state, that the USA did not send detainees abroad for torture were dismissed last night by a cross-party group of MPs as "beyond belief". The MPs said it was "likely" that suspects had been tortured. The cross-party group which was launched yesterday to investigate the 'extraordinary renditions' of prisoners by the CIA, claimed that Ms Rice had confirmed that Britain had been told about the nature of the secret CIA flights to UK airports.

Mr Andrew Tyrie, the Tory chairman of the all-party group, said: "There has been so much smoke on this issue, it's very unlikely that there is not a fire somewhere. I think it's likely they have been tortured."

Downing Street was challenged over photographs produced at the weekend of CIA planes landing and taking off at UK airports. Downing Street denied British airports had been used for torture flights, "so far as we are aware of". But that statement failed to satisfy the cross-party group of MPs including former Labour minister Mr Chris Mullin, and Mr Menzies Campbell, deputy leader of the Liberal Democrats.

Mr Mullin, the former Labour foreign affairs minister, said: "Some of the assurances in her



statement defy belief in a country where there has recently been a public discussion on whether submerging prisoners in water to the point of drowning constitutes torture or not."

Mr Tyrie said Ms Rice's assurance that the USA respected the sovereignty of other countries was a clear hint that British ministers were told about the flights. "It sounds by implication whatever has been going on the British authorities have been kept informed of it," he said.

Mr Tyrie said she had carefully chosen her words to avoid ruling out abuse of prisoners that stopped short of torture. "She said torture is defined by law and by implication there may be levels of duress that may be short of torture," he said.

He also dismissed Ms Rice's assurances about the use of torture, saying: "What she actually

said was the US doesn't move people about for the purpose of torture and the government seeks assurances that transferred people will not be tortured. We have to ask ourselves how valuable these assurances are for countries like Egypt, Syria, and Libya. I think it's likely they have been tortured."

He warned Ms Rice that defending abuse of prisoners would prove counter productive. "We have got to be clear in our minds why we are so worried about it. It's not just that people may have been tortured. It's the effect that using torture to try to combat terrorism is likely to leave us less secure, not more. It is likely to inflame Muslim opinion. We have learned that lesson the hard way in Northern Ireland; the French learned that lesson in Algeria.

"I think they (the US) over-

reacted to 11 September. They made a profound mistake invading Iraq. They made a number of other mistakes. This looks as though it could be another one and it is our job to make sure they don't fall over the cliff."

For the Liberal Democrats, Mr Campbell MP, described Ms Rice's statement as "disingenuous". He said: "The volume of evidence of transfers has become overwhelming but what possible purpose is served by rendition other than to subject individuals to harsher treatment than would otherwise be the case? "Parliament and the public are entitled to expect the British government to show equivalent candour. But the question remains, what did our government know and when did it know it? How high up the political tree did such knowledge go?"

The Labour chairman of the Commons foreign affairs committee, Mr Mike Gapes gave a pledge that his committee would also pursue ministers over "extraordinary rendition" flights across the UK airspace.

White House security breach

A man from Arkansas, Mr Shawn A Cox, has scaled the fence surrounding the White House while President Mr George W Bush was inside and was immediately captured by Secret Service officers. Secret Service spokesman Mr Jonathan Cherry said Cox was being charged with unlawful entry and was expected to appear today in US District Court adds AP from Washington.

— The Independent

US (A)
WASH

USA threatens Iran

V.L.

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WASHINGTON, Dec. 1. — Noting that the USA is “working closely” with European allies, Russia, India and China, to deter “Iran’s nuclear ambitions”, a senior Bush administration official has slammed Teheran for “defiantly pursuing” an atomic weapons programme and warned that some nations might apply curbs on trade if negotiations over the issue fail.

“In coordination with our allies and our friends around the world, the USA seeks to isolate Iran. It seeks to promote a diplomatic solution to Iran’s nuclear ambitions... to expose and oppose Iran’s support of terrorism. And... to advance the

cause of democracy and human rights within Iran,” said under-secretary for political affairs Mr Nicholas Burns.

If diplomacy does not succeed, he said, “there is a growing diplomatic coalition to apply curbs, and other countries have trade and other weapons.” He, however, said the USA would not try to organise trade and investment sanctions. “It’s up to the Europeans to decide. It’s not up to the United States of America.”

During the course of remarks at the Paul Nitze School of Advanced International Studies of the Johns Hopkins University, Mr Burns said few in the international community have doubts on what the real objective of the Iranian nuclear

programme was — developing nuclear weapons capabilities.

“Why then would Teheran deny the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) access to its facilities, defy IAEA demands regarding its programme and pursue casting and machining technology specifically related to nuclear weapons manufacturing if its intentions were limited to civil nuclear energy production,” Mr Burns asked.

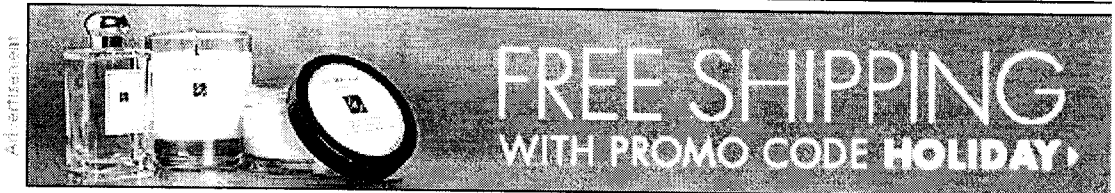
The State Department official called on Iran to return to the discussions with the EU-3 and said that Russia’s efforts thus far have been met with a cool response from Iran.

“The USA is working closely with the Europeans, Russia, India, China and other countries

with the hope of forming one increasingly united and purposeful coalition to deter Iran’s efforts. This circle of countries is widening. Iran should listen to the call for it to return to active and sustained negotiations with Europe,” Mr Burns said.

“If Iran does not do so, then it will face, at a time of our choosing, a UN Security Council debate to support and reinforce the work of the IAEA,” Mr Burns said.

In Ankara, Iranian foreign minister Mr Manouchehr Mottaki said the talks would resume within the next two weeks. If diplomacy does not succeed, Mr Burns said, a growing number of countries probably would consider punishments such as limiting trade and investments.



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Analysis
Bush's Asia Trip Meets Low Expectations

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By Peter Baker and Philip P. Pan
Washington Post Staff Writers
Monday, November 21, 2005; Page A01

Updated 2:45 a.m. ET

- Russia to build oil pipeline to Pacific, supply Japan
- Bush's Asia Trip Meets Low Expectations
- Under U.S. Design, Iraq's New Army Looks a Good Deal Like the Old One
- The China Opening Of 2005: Don't Ask
- A Mixed Family Struggles On France's Urban Fringe

BEIJING, Nov. 20 -- When President Bush was flying toward Asia a week ago, his national security adviser, Stephen J. Hadley, predicted to reporters in the back of the plane that the four-nation trip would yield no "headline breakthroughs." He turned out to be right.

As Bush wrapped up his stay in Beijing on Sunday and prepared to head home Monday after a brief stop in Mongolia, the trip has produced no real breakthroughs of any sort. On a wide variety of issues, from trade to security to human rights, Bush won no concrete agreements from any of his summit partners.

Advertisement

White House officials said that did not mean the trip was unsuccessful, because they never expected to bring home any major agreements in the first place. Such trips, they said, reflect a more mature diplomacy aimed at building relationships and achieving steady progress that will produce gains at some later date. Yet at the same time, it means that a politically weakened Bush returns home without anything high-profile to brag about when he could use some good news.

"I know that it's not like a deliverable or big breakthrough,



enlarge photo
President Bush rides with members of the Chinese Olympic cycling team on the Laoshan Olympic Mountain Bike Course in Beijing. Bush as traveler, C1. (By Charles Dharapak -- Associated Press)

PHOTOS



Bush Tours Asia
President Bush and First Lady Laura Bush are on week-long trip to Asia. The trip will include stops in Japan, South Korea, China and Mongolia.

but when breakthroughs are made you'll be able to point back" at the trip as paving the way, White House counselor Dan Bartlett said. "Some of these things aren't things that happen with the snap of a finger. What these summits do provide is an opportunity to move forward."

Bush wanted Japan to drop its two-year ban on U.S. beef imports, but although Japan seems likely to do so soon, it did not declare its readiness while the president was in town. Bush wanted to propel free trade during an economic summit in South Korea, but the general statement drafted by Pacific Rim leaders drops no tariffs and merely sets the stage for further talks.

In another setback, South Korea's cabinet on Monday backed a proposal to withdraw one-third of the country's 3,200 troops from Iraq.

In China, Bush's meetings with President Hu Jintao and Premier Wen Jiabao produced little progress toward resolving long-standing differences. Hu pledged "to gradually achieve balanced trade between China and the United States" and to "unswervingly press ahead" with plans to allow the Chinese currency to float more freely. But he offered no plan for how he would achieve either goal.

Hu also vowed "to step up" efforts to combat Chinese piracy of American movies and software. Wen insisted at length that Beijing was already waging a vigorous campaign to enforce intellectual property rights. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said there was "very important movement" that indicated the Chinese were "taking the issue . . . seriously."

But neither Rice nor other U.S. officials could point to any specific evidence of that. The Bush administration recently gave Beijing a list of 25 factories manufacturing pirated DVDs in China, and there has been no word on whether the Chinese have shut down any of them.

On human rights, Bush's team handed Hu's aides a list of political prisoners when the two met in New York two months ago and had expressed hope that at least some of them would be released by the time the president arrived here, as has been customary in the past. Instead, in the weeks before the visit, Chinese authorities sentenced an underground Christian pastor to three years in prison for illegally printing Bibles and closed down the firm of a prominent human

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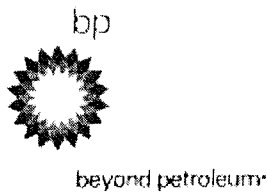
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rights lawyer.

Chinese police detained a group of 30 people who tried to see Bush to complain about the lack of political freedoms here, according to a member of the group who called the Associated Press after police stopped them outside the church where the president worshiped Sunday morning.

Rice said U.S. officials complained "quite vociferously" about the crackdown and acknowledged that the Chinese had not acted on the U.S. list. "We've certainly not seen the progress that we would expect, and I think we'll have to keep working on it," she said.

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US FOREIGN POLICY

Bush's Term Two Trauma

By RAJINDER PURI

American presidents are jinxed by the term two trauma. One should understand why. President John Kennedy's 1960 election was a watershed. The market got entrenched into electoral politics as never before. For the first time TV debates created a decisive impact. The electorate was categorised and quantified, its opinions sampled through market surveys, then computed to determine what the candidates should say to maximize voter-appeal. Earlier great democratic leaders believed in agendas. They persuaded the public to follow them. There were leaders like Churchill, Roosevelt, de Gaulle and Gandhi. Now market surveys determine what leaders should say. They don't lead the public. They are led by the market. They are controlled by the corporate world.

Kennedy of course got no second term. He was assassinated. His murder remains an unsolved mystery. After his death his policies were reversed. Before his murder he had signed a paper recalling US troops from Vietnam. He contemplated a strike against China's nuclear sites.

Russian cooperation

He sought Khrushchev's cooperation for containing China. He was finalising a strategic defence alliance with India. After his death President Johnson rescinded the order for withdrawal from Vietnam. Nixon's presidency broke the ice with China for containing the Soviet Union. That ruled out the proposed strategic alliance with India.

Nixon understood politics. He had clawed his way to the top. In a *Look* magazine interview he identified four contemporaries who understood power politics. Beside himself he named Nelson Rockefeller, Barry Goldwater and Texas Governor John Connolly. He struck a cozy relationship with corporate America and created the US-China strategic alliance. He thought he would become his own man in his second term. He wanted to replace Secretary of State Henry Kissinger by John Connolly.

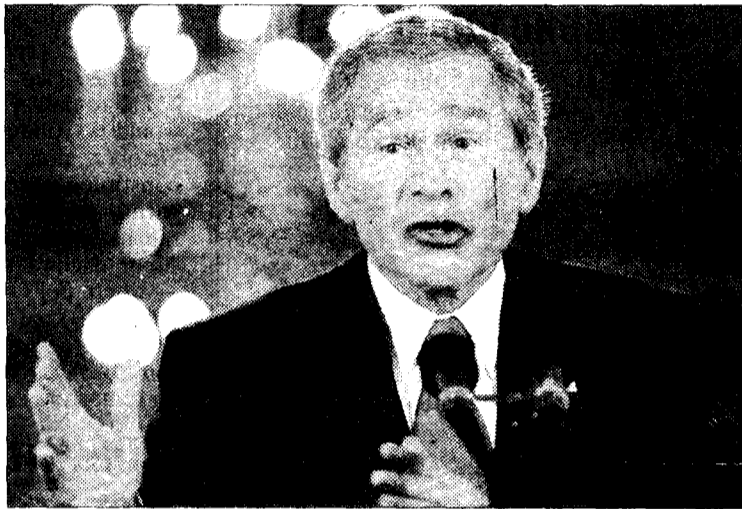
Subsequently Connolly's political career was ruined by the Milk Fund Scandal. Later, but too late, Connolly was exonerated. Watergate destroyed Nixon. Corporate America has long arms. Reagan in his second term battled for his life after narrowly escaping an assassination attempt. The Iran-Contra scandal paralyzed his administration.

Clinton made a breakthrough in his attempt to solve the Middle East crisis. He reached agreement with Israeli Premier Yitz-

The author is a veteran journalist and cartoonist

hak Rabin. Unidentified Israelis assassinated Rabin. Clinton in his second term was crippled by the Monica Lewinsky scandal. His legal defence costs for that case were met partly by China's Peoples' Liberation Army through its American representative Wang Jun. Clinton escaped impeachment because Republicans like Democrats had also received illegal election funds from China.

Clearly, term two traumas were



related to US foreign policy. The Bush administration is also vulnerable on many counts. Not least being official lies to justify the invasion of Iraq. But the issue haunting the Bush team is the Valerie Plame Wilson affair. She is the wife of the US diplomat who exposed the administration's lies about Iraq's nuclear programme. To settle scores top US officials blew the cover of his wife, a covert CIA operative. That exposure was a serious offence.

It cost undercover Americans their lives. Investigations have zeroed in on Bush's closest aide Karl Rove and Vice President Cheney's closest aide Lewis Libby. If they are indicted Bush could become a lame duck president. There is speculation that Vice President Cheney himself could be involved. Public criticism of President Bush is mounting. Colonel Lawrence Wilkerson, chief of staff to former Secretary of State Colin Powell, said: "What I saw was a cabal between the vice-president of the United States, Richard Cheney, and the secretary of defense, Donald Rumsfeld, on critical issues". He accused this cabal of serious mistakes with North Korea and Iran.

Spurious charges

Bush's second term differs from those of his predecessors in one vital aspect. Earlier presidents were weakened to prevent any change in policy. Bush is being weakened while policy is being changed. It is the architects of the earlier policy who are being targeted. President Bush star-

ted his first term as expected. He took a tough stand on Taiwan. He rattled China by announcing plans for the Missile Defence System. Then 9/11 derailed policy. Although US intelligence identified Osama bin Laden's Al Qaeda as the culprit, the neo-conservative advisers surrounding Bush immediately focused on Iraq.

The American assault on Afghanistan toppled the Taliban regime. But instead of concluding

that war and capturing Osama, Bush started another war against Iraq on the spurious charge that it had weapons of mass destruction and was allied to Osama. This was patently false.

Saddam was patronised by the Russians. The Iraqis always opposed Islamic fundamentalism. They were perceived as a threat by Saudi Arabia. They had no sympathy for Al Qaeda. They were opposed to Iran which had received American arms in its war against Iraq. China, however, has close links with the Taliban, Al Qaeda and Pakistan's extremists. The PLA had nursed Pakistan's army and ISI. In the mid-nineties China financed Islamic terrorism in Indonesia and Malaysia through Pakistan and Iran to keep the South-east Asian governments on edge. China sought leverage for controlling the strategic Malacca Straits. Richard L Russell, author of *Strategic Contest: Weapons Proliferation and War in the Greater Middle East*, researched how China through weapons of mass destruction brought Saudi Arabia, Iran, and Pakistan into its fold. All are pivotal states in the Islamic world. These states view China as a future counterbalance to America.

Saudi General Khaled said: "China's rapid economic growth must soon make it a formidable military power, which we, in the Middle East, must take into account". During the 1980s the Saudis purchased CSS-2 intermediate range missiles from China which came from an array of over

100 nuclear-capable IRBMs first tested by China in 1969 and later deployed in 1971. The security cooperation between both nations still continues.

Iran forged military ties with China throughout its war with Iraq. Simultaneously America and Israel also backed Iran against Iraq. In the early eighties, Iran purchased substantial Chinese conventional military hardware. Later China sold HY-2 Silkworm cruise missiles to Iran.

President Reagan objected. In 1988 China promised America it would stop the sale. But it lied. In January 1996 Iran tested an advanced Chinese C-802 anti-ship cruise missile. Once again under US pressure China in 1997 renewed its pledge to President Clinton it would halt future sales of cruise missiles to Iran. America was touchingly patient while dealing with China! One wonders if Clinton ever brought up the Iranian missiles issue with his Chinese financial benefactor Wang Jun.

Nuclear proliferation

The Iranians and Chinese continue to maintain high-level contacts to strengthen their strategic relationship. One need not reiterate China using Pakistan as its most trusted proxy for nuclear proliferation. Dr Abdul Qadeer Khan was also a conduit to Iran. Two trends have surfaced in Bush's second term. First, there is a perceptible rollback in foreign policy. Secondly, Bush aides are coming under legal assault, Watergate style. In foreign policy Israel has been compelled to suspend arms sales to China. It has also been forced to withdraw from Gaza. At the same time, there is slight hardening of America's stance against China and North Korea. America is too badly enmeshed in Iraq for quick policy reversal.

India must safeguard against America accommodating China at the cost of India's interests. That could happen if India overlooks security aspects for sake of economic profit as did America influenced by Kissinger. As long as Iran and Pakistan are in China's net, India must remain cautious. India cannot trust China until it changes policy towards Pakistan and Bangladesh. India cannot trust Pakistan and Iran while they remain client states of China. So for the time being, goodbye gas pipeline! India cannot trust the Bush administration until it liberates itself from China's economic stranglehold. Last week Donald Rumsfeld was in Beijing making appropriate noises. Bush will visit Beijing in November. That visit must be closely watched. Are America's foreign policy changes genuine or merely cosmetic?

U.S. launches another offensive in Iraq

Forces raid three towns to take them back from militants; suicide blast in the Green Zone

HAQLANIYAH (IRAQ): Some 2,500 U.S. troops along with Iraqi forces launched their second major offensive in western Iraq in a week on Tuesday, sweeping into three towns to take them back from militants who drove out Iraqi forces and killed Marines there last month.

The U.S. military announced its first casualties of the offensives, with four service members killed by roadside bombs during the fighting and a fifth elsewhere.

The assaults in western Iraq aim to put down Al-Qaeda in Iraq and other Sunni-led militant groups that have waged a campaign of violence aimed at wrecking a crucial Oct. 15 national vote on a new Constitution.

Boycott threat

The United States has hoped the new charter would bring together the fractious communities, but Sunnis sharply oppose it. Sunni Arab moderates threatened on Tuesday to boycott the voting after the Shia-led Parliament passed new rules over the weekend that make it effectively impossible for Sunnis to defeat the charter at the ballot box.

The new rules deepened alienation over the political process among Sunnis, who had decided to participate in the referendum but to vote no — but who now said the Shiites were using their dominance to stack the deck against them. A boycott would undermine the referendum's legitimacy and strike a



STRIKING TERROR: U.S. soldiers guard suspects during an overnight raid in Tikrit on Monday. — PHOTO: AFP

blow to hopes that political progress would weaken Sunni support for the insurgency.

In Baghdad, a suicide attacker set off a car bomb at the main entrance to the heavily fortified

Green Zone, a district of Iraqi government buildings and the U.S. and British Embassies. The powerful blast killed two policemen.

The attack came on the first

day of Ramzan. Al-Qaeda in Iraq called on its followers to step up attacks against U.S. and Iraqi forces to mark the month and make it a "month of victory for Muslims and a month of defeat

for the hypocrites and polytheists."

Previous Ramzans, since the invasion and occupation of Iraq two years ago, saw spike in violence in Iraq — especially suicide

attacks. In another statement, Al-Qaeda in Iraq urged Sunnis to boycott the referendum, saying U.S. authorities would fix the vote. "You know very well that the Americans are going to supervise collecting the voting boxes and counting the votes," it said.

Baghdad battle

Violence involving militants has killed at least 237 persons, including 21 U.S. forces, across Iraq in the past nine days.

In Tuesday's worst clash in the capital, Iraqi security forces backed by U.S. helicopters fought about 40 militants house-to-house in south Baghdad. More than three dozen militants were killed, wounded or detained, the U.S. military said. Three Iraqi soldiers were injured.

The U.S. military launched its latest offensive in a cluster of cities in the Euphrates River valley about 220 km northwest of Baghdad on Tuesday. Code-named River Gate, it was the largest U.S. offensive in the troubled Anbar region of western Iraq this year, the military said. It also included hundreds of Iraqi troops, the largest Iraq contingent of any of the offensives this year.

Air strikes by U.S. warplanes and dozens of helicopters set off explosions that lit up Haqlaniyah and Haditha before dawn on Tuesday. Barrages of gunfire also were seen in the night sky. Large sections of Haqlaniyah's power were knocked out. — AP

Lynndie gets three years' prison term

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REUTERS

Baghdad, September 28

IRAQIS EXPRESSED fury on Wednesday over the three-year jail sentence for Lynndie England, the US soldier notorious for her photos holding a naked inmate by a leash in Abu Ghraib prison, saying it exposed American hypocrisy. They said the sentence would have been more harsh had she been convicted of abusing Americans.

"America should be ashamed of this sentence. This is the best evidence that Americans have double standards," said Akram Abdel Amir, a retired bus driver in Baghdad. "There are Iraqis in jail without any charge, just based on suspicion. But when it comes to Americans, the matter is totally different."

England, 22, was sentenced on Tuesday by a US military court after being convicted of abuse, including being photographed pointing to the genitals of a naked Iraqi prisoner.

The former West Virginia chicken factory worker, who had faced a maximum sentence of nine years, was also given a dishonourable discharge. She is the last of a group of US soldiers to be convicted of abuse at Abu Ghraib, including her former boyfriend and the father of her child, Charles Graner, who is serving 10 years.

"If the abuse was committed against Americans I am sure the sentence would be much harsher. The sentence is nothing compared to what she has done," said labourer Muntasser Abdel Mon-eim, 30.

The prosecution asked for a sentence of four to six years. England was found guilty on six counts on Monday.

The prisoner abuse scandal provoked global outrage and deepened Iraqi resentment of occupying US troops.

In pre-sentencing testimony, England said she was sorry for



Lynndie England being led out of the court after her sentencing.

her actions but remained an American patriot.

Iraqis remember her as the American soldier who held an inmate by a leash like the kind used for dogs, a highly degrading act because Iraqis and other Muslims regard the animals as unclean. The images of a smiling England abusing naked inmates were especially humiliating in Iraq, a male-dominated society.

"The whole thing is theatre. The Americans want to pretend they defend human rights and are a civilised nation," said Munir Abdel Sahib, a university lecturer. "I believe that England would not have committed these crimes without orders from above."

In court testimony, England blamed her involvement on Graner, the abuse ringleader, who is now married to another woman who also pleaded guilty to abusing prisoners at Abu Ghraib.

"There is no justice in this sentence because the pictures were very shameful. She has to get more years in jail and she has to be imprisoned in Iraq," said Najaat al-Azawi, 55, a retired engineer.

Rice in new warning to Iran

Leaders adopt limited goals

United Nations, Sept. 17 (Reuters): US secretary of state Condoleezza Rice demanded today that Iran abandon a suspected quest for atomic weapons but Tehran's new President said his country would defend its right to enrich uranium.

Rice told the UN General Assembly that Iran's nuclear programme was a real threat to global security and the Security Council must deal with it unless Iran ended sensitive activities and resumed talks with the EU.

"Iran should return to negotiations with the EU3 and abandon forever its plans for a nuclear weapons capability," she said. "When diplomacy has been exhausted, the Security Council must become involved."

However, state department spokesman Sean McCormack later quoted Rice as saying: "There is still time for diplomacy but it's up to the Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad to seize the opportunity."

Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad said in a television interview that his country's programme was entirely legal. He attacked what he called "nuclear apartheid"

smart human being should use every resource in order to maintain his or her freedom and independence," he said when asked about the oil weapon. Iran "has the means to defend and obtain its rights," he added.

Ahmadinejad gave few details of proposals he was to outline to the General Assembly later aimed at allaying international concerns about Iran's nuclear ambitions.

The Islamic Republic swears its programme, conceived from the International Atomic Energy Agency for 18 years, is purely for civilian energy purposes.

UN secretary-general Kofi Annan warned the world in his opening address that the consensus underlying the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty was badly frayed while nations pointed fingers at each other rather than working for solutions.

Iran last month spurned a European package of economic security and technology incentives for it to abandon sensitive nuclear work and reacted a factory converting uranium ore into gas, prompting the EU to break off talks.



Condoleezza Rice at the United Nations. (AFP)

that would permit some countries to enrich fuel, but not others. "The first point is stressing the right of the Islamic Republic of Iran to pursue and have the nuclear (fuel) cycle," he told CNN.

Speaking through an interpreter, Ahmadinejad called for a UN committee to control the spread of nuclear weapons technology and did not rule out triggering an oil price rise if the West hauled Iran to the top UN body for sanctions.

"Any intelligent, healthy

United Nations, Sept. 17 (Reuters): World leaders endorsed modest reforms of the UN yesterday at the end of a summit that made only limited progress on fighting poverty and terrorism, boosting security or protecting human rights.

The final document was adopted by consensus to polite applause after Venezuela condemned the procedure as "grotesque" and illegal, and the US put on record its opposition to any "support, endorsement, or promotion of abortion."

"We, the leaders of the world, have for three days discussed how the UN can be strengthened to meet the challenges of the 21st century," Swedish Prime Minister Goran Persson, the co-chairman, told the closing session. With many leaders including President George W. Bush having left New York, those remaining voiced a mixture of hope that the biggest summit in UN history would give new momentum to development goals and disappointment at the meagre outcome.

Secretary-general Kofi Annan hailed an unprecedented agreement on the international responsibility to intervene to protect civilians from genocide and ethnic cleansing designed to prevent a repeat of massacres in Rwanda, Bosnia and Kosovo.

Other achievements he cited included the establishment of a peace-building commission to help nations emerging from conflict, and member states' reaffirmation of goals set by a UN Millennium summit in 2000 to halve poverty by 2015.

In a final statement, Persson regretted the failure to agree on a common approach to preventing the spread of nuclear arms or a comprehensive strategy to counter terrorism.

Bush calls for graft-free U.N.

United States President calls for greater cooperation among nations on Iraq

UNITED NATIONS: U.S. President George W. Bush called on Wednesday for the United Nations to be "free of corruption," and urged the world body not to place abusers of human rights on commissions designed to protect those rights.

Three years after warning that the world body must back the U.S.-led war in Iraq or be irrelevant, Mr. Bush used a speech to assembled world leaders to call for greater international cooperation on Iraq, freer trade, and other issues.

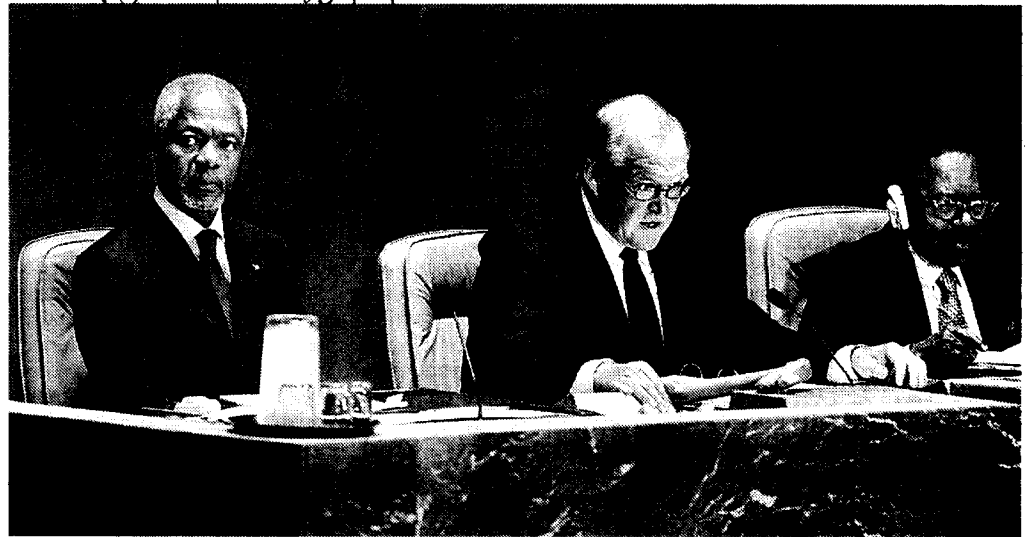
He underlined a global effort to battle avian influenza and said the U.S. was ready to scrap "all tariffs and subsidies" and other barriers to trade if other nations agree.

Key to development

"This is key to overcoming poverty in the world's poorest nations. It's essential we promote prosperity and opportunity for all nations," he said.

Mr. Bush thanked the assembled world leaders for the outpouring of help in response to Hurricane Katrina and said sweeping U.N. reforms would help the world body seize the "exciting opportunity" that Saddam Hussein's departure provided.

"The United Nations must be strong and efficient, free of corruption, and accountable to the people it serves. The United Na-



FOCUS ON POVERTY: Goran Persson (centre), Prime Minister of Sweden, opens the 2005 World Summit at the 60th session of the United Nations with Secretary-General Kofi Annan (left) and Hadj Omar Bongo Ondimba, President of Gabon in New York on Wednesday. - PHOTO: AFP

tions must stand for integrity and live by the high standards it sets for others," he said.

In addition to management reforms at the world body, Mr. Bush renewed Washington's criticism of putting countries with questionable human rights records on its rights watchdog commission.

His appeal for rock-solid ethics came after an investigation into the U.N.-run oil-for-food programme meant to ease the

pain of sanctions for the people of Iraq found rampant mismanagement and corruption.

Mr. Bush also called for increased international cooperation against terrorism, as well as the "outlaw regimes" that promote it and could give extremists access to the devastating power of unconventional weapons.

Without mentioning them by name, he alluded to U.S. complaints against countries such as Iran, Syria and North Korea,

which Washington accuses of sponsoring terrorism.

The Security Council was to take up on Wednesday a British proposal to outlaw incitement to terrorist acts, but Mr. Bush said more needed to be done.

"We also need to sign the conventional acts for nuclear terrorism so that all those who seek radioactive materials or nuclear devices are prosecuted and extradited wherever they are." - AFP

Bush seeks support for spread of democracy

United Nations, September 14

BEFORE SKEPTICAL and silent world leaders, President Bush on Wednesday urged compassion for the needy and pressed the global community to "put the terrorists on notice" by cracking down on any activities that could incite deadly attacks.

Bush, addressing more than 160 presidents, PMs and kings gathered for three days of UN General Assembly meetings, was seeking to sell his blueprints for spreading democracy in Iraq and elsewhere, overhauling the United Nations and expanding trade, and "permanently lifting poverty."

"The terrorists must know that wherever they go they cannot es-

cape justice," Bush said to world leaders. Those gathered before him included many who harbour lingering bitterness about the U.S.-led war in Iraq.

Bush pressed for Security Council approval of a resolution calling upon all nations to take steps to end the incitement of terrorist acts and asked nations to agree to prosecute and extradite anyone seeking radioactive materials or nuclear devices.

"We must send a clear message to the rulers of outlawed regimes that sponsor terror and pursue weapons of mass murder: You will not be allowed to threaten the peace and stability of the world," Bush said. "Confronting our enemies is essential, and so civilised

nations will continue to take the fight to the terrorists."

Seeking broader support for U.S. engagement in Iraq, Bush said the whole world has a stake in fostering democracy there. "The U.N. and its member states must continue to stand by the Iraqi people as they continue their journey," he said. "It's an exciting opportunity for all of us in this chamber," he told an assembly of nations, many of whom had bitterly opposed the U.S. decision to go to war.

At a time when polls show sliding support at home for the war in Iraq, the president used his U.N. speech as a fresh defence of his policies in a country trying to hold on to a fragile democracy.

"Across the world hearts and

minds are opening to the message of human freedom than ever before," Bush said. "We must encourage their aspirations ... and the United Nations has a vital role to play." However, the Bush administration has long viewed the U.N. as an ineffective bureaucracy in dire need of a management overhaul.

"The United Nations must be strong and efficient, free of corruption and accountable to the people it serves," Bush said Wednesday. "Institutional reforms must include internal oversight," said Wednesday. The president's attendance at the U.N. meetings came as leaders were being presented with a plan for addressing poverty worldwide.

USA Today



President Bush with UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan at the UN World Summit on Tuesday.

AP

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91-14
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US rules out N-pact with Pakistan, Israel

'India A Special Case. Progress Depends On Steps Taken By Delhi'

Washington: The United States entered into a civil nuclear cooperation agreement with India because it was an "exceptional case", a senior state department official said and ruled out negotiating any such pact with Pakistan.

"We view India as an exceptional case, and see civil nuclear cooperation as a mechanism to deepen further India's commitment to international nonproliferation," under secretary of state for arms control and security Robert G Joseph said.

"Some have asked whether it might be possible to extend such cooperation to Israel and Pakistan—the only other two (de facto weapon) states that did not join the NPT," he said, adding India, Israel and Pakistan are each unique and require different approaches.

"Neither Pakistan nor Israel has a civil nuclear energy programme that approximates that of India. The United States has no plans to seek full civil nuclear cooperation with Israel or Pakistan,"

he told the House International Relations Committee here.

He said the US recognised that India was a special case and see a clear need to come to terms with it.

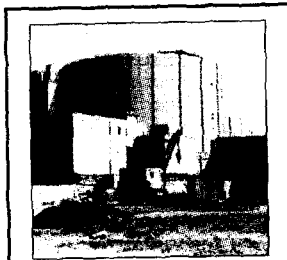
"India has informed us that it has no intention of becoming a party to the npt as a non-nuclear state at this time.

Despite this, it is important to seize this opportunity to assist India in becoming a more constructive partner in our global nonproliferation efforts," he said.

The official also said the US is in talks with its allies on the steps needed to fully realise civil nuclear cooperation with India, but success of these efforts will depend on timely

implementation of commitments made by New Delhi under the US-India pact, a senior official has said.

The US has begun consultations with its partners and conducted a number of introductory discussions with Congress on the steps necessary to fully realise civil nuclear cooperation with India, Joseph said. PTI



'Neither Israel nor Pakistan has a civil energy programme that approximates that of India'

Nuke deal awaits US Cong nod

S. Rajagopalan

Washington, September 7

THE BUSH administration begins its campaign to secure Congressional nod for the US-India nuclear agreement on Thursday, when two high-ranking officials are slated to testify in the first hearing on the subject on Capitol Hill.

Undersecretary of state for political affairs Nicholas Burns and undersecretary for arms control Robert Joseph are expected to make a strong pitch for the deal, concluded during Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's visit here in July. A full meeting of the House International Relations Committee, chaired by Henry J. Hyde, will deliberate on the issue as part of a larger discussion on what it calls the "The US and India: An Emerging Entente". Although lawmakers are heavily preoccupied with the ravages of Hurricane Katrina, media contacts indicated that the committee's meeting tomorrow will be held as scheduled.

Iran: George Bush is the real threat

Bombing Iran would allow President Bush to regain the political credibility lost in Iraq.

Tony Benn

NOW THAT George W. Bush has announced that he has not ruled out an attack on Iran, if it does not abandon its nuclear programme, the Middle East faces a crisis that could dwarf even the dangers arising from the war in Iraq. Even a conventional weapon fired at a nuclear research centre — whether or not a bomb was being made there — would almost certainly release radioactivity into the atmosphere, with consequences seen worldwide as a mini Hiroshima.

We would be told that it had been done to uphold the principles of the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT) — an argument that does not stand up to a moment's examination. The moral and legal basis of the NPT

convention, which the International Atomic Energy Agency is there to uphold, was based on the agreement of non-nuclear nations not to acquire nuclear weapons if nuclear powers undertook not to extend nuclear armaments and to seek to secure their abolition.

Since then, the Americans have launched a programme that would allow them to use nuclear weapons in space, nuclear bunker-busting bombs are being developed, and depleted uranium has been used in Iraq — all of which are clear breaches of the NPT. Even those who are opposed, as I am, to nuclear weapons in every country including Iran, North Korea, Britain, and the U.S., accept that nuclear power for electricity generation need not necessarily lead to the acquisition of the bomb.

It is easy to understand why President

Bush might see the bombing of Iran as a way to regain some of the political credibility he has lost as a result of the growing hostility in America to the Iraq war due to the heavy casualties suffered by U.S. forces there. It is inconceivable that the White House can be contemplating an invasion of Iran. What must be intended is a U.S. air strike, or air strikes, on Iranian nuclear installations, comparable to Israel's bombing of Iraq in 1981. Israel has publicly hinted that it might do the same again to prevent Iran developing nuclear weapons. Such an attack would be in breach of the U.N. Charter, as was the invasion of Iraq. But neither Mr. Bush, Ariel Sharon nor Tony Blair would take any notice of that.

Some influential Americans appear to be convinced that the U.S. will attack Iran.

Whether they are right or not, the build-up to a new war is taking exactly the same form as it did in 2002. First we are being told that Iran poses a military threat, because it may be developing nuclear weapons. We are assured that the President is hoping that diplomacy might succeed through the European negotiations, which have been in progress for some months. This is just what we were told when Hans Blix was in Baghdad talking to Saddam Hussein on behalf of the U.N., but we now know, from a Downing Street memorandum leaked some months ago, that the decision to invade had been taken long before that. — ©Guardian Newspapers Limited 2005

(Tony Benn was a Cabinet Minister under the Labour administrations of Harold Wilson and James Callaghan.)

US frees 1,000 Iraqis, talks go on

Reuters

Baghdad, August 27

THE US military said on Saturday it had freed 1,000 detainees from Iraq's notorious Abu Ghraib prison at the Baghdad government's request, in the largest release to date.

It was not clear if the decision was linked to a demand by Arab Sunnis opposed to a draft constitution that authorities release Sunni prisoners so they can participate in a referendum on the text and elections later this year.

"I know this is a big one, but I can't say if it is related to anything that is going on," said US military spokesman Lieutenant Colonel Steven Boylan.

A statement from President Jalal Talabani's office said prisoners from the town of Madaen, just south of Baghdad, had also been released. Sunni negotiators had also demanded freedom for Sunni prisoners from Madaen.

Whether or not the releases were part of negotiations on the charter, they are likely to ease concerns over the estimated 10,000 Iraqi prisoners held in US detention centers in the country.

"This is a good move that we definitely welcome," said Hussein al-Falluji, one of 15 Sunnis on the panel drafting the constitution.

Parliament Speaker Hajem al-Hassani confirmed that a draft constitution with new proposals

on disputed points such as federalism would be reviewed by Arab Sunnis and the chamber would receive a response on Sunday.

Sunnis are fiercely opposed to federalism, fearing it would give Shi'ite and Kurdish leaders dominating the government control over oil resources in northern and southern Iraq.

The plight of prisoners in the US-run Abu Ghraib, once one of Saddam Hussein's most feared prisons, has been one of the most emotional issues for Iraqis since a US-led invasion toppled the former Iraqi president in 2003.

A scandal broke in the facility west of Baghdad last year when leaked photographs of US military guards abusing prisoners and forcing them to simulate sexual acts provoked an international outcry.

"This major release, the largest to date, marks a significant event in Iraq's progress toward democratic governance and the rule of law," said a US military statement.

US military officials say detainees sent to Abu Ghraib typically spend six months to a year in custody before a decision is made in Iraqi courts on whether to prosecute them.

US military lawyers in Baghdad estimate that 80 to 85 percent of those arrested by U.S. forces are released without being convicted.

Leaders of the Sunni commu-



AP
Iraq's parliament speaker Hajem al-Hassani announces that the Shi'ite and Kurdish factions had reached a pact for the new constitution.

unity, the seat of the insurgency, have complained that lengthy detentions without charge, during which prisoners have no access to lawyers or family, are unfair.

The military said the released prisoners were not guilty of serious crimes such as bombings, curfew forces, US troops and

murder, torture or kidnapping and had renounced violence.

Shi'ite and Kurdish leaders are hoping to get Sunni leaders on board for the constitution in a bid to neutralise an insurgency that has killed thousands of se-

curity forces, US troops and

civilians.

But negotiations over the charter, described as a blueprint for democracy by Shi'ites and Kurds, and a possible trigger for civil war by the Sunnis, have been deadlocked for weeks.

Falluji is the kind of Sunni that the government wants to win over in order to pacify Sunnis in the insurgency.

He is a lawyer from Abu Ghraib — a district which is a guerrilla stronghold despite being home to the prison — who is willing to try politics. But he was not optimistic about a deal.

"I don't think there will be an agreement because we find federalism in principle unacceptable and that has been our position from the start."

The fate of former members of Saddam's Baath party is also an obstacle. Some Shi'ite politicians say they should never be allowed back into public life. Sunnis advocate a softer line, saying not all former Baathists have blood on their hands.

"There was a concession on Baathism but we believe this is a political matter and we should not include it in the constitution at all," said the Sunni Falluji.

Sunni leaders said if no major concessions are made, they will mobilise the community to vote "No" in an October referendum on the charter, raising the possibility of a fierce political battle while the insurgency rages.

Bush puts pressure on Palestinians after pullout

Crawford (Texas): President George W Bush put pressure on the Palestinians on Saturday to respond to the Israeli pullout from Gaza and portions of the West Bank by cracking down on terrorism.

"Now that Israel has withdrawn, the way forward is clear. The Palestinians must show the world that they will fight terrorism and govern in a peaceful way," Bush said.

"We demand an end to terrorism and violence in every form because we know that progress depends on ending terror," Bush added in his weekly radio address.

He stopped short of specifically calling on Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas to dismantle Hamas and other groups, and Palestinian officials in Washington said the White House understood Abbas and his security forces would need more time to prepare for any push to disarm the militants.

The top Palestinian official in Washington, Hasan Abdel Rahman, said the Palestinian Authority "needs time and I think it's wise to allow President Abbas to achieve that objective on his own terms".

Edward Abington, an adviser to the Palestinian Authority in the United States and a former US consul in Jerusalem, said it was US security coordinator Lt Gen William Ward's judgment that PA (Palestinian Authority) capabilities are limited and it's going to take time to rebuild it".

"It's not realistic that the PA can go in to disarm the groups at this time. It's not something they (US officials) expect to happen any time soon," Abington said.

American officials said they were counting on Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's removal of 25 settlements to kick-start the "road map" peace process for establishing a viable Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza.

Bush said this week he



A Palestinian militant from the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine jumps over a burning model of a Jewish settlement during a rally in the West Bank city of Jenin on Saturday

wanted the Israelis and the Palestinians to return to the "road map", but that "in order for this process to go forward", steps must be taken to increase confidence on both sides.

He said the next step after Israel's withdrawal would be establishing a working Palestinian government in Gaza and consolidating Palestinian security forces. The United States would help the Palestinians in Gaza to prepare for self-government and "to defeat the terrorists who attack Israel

and oppose the establishment of a peaceful Palestinian state", he said. Bush praised Sharon for taking the "painful step" of withdrawing settlers, and said the United States remains "fully committed to defending the security and well-being of our friend and ally Israel". Palestinians want Israel to hand over all of the West Bank and Arab East Jerusalem for their capital. But Sharon has vowed to keep all of Jerusalem and large West Bank settlements. Reuters

08 AUG 2005 11:00

Bush raises option of using force to dissuade Iran N-plan

Reuters
Jerusalem, August 13

US PRESIDENT George W. Bush said on Israeli television that he could consider using force as a last resort to press Iran to give up its nuclear programme.

"All options are on the table," Bush, speaking at his ranch in Crawford, Texas, said in the interview broadcast on Saturday. Asked if that included the use of force, Bush replied: "As I say, all options are on the table. The use of force is the last option for any President and you know, we've used force in the recent past to secure our country."

Iran angered the European Union and the US by resuming uranium conversion at the Isfahan plant last Monday after rejecting an EU offer of political and economic incentives in return for giving up its nuclear programme. Teheran says it aims only to produce electricity and denies Western accusations it is seeking a nuclear bomb.

Bush made it clear that he still hoped for a diplomatic solution, noting that EU powers Britain, Germany and France had taken the lead in dealing with Iran. Washington last week expressed a willingness to give negotiations on Iran's suspected nuclear weapons program more time before getting tougher with the

WAR MONGERING?



George Bush Fight fit

country.

"In all these instances we want diplomacy to work and so we're working feverishly on the diplomatic route and we'll see if we're successful or not," Bush told state-owned Israel Channel One television. Bush has also

previously said that the US has not ruled out the possibility of military strikes. But US officials have played down media speculation earlier this year that they were planning military action against Iran.

French foreign minister Philippe Douste-Blazy had said on Friday that negotiations were still possible with Iran on the nuclear issue but only on condition the Iranians suspend their nuclear activities. The governing board of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) had unanimously called on Iran on Thursday to halt sensitive atomic work.

Douste-Blazy said the next step would be taken on September 3 when IAEA chief Mohamed ElBaradei reports on Iran's activities.

If Iran continues to defy global demands to put its nuclear work on ice, another IAEA meeting will likely be held soon. At this meet, both the European powers and Washington will push for a referral of Teheran's activities to the UN Security Council for possible sanctions.

Washington was always in favour of taking Iran to the United Nations but the Britain, France and Germany convinced the US to give them some time to negotiate with Teheran and try to solve the issue.

No Iraq troop cut: Bush

Pullout will send terrible signal to enemy, says U.S. President

Anne E. Kornblut

CRAWFORD (TEXAS): Faced with mounting casualties and signs of diminished support for the war, U.S. President George Bush said on Thursday while the U.S. was making progress in Iraq, it was too soon to say when the number of American troops could be scaled back.

Speaking in unusually personal terms, forced on him in part by the defiant presence outside his ranch here of the mother of an American soldier killed last year in Baghdad, Mr. Bush said he had considered and rejected calls by some anti-war protesters for an immediate withdrawal.

Security issue

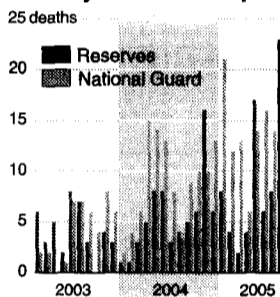
He also signalled that, despite planning by senior Pentagon officials for a potential troop reduction as early as next spring, he was not certain Iraqis could handle their own security well enough for the U.S. to begin leaving anytime soon.

Mr. Bush dismissed talk among some Pentagon officials

Guard and Reserve troop deaths climb

The death toll among U.S. National Guard and Reserves has climbed as their role in Iraq becomes more prominent.

Monthly deaths in Iraq



NOTE: Death toll as of Aug. 10

SOURCE: Associated Press research; AP Defense Department

of a phased troop reduction as "speculation based upon progress that some are seeing in Iraq as to whether or not the Iraqis will be able to take the fight to the enemy."

He said no decisions had been

made about either drawing down American forces or adding more to safeguard the Iraqi elections, another step under consideration.

The political timetable ahead of the elections, scheduled for December, faced fresh strains on Thursday as one of Iraq's leading Shia politicians backed demands for a semi-independent region in the south, a call that could hinder the completion of the country's new constitution.

Delicate question

Mr. Bush said, "Pulling the troops out now would send a terrible signal to the enemy."

For Mr. Bush, questions about an exit strategy have become especially delicate as anti-war protesters have expanded at the edge of his ranch, rallying around Cindy Sheehan, the California woman whose son Casey was killed in Iraq in 2004. The Pentagon and the Bush administration have struggled to calibrate their message on future troop reductions in Iraq. —New York Times News Service

Beating around Bush

George W Bush is quite likely the worst President in the 200-year history of the USA.

This has enormous implications for the international community, since his country is not a small republic like the Maldives or Andorra, but a global behemoth. His power as the most powerful man on earth derives not from a particular Intelligence or set of talents, but by virtue of his position as the leader of the dominant military and economic nation on our planet.

Many of us in the USA do not like the way in which Mr Bush runs the American nation and attempts to run the world. Our numbers are growing: In each of the nine national polls taken this month, less than half the respondents are of the opinion that he is handling the presidency well.

More significant still, since he retains a reputation for personal charm which buttresses his standing in the polls, the latest poll reported that only one-third of Americans think the nation, under Mr Bush, is headed in the right direction. Two polls earlier in the month found that well under 40 per cent of Americans approve of the direction in which he is leading the country.

Americans are very fond of lists, so let me do the American "thing". Here is a list of the top reasons why Mr Bush can be considered the most disastrous President in US history. This is a double list: the first five items concern foreign policy, while the second five address domestic policy (in the next part of the article).

■ Mr Bush began a war on false pretenses. He lied to his people when he committed them to the war on Iraq, and on the basis of those lies he has undermined world security and committed his nation to the destruction of much of Iraq. Tens of thousands of Iraqis have died — and over 1,700 Americans — for no reason greater than that being a war-time President would improve his political stature. (Well, it is possible that his personal oil interests, and those of his friends, factored in. Maybe also an idiosyncratic personal grudge — on the order of, "I'm going to show up my father and get that

In the first of a two-part article, Huck Gutman cites five foreign policy reasons why George W Bush can be considered the most disastrous President in US history

damn Saddam Hussein and show I'm tougher than both Saddam and my Dad" — that raises his oedipal complex to international dimensions.)

That he lied about Iraq's "threat" to the USA is no unsubstantiated allegation. The recently revealed "Downing Street Memo" is the report of Britain's Intelligence chief made to Prime Minister Blair about his trip to the USA eight months before the war in Iraq began, long before it was publicly considered.

The memo makes clear that deception and the fitting of facts to serve a military agenda was a high priority for the Bush administration. ("C" in the following is Sir Richard Dearlove, head of Britain's foreign Intelligence service — MI 6 — who had just returned from meetings in Washington.) "C reported on his recent talks in Washington. There was a perceptible shift in attitude. Military action was now seen as inevitable. Mr Bush wanted to remove Saddam Hussein, through military action, justified by the conjunction of terrorism and WMD (weapons of mass destruction). But the Intelligence and facts were being fixed around the policy." (Emphasis added.)

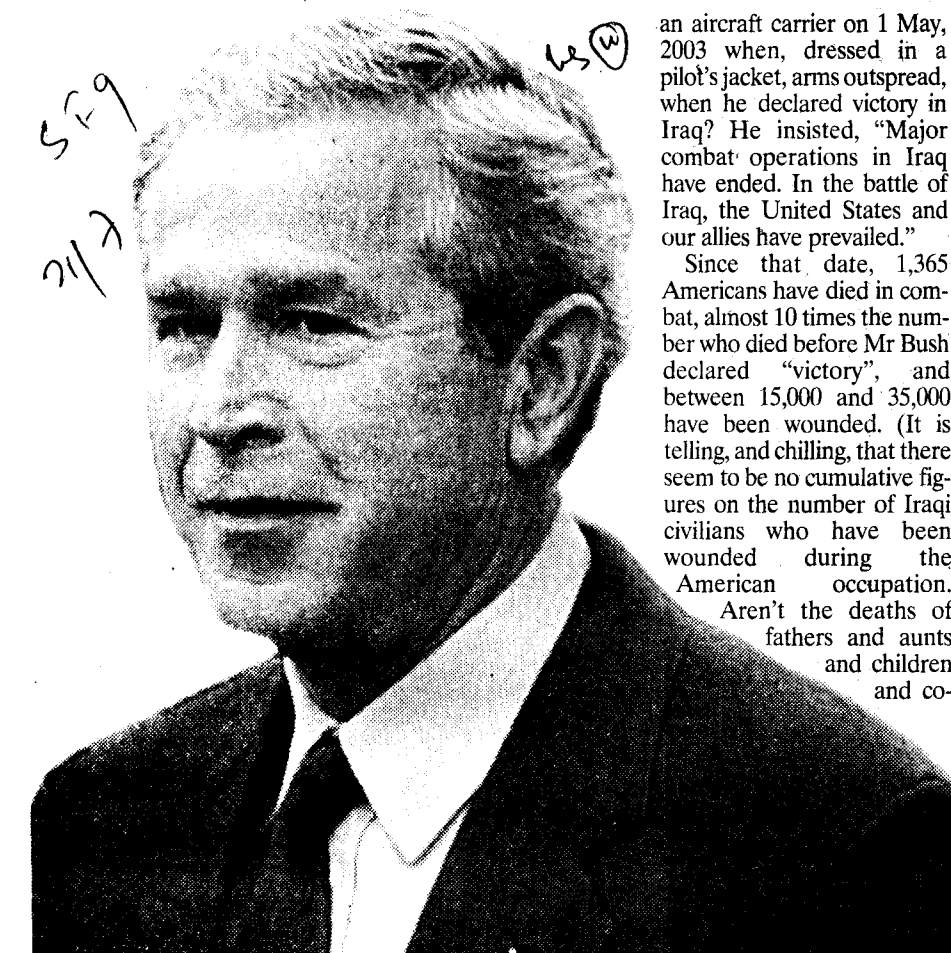
Let us be blunt. Basing a war on "fixed" evidence is a high crime, a betrayal of the trust of the nation's citizens.

In the USA, it is ground enough for impeaching the President and removing him from office.

But since Mr Bush's own Republican Party controls both Houses of Congress, such impeachment is, though warranted, unlikely.

■ Mr Bush has undermined global security by legitimising a doctrine of "pre-emptive war". What nation cannot use Mr Bush's rationale — "to counter a sufficient threat to our national security...to forestall or prevent such hostile acts by our adversaries, the USA will, if necessary, act pre-emptively" — in its own interest to attack a neighbouring state?"

The threshold which prevents nations from legitimately making war on other



nations has been dramatically lowered by the Bush administration.

Worse, as I have argued previously on this page, the US President's "National Security Strategy" justifying pre-emptive war provided economic reasons as examples of a *causus belli*: a disrespect for private property, policies which do not "support business activity," and a refusal to commit to "tax policies — particularly lower marginal tax rates — that improve incentives for work and investment."

If one parses that last statement, it says that if another nation that taxes the wealthy to provide services for the poor, the USA may consider it has a sufficient cause for pre-emptive war.

■ Mr Bush has waged a destructive war in and against Iraq. There is no question that Saddam Hussein was a dictator and that his regime was repressive. But by ignoring the international community and the UN, by starting a war to show he was tougher

than his father, Mr Bush has visited destruction and death on the people and the economy of an independent nation.

Reliable reports put the civilian death count in Iraq at somewhere between 22,500 (actually reported and verifiable) to 98,000 (the number provided by the British medical journal *Lancet* nine months ago based on its sophisticated statistical sampling).

Electric service is unreliable in 78 per cent of households in Iraq, a figure which increases to 92 per cent in Baghdad. Potable water is often non-existent. Male unemployment is over 30 per cent.

But US companies are growing profitable by supposedly providing services — repairing infrastructure, pumping oil — that benefit them far more than the citizens of Iraq.

■ Mr Bush embarked on a war with no plan to win the peace. President Bush created a dramatic made-for-television scenario on the deck of

an aircraft carrier on 1 May, 2003 when, dressed in a pilot's jacket, arms outspread, when he declared victory in Iraq? He insisted, "Major combat operations in Iraq have ended. In the battle of Iraq, the United States and our allies have prevailed."

Since that date, 1,365 Americans have died in combat, almost 10 times the number who died before Mr Bush declared "victory", and between 15,000 and 35,000 have been wounded. (It is telling, and chilling, that there seem to be no cumulative figures on the number of Iraqi civilians who have been wounded during the American occupation.

Aren't the deaths of fathers and aunts and children and co-

negotiations with North Korea. He invaded Iraq with only the support of what he called the "coalition of the willing", a code name for Great Britain and a number of American client-states.

He has unilaterally rejected the Geneva Conventions regarding the treatment of prisoners of war and civilians. The USA has held over 500 people of 35 different nationalities at Guantanamo Bay in Cuba, "many" according to Amnesty International, "without access to any court, legal counsel or family visits."

The US military subjected inmates at the infamous Abu Gharib prison to humiliation amounting to torture. Amnesty International reports that the "total number of detainees held outside the USA by the USA during the 'war on terror'" is 70,000 - and it is unknown for how many of them their Geneva Conventions rights are secured.

To summarise: Instead of making the world a safer place, Mr Bush has made war, wrought destruction, and undermined multilateral efforts to build and sustain a more livable world.

Nor has he been kinder to the American people, or secured their well-being, as their elected leader is supposed to do.

To be concluded

(Huck Gutman was Fulbright Visiting Professor at the University of Calcutta. He teaches at the University of Vermont, USA).

4 JUL 2007

THE STATESMAN

US AND MIDDLE EAST

Short-Term Success Followed By Strategic Disaster

By YEVGENY SATANOVSKY

Americans are good at defeating their rivals. They have better control over former British and French colonies than Britain and France, and a stronger grip on the southern borders of Russia than Moscow. Nobody likes them there, but they come in handy as a counter-balance to the former rulers. In this context, Washington is responsible for the entire situation in the region. However, although the US often scores short-term tactical successes, these are usually followed by a strategic disaster.

The problem is that the US pursues global interests but its military and economic resources are not unlimited. Just over a decade ago, the Soviet Union dropped its bid to establish global supremacy out of exhaustion. Unlike the Soviet Union, wealthy America does not have enemies who can challenge it militarily. But the occupation of Afghanistan and Iraq has put the United States on the horns of a dilemma: It must either introduce a draft in the near future, or else convince its allies to send many more troops to the area. But would they go for it?

Interests of allies

It is not easy to keep allies sympathetic while blatantly ignoring their interests at the same time. It is even more difficult to do so when putting them under constant pressure. France, Germany and Russia have opposed the second war in the Persian Gulf. US policy towards the Kurds has led to a considerable cooling in US-Turkish relations. The US has subjected Israel to unprecedented pressure over its military and technical ties with China, and insisted on a settlement with Palestine that has turned into a ten-year war for Israel on its own territory. Now the Israelis feel that the United States is stifling them in its embrace.

American efforts to export Western-style democracy to the Middle East and South West

The author is president for the Institute for Israel and the Middle East in Russia

Asia, regions that follow their own laws, have been as successful as the Soviet attempt to export socialism there in the past. Now it is common knowledge that socialism acquires fascist features in that part of the world, whereas democracy inevitably brings radical Muslims to power. Failure to understand this means that Washington is either deliberately rocking the Middle Eastern boat, or that it has already

nuclear-power status has been facilitated by the US pressure.

The war on international terrorism, proclaimed to be the core of US foreign policy by President George W Bush after the 11 September attacks, is more in the vein of settling scores with America's old foes, Iran and Iraq. While waging a battle against terrorism, the United States occupies bridgeheads on vital energy routes, as well as



achieved the adequacy of the Soviet Politburo.

The US administration also pursues a contradictory policy on nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction. Here we are not talking about Israel, a stable Western-style democracy that does not spread any nuclear technologies — if only because of bad relations with its neighbours. Pakistan and Iran are a different matter. Unstable Pakistan is a nuclear power. Its government is being torn apart by constant pressure from the fundamentalists who once produced the Afghan Talibs, and from Pushtu leaders.

No Pak sanctions

But even when Pakistani scientists were caught red-handed spreading nuclear technologies to their Muslim neighbours, no sanctions ensued against Pakistan. Instead, Washington concentrated its attention on Iran, whose rapid headway towards

on the approaches to China, the only country that may challenge America in the years to come.

This policy is not conducive to solidarity with America. Other nations are trying to unite in blocs and alliances in order to stop US expansion. These nations are US partners, but they are concerned that in reaching out the United States totally ignores both their national interests and those of the ruling elite.

The decision of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation to demand the withdrawal of US troops from Central Asia is the direct result of the revolutions in Georgia and Kyrgyzstan and Islamic unrest in Uzbekistan. It does not matter much whether the United States stands behind these events or just shows its support for the "revolutionary masses".

Destabilisation under democratic slogans in the Caucasus and Central Asia is no less dangerous than it is in northern

Africa, the western Mediterranean and the Arabian Peninsula. Events in Iraq have made it clear that the Americans can quickly do away with any totalitarian regime in the region, but are not able to make life safe for the people in the wake of its collapse.

The rout of the Taliban did not bring life in Afghanistan back to normal. Instead it has turned into the centre of the world's drug production. Iraq's occupation has liberated its citizens from the dictatorship of Saddam Hussein, but all they have received is the right to destroy each other. Iraq has turned into an arena of civil war and a breeding ground for Muslim terrorists.

Syria and Egypt

There is little doubt that democratisation in Syria or Egypt will produce the same effect. The withdrawal of Syrian troops from Lebanon has put it on the brink of another civil war. The ethnic and religious minorities of the Middle East have suffered a tragic fate, as the first victims of the ruling regimes' collapse. Christian communities are perishing in Palestine and Iraq. Those in Lebanon are also doomed. This is primarily a consequence of American political experiments.

Americans have never been liked in the Middle East. But in the past they evoked fear and envy, and some tried to emulate them or develop long-term relations. But today the Americans are hated. No one is afraid of them anymore. They are being used but kept at a distance. The American way of life, education, state system and economy are no longer considered an example to follow. There are reasons to laugh at the United States and to mistrust it, to repent the destruction it creates at every step, to be terrified by its blunders. But for all that, we should still wish the United States success and help it — even contrary to its own wishes. The whole world will pay dearly for a US defeat in the Middle East. Last week's bombs in London bear this out once again.

THE STATESMAN

Bush counsels patience on Iraq

Associated Press

FORT BRAGG (USA), June 29. — President Mr George W Bush rejected suggestions that he set a timetable for withdrawal from Iraq or send in more troops, counseling patience for Americans who question the war's painful costs.

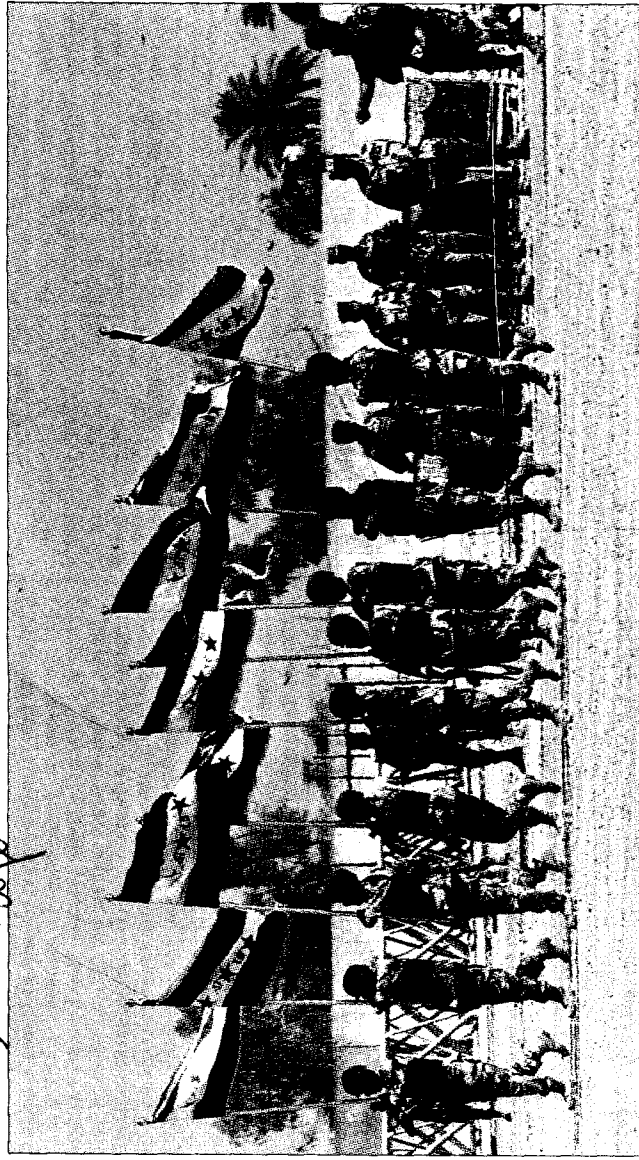
"Is the sacrifice worth it? It is worth it and it is vital to the security of our country," Mr Bush yesterday told a nation increasingly doubtful about the toll of the 27-month-old war.

Mr Bush spoke in an address for a half-hour from an army base that has 9,300 troops in Iraq, hoping to convince the public that his strategy for victory needs only time — not any changes — to be successful. He offered no shift in course.

"We have a clear path forward," he said. "As the Iraqis stand up, we will stand down."

The audience of 750 soldiers and airmen in dress uniform listened mostly quietly — as they were asked to do to reflect the sombre nature of the speech — only breaking into applause when Mr Bush vowed that the USA "will stay in the fight until the fight is won".

51-7 2006
 American



OTHER MAN'S WAR? Iraqi troops participate in a parade in Baghdad on Wednesday. — AFP

The President said he understands the public concerns about a war that has killed over 1,740 Americans and at least 12,000 Iraqi civilians and cost \$200 billion. "Like most Americans, I see the images of violence and bloodshed... Every picture is horrifying and the suffering is real," he added.

It was a tricky balancing act, more specifics about how to

believed necessary by White House advisers who have seen dozens of deadly insurgent attacks each day eat into Americans' support for the war — and for the President — increase discomfort among even Republicans in Congress.

Democrats and other critics said the country needed to hear more specifics about how to

reach success in Iraq. "The President's Iraq policy is adrift, disconnected from the reality on the ground and in need of major midcourse corrections," said Senate Minority Leader Mr Harry Reid. "Staying the course, as the President advocates, is neither sustainable nor likely to lead to the success we all seek," he added.

Iraqis divided over policy

Associated Press

BAGHDAD, June 29. — Iraqis were today divided over Mr George W Bush's rejection of a timetable for the withdrawal of American troops, which came as insurgents bent on starting a civil war between Sunnis and Shi'ites blew up a natural gas pipeline and killed a police officer.

"Iraq cannot be stable if the American and coalition forces left it because Iraqi forces don't have the required level of training to protect the country," said Baghdad University engineering professor Moayad Yasin al-Samarai.

But other Iraqis still believe the presence of about 138,000 US troops is an occupation force preventing local officials from fully controlling internal affairs.

"The transfer of authority was a great dream but nothing took place," said Ms Samah Abdul Mihsen, a 24-year-old housewife living in Al-Amin Al-Thaniyah, a middle-class neighbourhood in eastern Baghdad.

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28/6

Iraq insurgency could last 12 years: Rumsfeld

Says This Is A Battle Iraqis Will Have To Finish

US
in Iraq

Washington: US defence secretary Donald Rumsfeld has warned it may be years before the insurgency in Iraq is defeated. Speaking on US television on Sunday, Rumsfeld said that ultimately Iraq's own forces, rather than coalition troops, would beat the insurgents. It was a sign that the US will hand over to Iraq the tough task of rounding up the rebels.

The US defence secretary told Fox news that more American forces would not end the insurgency. "We are not going to win the insurgency. The Iraqi people are going to win against the insurgency. That insurgency could go on for any number of years. Insurgencies tend to go on five, six, eight, 10, 12 years. We are going to create an environment that the Iraqi people and the Iraqi security forces can win against that insurgency," he said.

He also said: "More US forces would require more force protection, more support troops, more targets,



'We will create an environment for the Iraqi security forces to win against the insurgency'

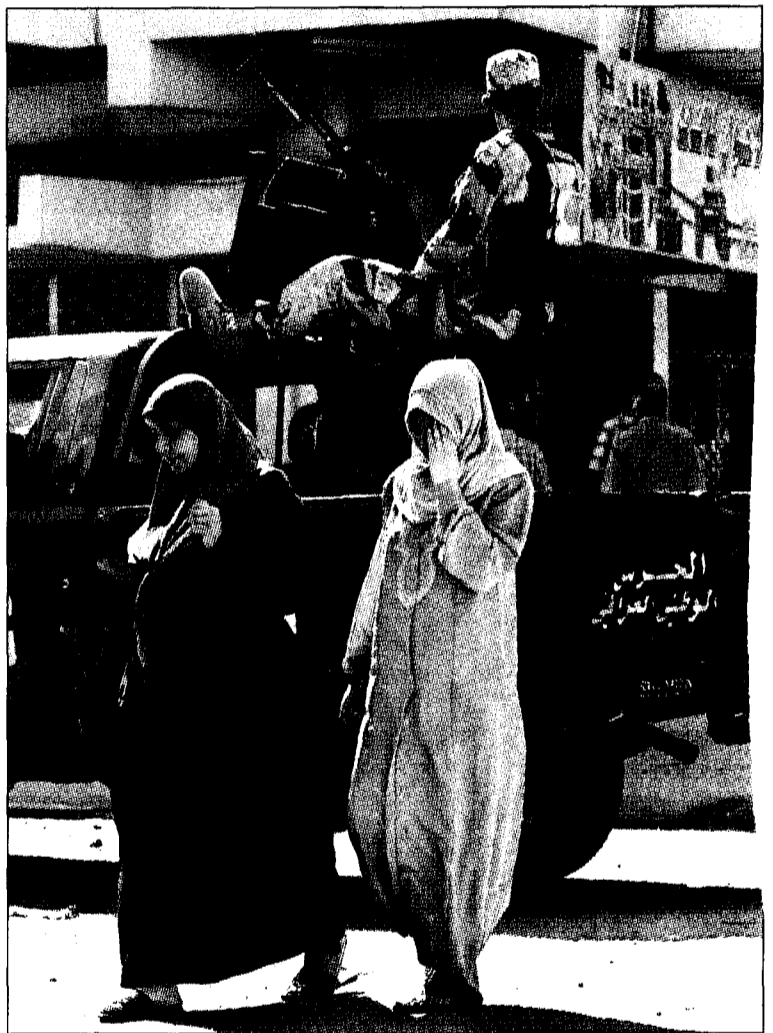
--US defence secretary Donald Rumsfeld

a heavier footprint, a more intrusive occupation force that would further alienate Iraqi people from the coalition forces."

President George W Bush is scheduled to make a prime-time TV address to the American people on Tuesday. It is expected to be a firefighting effort as recent opinion polls in the US show a considerable drop in support for the US-led invasion of Iraq.

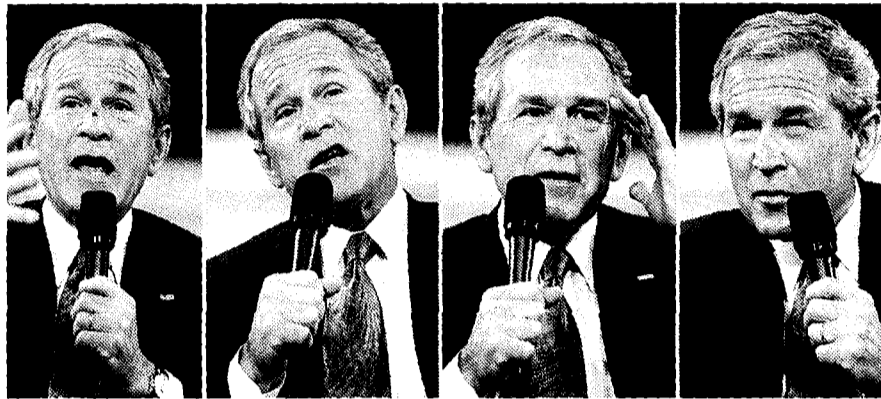
More than 1,000 people—mostly Iraqis—have been killed since the new government was installed in April. Rumsfeld warned that the violence could escalate ahead of new elections for a permanent government, due in December.

Rumsfeld also confirmed a London Sunday Times report that US officials had met with insurgents in a bid to stem the carnage in Iraq. His confirmation came even as at least 25 people were killed in bombings targeting Iraqi forces. But Rumsfeld tried making light of the report, saying such meetings "go on all the time... I would not make a big deal out of it." Several insurgent leaders denied having contact with the Americans. Agencies



Iraqi women pass in front of a military vehicle stationed to secure an area where a roadside bomb exploded in Baghdad on Monday. One Iraqi was killed and his wife wounded in the blast

US mission in Iraq difficult, says Bush



Washington: Acknowledging that the US mission in Iraq was "difficult" with "more tough fighting" expected in near future in the wake of bitter insurgency, president George W Bush nevertheless said today that democracy was moving forward in the war-ravaged country.

"Our mission in Iraq is difficult, and we can expect more tough fighting in the weeks and months ahead. Yet I am confident in the outcome. The Iraqi people are growing in optimism and hope. They understand that the violence is only a part of the reality in Iraq," Bush said in his weekly radio address.

"Each day, Iraqis are exercising new freedoms that they were denied for decades. Schools, hospitals, roads and post offices are being built to serve the needs of all Iraqis. Increasing numbers of Iraqis are overcoming their fears and working actively to defeat the insurgents. And every Iraqi who chooses the side of freedom has chosen the winning side."

Affirming the two-track US strategy for victory in Iraq, Bush said the military track was "to defeat the terrorists and continue helping Iraqis to take greater responsibility for defending their freedom."

"The images we see on television are a grim reminder that the enemies of freedom in Iraq are ruthless killers with no regard for human life," he said.

The terrorists "are trying to undermine the new (Iraqi) government and intimidate Iraqis from joining the growing Iraqi security forces. Yet democracy is moving forward and, more and more Iraqis are defying the terrorists by joining the democratic process," Bush said. The political track of the strategy, Bush said, was to continue helping Iraqis build the institutions of a stable democracy. "The Iraqi people have taken landmark steps by voting in free elections and forming a representative government," he said.

Referring to his talks with Iraqi prime minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari at the White House yesterday, Bush said Jaafari "has assured me that his government is committed to meeting its deadline to draft a new constitution for a free Iraq. PTI

By George, Iraq gets new neighbour

Washington: It was either a slip of the tongue — or US president George W Bush has ambitions for the Palestinians beyond anyone's expectations. "My dream is that there be a Palestinian state living side-by-side in peace with Iraq," Bush said at a news conference yesterday with Iraqi Prime Minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari. Bush made the comment as he described his hopes for a peaceful, democratic Middle East. Bush presumably meant Israel instead of Iraq. He has repeatedly called for a Palestinian state alongside Israel.

Female marines ambushed in Baghdad

Baghdad: A suicide car bomber and gunmen ambushed a convoy carrying female US marines in Fallujah, killing two marines and leaving another four American troops presumed dead, the military said. At least one woman was killed and 11 of 13 wounded were female.

The terror group al-Qaida in Iraq on Friday claimed it carried out the bombing, one of the single deadliest attacks against the Marines — and against women — in this country.

The high number of female casualties spoke to the lack of any real front lines in Iraq, where US troops are battling a raging insurgency and American women soldiers have taken part in more close-quarters combat than in any previous military conflict. The women were part of a team of Marines who were assigned to various checkpoints around Fallujah. Female marines are used to search Muslim women. Agencies

Bush to visit Vietnam

WASHINGTON, June 21.

— President Bush will make a landmark visit to Vietnam next year, nearly 30 years after a bitter war with Hanoi that resulted in a regime change.

This was declared after the US President, who is pushing for democratic reforms around the globe, met Vietnam Prime Minister Mr Phan Van Khai and signed an agreement on issues related to business and religious freedom in Vietnam.

Mr Bush praised the communist nation's economic progress, steps towards religious freedom and continued efforts to find the remains of US troops who died in the Vietnam War. The two leaders discussed Vietnam's desire to join the WTO, business issues and human rights and signed an agreement that Bush said would help people worship freely in Vietnam. He met with Bush in the Oval Office as several hundred protesters demonstrated outside. — AP

22 JUN 2005

THE STATESMAN

Deal to destroy settler homes in Gaza

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Jerusalem, June 19 (Reuters): Israel and the Palestinian Authority have agreed that Jewish settler homes in the Gaza Strip will be destroyed when Israel pulls out of the area, US secretary of state Condoleezza Rice said today.

Rice, visiting Israel and the West Bank, said Israel and the Palestinian Authority had agreed to cooperate to ensure the withdrawal would proceed peacefully, hailing it as a historic step towards resolving the West Asian conflict.

Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon reaffirmed there could be no progress along a US-backed peace "road map" leading to the creation of a Palestinian state unless the Palestinian Authority disarmed and dismantled militant groups.

In the Gaza Strip, an Israeli soldier was killed and two oth-

ers were wounded in an attack by Palestinian gunmen on troops and civilian contractors along the border with Egypt, the Israeli army said. One of the attackers was shot dead.

"Israel and the Palestinian Authority agree that the settler homes in Gaza should be removed," Rice told a news conference after meeting Sharon. "Therefore the parties will work towards a plan for destruction and cleanup."

Palestinian officials have said they prefer the red-roofed homes, built on occupied land in 21 Jewish settlements in Gaza, be demolished so that high-rise housing can be constructed in the crowded coastal strip, home to 1.3 million Palestinians.

"It was their choice. If they wanted them, they could have had them," Israeli foreign ministry spokesperson Mark

Regev said.

Palestinian officials said rubble from the settlements, whose evacuation is due to begin in mid-August, could be used to build a seaport for Gaza.

An Israeli official said it would take three to four weeks to complete the pullout and Israel would then immediately raze the houses. He said the Palestinians had agreed to clear the debris in a project that would generate jobs in Gaza.

During the two-day visit, which included talks with Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas yesterday, Rice called on both sides to agree on specifics about how to carry out the withdrawal, saying time was running out.

Israel fears that Palestinian militants could fill a security vacuum in Gaza after the pullout unless Palestinian se-



US secretary of state Condoleezza Rice at a news conference in Jerusalem on Sunday. (Reuters)

curity forces take over from the withdrawing Israeli troops.

At the news conference, Rice said Israel and the Palestinian Authority recognised the withdrawal "must proceed peacefully and without violence" directed towards settlers and soldiers.

"Both Israel and the Pales-

tinian Authority will take the necessary actions and will coordinate such actions where appropriate to ensure a peaceful disengagement and economic viability and hope for the Palestinian people," she said, without giving details.

"The most important thing is they need to make certain there are no surprises here, that both sides know precisely what's going to happen and that they can work together," Rice later told Fox News.

Abbas, citing his fears of civil war, has rejected Israel's demands that he confront militant groups that have spearheaded the Palestinian uprising that began in 2000.

The Palestinian leader has said he prefers to co-opt the gunmen into the Palestinian security services and the groups to which they belong into the political mainstream.

Sharon is due to hold a

summit with Abbas on Tuesday, their first meeting since declaring a truce in Egypt on February 8. Abbas is expected to press Sharon to open Gaza's borders, which Israel controls under interim peace deals, to wider movement of people and goods after the pullout.

Palestinians particularly want to reopen Gaza's airport, closed after they began the uprising, and a safe passage for the movement of people and goods between the territory and the West Bank.

"Israel will, consistent with its security needs, evaluate the way it manages the crossings," Rice said at the news conference.

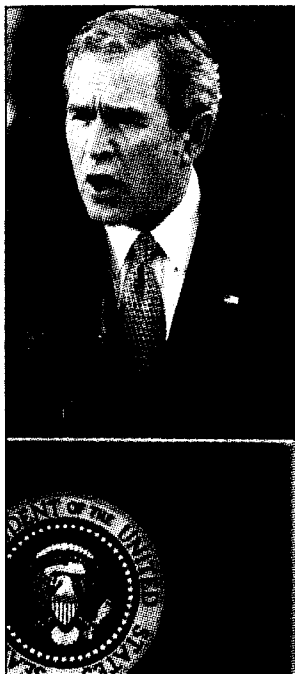
US launches double assault on Iraqi rebels

Karabila, Iraq: Helicopter gunships and fighter jets streaked across the desert sky in the hunt for foreign fighters near Syria's border on Saturday and Sunday as part of two US-Iraqi offensives that have killed 50 insurgents so far in protracted battles. Dozens of buildings have been destroyed in Karabilah, according to an AP reporter at the scene. There have been airstrikes and shelling since the launching on Friday of Operation Spear, officials said.

"The goal is not to seize territory," said Marine Col Stephen Davis, a commander. "This is about going in and finding the insurgents. This is not a walk-through-the-river exercise." About 50 insurgents have been killed since the operation began, Marine Capt. Jeffrey Pool said.

Another campaign of similar size, Operation Dagger, was launched on Saturday against insurgents operating in Anbar — this time targeting the marshy shores of a remote lake just north of Baghdad. The region has been flush with insurgents in recent weeks.

Operation Dagger aims to uncover insurgent training camps and weapons caches in the southern part of the Lake Tharthar area in central Iraq. In Karabilah, Marines and Iraqi forces backed by main battle tanks



REMEMBER 9/11: In his weekly address, Bush reminded Americans about the threat of terrorism

fought their way into the town from the south encountering enemy fire almost immediately, Davis said.

During Friday's assault, troops captured about 100 foreign fighters and discovered at least one car bomb factory, said Col Bob Chase, chief of operations for the Second Marine Division. Iraqi troops did not participate in the earlier anti-in-

surgent offensives but Chase said this time they not only fought alongside Americans, but used their language skills and knowledge of the area to spot foreign fighters.

Meanwhile, reports from Washington say that President George W. Bush, wounded by slumping approval ratings and growing worries about Iraq, began a public relations offensive Saturday to defend the war amid mounting calls to bring US troops home.

On Friday, Bush will welcome Iraqi Prime Minister Ibrahim Jaafari for his first visit to the White House to trumpet progress since Iraq's January 30 elections despite an increasingly deadly insurgency. The centerpiece of the campaign will be a speech on June 28, exactly one year after the US-led coalition officially handed over sovereignty to a hand-picked Iraqi provisional government.

Bush began his PR pitch Saturday during his weekly national radio address, telling the US public the country went to war because the United States was attacked on September 11, 2001. "We went to war because we were attacked, and we are at war today because here are still people out there who want to harm our country and hurt our citizens," Bush said.

20 JUN 2007 THE TIMES OF INDIA

U.S. slaps sanctions on Israel

Conal Urquhart

TEL AVIV: The United States has imposed sanctions on Israel after a dispute over Israel's sale of drones – unmanned aerial vehicles – to China, according to news reports.

The U.S. has suspended cooperation on several development projects and frozen delivery of night-vision equipment.

An official at the U.S. embassy in Tel Aviv said he was aware of the reports but would not comment on them. He said the information about the sanctions had come from the Israeli Government and not the U.S.

The sanctions have been in place for at least three months and were approved by Donald Rumsfeld, the Defence Secretary, and Condoleezza Rice, the Secretary of State, seven months ago, according to the reports.

Washington angry

Although the U.S. is primarily angered by the behaviour of civil servants whose tenure stretches back to the Labour Government of Ehud Barak in 2000, the crisis threatens Israel's relations with the U.S.

A report in the Israeli newspaper *Ha'aretz* concluded: "Following the crisis, one can sense

the repulsion toward Israel among lower – and middle-ranking officials in Washington.

"More and more of them are saying that it is not worth doing business with Israel."

The U.S. believes that Israeli officials lied to them about the export of Harpy Killer drones to China.

The officials claimed that Israel was merely refurbishing old drones which had been exported with American consent. The U.S. argued that the drones had been upgraded using new technology which it had shared with Israel.

The U.S. fears that China is becoming increasingly well-

armed and may seek to settle longstanding territorial and political disputes by the threat and use of force.

China's threat

China has repeatedly threatened Taiwan with attack if it declares independence, and South Korea and Japan are concerned about China translating its size into military power.

The U.S. is also keen that the E.U. maintain its arms embargo on China, which was put in place after the crushing of pro-democracy protesters in Tiananmen Square in 1989. – ©Guardian Newspapers Limited 2005

14 JUN 2005

THE HINDU

US panel mum on UN reforms

HT Correspondent
Washington, June 13

ASW
A BIPARTISAN panel, set up by US Congress, has avoided taking a position on the critical issue of UN Security Council expansion even while voicing its broad support for a raft of other reforms mooted by Secretary General Kofi Annan.

The panel's report is sharply critical of the UN for what it calls poor management and lack of accountability, but wants the United States to back Annan's reform proposals.

The 174-page report, an advance copy of which has been made available to the New York Times, makes it clear that the panel wants the Bush administration to deal with the crucial UNSC expansion issue in the manner it deems fit.

The State Department is still formulating its views, but is understood to have shared its thinking with some key players, notably India. The issue is expected to come up in greater detail during National Security Adviser M.K.Narayanan's visit here later this week and US undersecretary of state Nicholas Burns' visit to New



Delhi next week.

The bipartisan panel's recommendations for the UN including putting in place corporate style oversight bodies and personnel standards to tone up the world body's performance.

Its co-chairs -- former Speaker Newt Gingrich and former Senate majority leader George Mitchell - have stressed that the proposed UN changes "must be real and must be undertaken promptly".

One of Annan's proposals to be readily endorsed was the replacement of the Human Rights Commission by a smaller, more powerful Human Rights Council. The congressional panel felt the council's membership should be "ideally composed from democracies".

US ponders Guantanamo base closure

ALEC RUSSELL

Washington, June 10: The administration has for the first time raised the prospect of closing the Guantanamo Bay prison camp in apparent recognition of the damage it has done to America's image worldwide.

With domestic voices joining the chorus of outrage over the fate of detainees at the base, President George W. Bush provoked a flood of speculation when he left open the possibility of shutting it down.

"We're exploring all alternatives as to how best to do the main objective, which is to protect America," he said,

asked in an interview with Fox News whether he would close it.

He went on to defend the treatment of the 540 terrorist suspects at the camp as being in line with international standards. He also defended the policy of not treating them as prisoners of war.

But administration officials yesterday made clear that Bush's remarks betrayed a significant shift, paving the way for heated debate in Washington over what to do with the terrorist suspects at the base.

The officials signalled that there were no immediate plans to close the base pending an anticipated clash between

"hawks" and "doves" over its future.

Rather, the administration is expected to accelerate the transfer of detainees back to their home countries.

"It's never been our intention to hold these people indefinitely," said an administration official. "It is not our goal to be an international jailer."

The CIA and the Pentagon have long defended the use of Guantanamo Bay, a base on the eastern tip of Cuba, arguing that the detainees provide priceless intelligence to foil terrorist attacks.

Donald Rumsfeld, the defence secretary, appeared to dismiss the idea of closing the base on Wednesday, saying he

did not know of anyone in the administration entertaining such a thought.

But yesterday he took a markedly less hawkish stance, saying that America would rather the detainees were imprisoned in their home countries.

The bulk of the detainees were captured on the battlefield in Afghanistan in 2001. Since the base opened, 234 detainees have been returned home, either as free men or to imprisonment. The repatriation process is now expected to be speeded up.

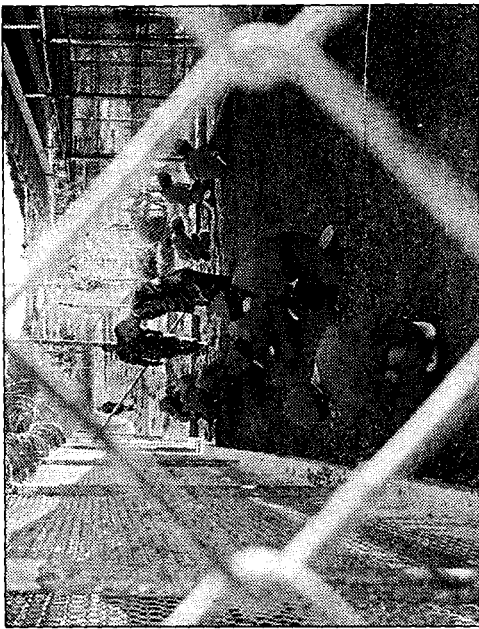
The White House was infuriated last week when Amnesty International compared Guantanamo Bay to the

gulags of the Soviet Union. "It's just absurd to equate Guantanamo with a Soviet Gulag," Bush said this week. "Not even close."

But the state department and less hawkish officials in the White House are acutely aware of the disastrous impact the reports of abuse of prisoners at the base has had on America's reputation.

The debate began to take hold in America at the weekend when Joe Biden, a leading Democratic senator who has backed the war in Iraq called for the base's closure. He described it as the "greatest propaganda tool" that existed for terrorists' recruitment.

THE DAILY TELEGRAPH



Detainees at a holding area in Camp X-Ray inside the Guantanamo Bay naval base, Cuba. (Reuters)

Bush may consider alternatives to Gitmo

Washington, June 9

PRESIDENT GEORGE W. Bush said on Wednesday he was ready to examine alternatives to the US camp for 'war on terror' detainees at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, but defended the treatment of prisoners there.

Asked in a US television interview whether the camp should be shut down, Bush said: "We're exploring all alternatives as to how best to do the main objective, which is to protect America. What we don't want to do is let somebody out that comes back and harms us."

The US has faced international criticism of the detention centre at its naval base in Cuba since it was opened in early 2002 to house alleged Taliban and al-Qaida militants. There are currently about 540 inmates from 40 countries there. Controversy has risen in recent weeks over allegations about the abuse of the Koran there and former president Jimmy Carter on Tuesday joined US politicians and *The New York Times* in calling for Guantanamo's closure.

US defence secretary Donald Rumsfeld



Gen Richard Myers, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (L) with Malaysia's defence minister Najib Abdul Razak. Myers says Guantanamo abuse allegations are not credible.

said on Wednesday, during a trip to Norway, that the US was not considering closing Guantanamo.

"I know of no one in the US government in the executive branch that is considering closing Guantanamo. It is unfortunately something that is necessary in the world we're living in," Rumsfeld told reporters in Stavanger, Norway. Bush and

Rumsfeld insisted prisoners at the camp were treated humanely.

The president told Fox News television: "I first of all want to assure the American people that these prisoners are being treated in accordance with the Geneva Convention. I say in accordance with, because these weren't normal military-type fighters. They had no uniforms. They had

no government structure. These were terrorists, swept up off the battlefield in a place like Afghanistan, for example. And it's in our nation's interest that we learn a lot about those people that are still in detention, because we're still trying to find out how to better protect our country." Bush insisted that all allegations of abuse were investigated. He reaffirmed his comment that an Amnesty International report likening Guantanamo to a "gulag" was "absurd."

Guantanamo has been at the centre of a political and media storm in recent weeks after Amnesty on May 25 said in its annual rights report that the camp represents the "gulag of our times." Amnesty is not the only rights group to call on the Bush administration to investigate alleged abuses at the prison. Human Rights Watch has also raised concerns about the prison. And FBI agents assigned to Guantanamo reported in internal e-mail messages, released publicly, seeing the use of strobe lights, loud music and growling dogs during interrogations.

Guantanamo Bay must be closed, says Senator

HG-13

S. Rajagopalan
Washington, June 6

W

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THE CONTROVERSY over the US's alleged mistreatment of prisoners at Guantanamo Bay has prompted the Senate Judiciary Committee to toy with the idea of holding hearings this month on the issue even as a leading democrat mooted closure of the camp.

Senator Arlen Specter, the judiciary panel chairman and a moderate republican, is said to be in the preliminary stages of drafting legislation to set up procedures for detentions and clarify the rights of detainees. Officials from the justice department and the Pentagon are likely to be called as witnesses.

Specter's move comes close on the heels of Amnesty International denouncing the Guantanamo Bay camp as "a gulag of our time", drawing a parallel with the concentration camps of the erstwhile Soviet Union — a charge dismissed by President Bush and top officials as "absurd" and "reprehensible".

The denial notwithstanding, the London-based human rights organisation stepped up its offensive on Sunday. William Schulz, its executive director in Washington, claimed on *Fox News* that the US had a network of secret prisons around the world where detainees "in some cases, at least, are being mistreated, abused, tortured and even killed".

Amnesty's demand to close down the Guantanamo Bay camp received a measure of support from Senator Joe Biden, the ranking democrat on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. "I think we should end up shutting it down, moving those prisoners. Those that we have reason to keep, keep. And those we don't, let go," he said.

Biden also mooted an independent commission to investigate the allegations about Guantanamo Bay, where about 540 men are in detention for more than three years.

Myers doesn't agree: America's top military officer General Richard Myers said on Monday that closing the Guantanamo detention centre would be very difficult as most of the inmates were too dangerous to let loose. Myers said that the closure was a complex issue because the prisoners were still important figures in the war and letting them lose could prove fatal for the US forces in their war against terror.

'GUANTANAMO FEEDING PROPAGANDA'

Calls to close prison camp

David Osborne in New York

June 5. — Senior Democrats are calling for the closure of the USA's controversial detention centre in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, saying that it has become a "propaganda and recruitment tool" for terrorists in the wake of allegations of prisoner abuse.

A leading Democrat Senator, Mr Joseph Biden, today suggested the time had come to consider a gradual closure of the facility, arguing that its worsening reputation around the world is helping to recruit people bent on hurting the USA. "This has become the greatest propaganda tool that exists for recruiting of terrorists around the world. And it is unnecessary to be in that position," he told ABC TV.

For a start, the Senator argued, there should at least be an independent commission established to address the value of keeping Guantanamo. "The end result is, I think we should end up shutting it down, moving those prisoners," he added. "Those that we have reason to keep, keep. And those we don't, let go."

The White House spent the weekend trying to downplay a Pentagon report confirming instances of abuse of the Koran at the camp in Guantanamo, chastising the media and placing the blame on a few rogue guards acting in disregard of US policy.

The latest furore comes just two weeks after the Bush administration assailed Newsweek magazine for suggesting that guards had flushed a copy of the Koran

'Secret prisons'

WASHINGTON, June 5. — The US government is running an "archipelago" of prisons around the world, many of them secret camps into which people "literally disappeared", a top Amnesty International official said today. Amnesty executive director Mr William Schulz criticised the Bush for holding alleged opponents in "indefinite incommunicado detention" without access to lawyers in an interview with Fox News today. The right's group representative was pressed to substantiate Amnesty's claim that the prison camp at the US naval base at Guantanamo Bay represents the "gulag of our times". The gulag reference was not "an exact or a literal analogy", Mr Schulz said. "But there are some similarities. The USA is maintaining an archipelago of prisons around the world, many of them secret prisons into which people are being literally disappeared..." — AFP

down the lavatory. The magazine withdrew the claim, saying it was unsure of its sources, but not before it had triggered deadly anti-American rioting in Afghanistan and other Muslim countries.

But on Friday the Pentagon concluded that there had indeed been some scattered cases where the Koran had been desecrated in the facility, though none flushed in a lavatory. In one case, urine from a guard had splashed on the Koran. Also recorded were cases where the books had been kicked or stamped on by guards and interrogators or made wet when guards threw water balloons into cells. — **The Independent**

06 JUN 2005

THE STATESMAN

Probe finds five Koran mishandling cases

Guantanamo officials indicted

REUTERS
Washington, May 27

THE US military has identified five incidents of "mishandling of a Koran" by US personnel at Guantanamo Bay, but found no credible evidence that the Muslim holy book had been flushed down a toilet, the commander of the prison said on Thursday.

Brig. Gen. Jay Hood refused to specify the nature of the mishandling of the Koran at the prison for foreign terrorism suspects other than to say it did not involve placing it in a toilet.

An FBI agent quoted a detainee in an August 2002 document made public on Wednesday as saying guards had thrown a Koran in a toilet. Hood said military investigators interviewed that man this month, but did not directly ask him whether he had seen US personnel put a Koran in a toilet.

But Hood told a Pentagon briefing: "I'd like you to know that we have found no credible evidence that a member of the Joint Task Force at Guantanamo Bay ever flushed a Koran down a toilet."

Hood said two Guantanamo staffers had been disciplined. One was transferred to other duties. He did not describe the other case.

Giving preliminary findings of a 12-day-old military inquiry into treatment of the Koran at Guantanamo, Hood said investigators turned up 13 allegations of mishandling the Koran, with five confirmed cases of "what could be broadly defined as mishandling of a Koran." Four guards and one interrogator were involved in the cases, three of which appeared to be deliberate mishandling and two accidental, Hood said.

Four of the five cases took place be-

fore written guidelines were issued in January 2003 on handling the Koran at Guantanamo, Hood said. He also said US military investigators this month interviewed the detainee quoted in the August 2002 document. Hood said this detainee did not mention during the May 14 interview that US personnel had placed a Koran in a toilet.

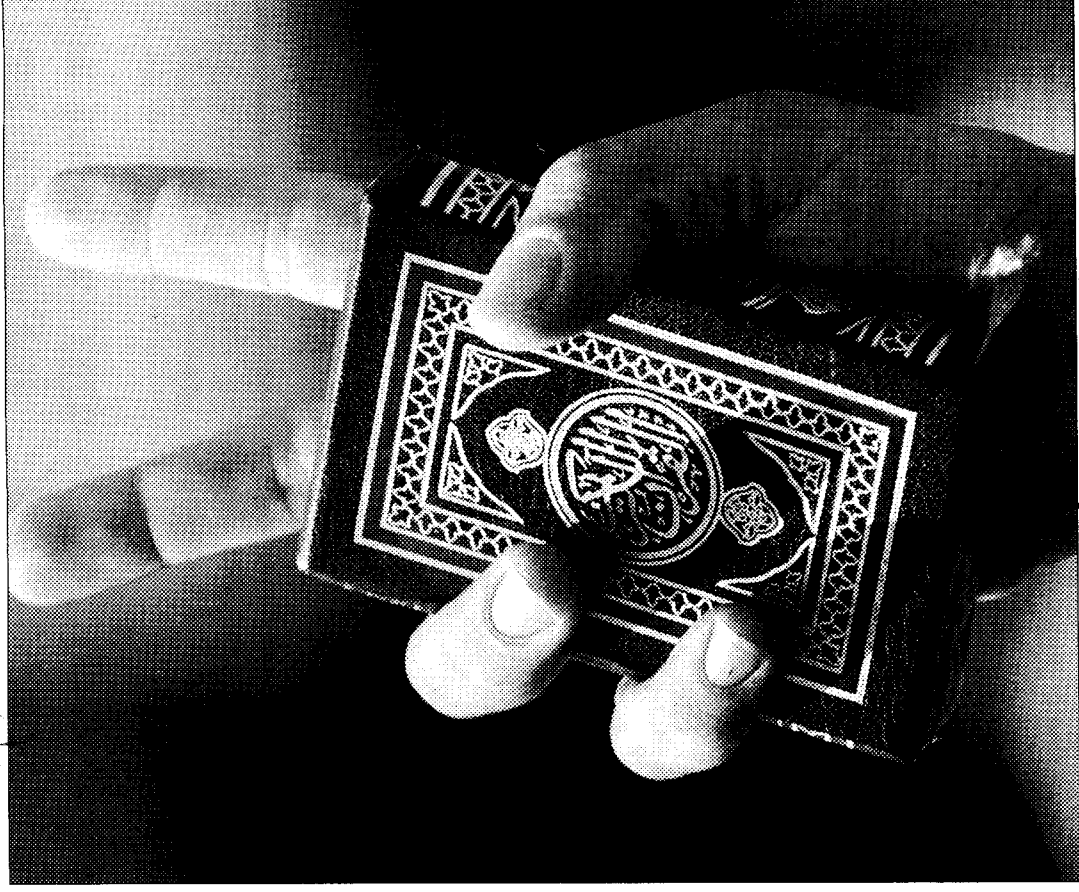
"The guards in the detention facility do not treat him well. Their behaviour is bad. About five months ago, the guards beat the detainees. They flushed a Koran in the toilet," the FBI agent wrote, summarising the detainee's comments.

Hood said the detainee, who US officials have not identified, said at the May 14 interview he had not been beaten or abused but that he had heard rumours that other detainees had been.

"We then proceeded to ask him about any incidents where he had seen the Koran defiled, desecrated or mishandled, and he allowed as how he hadn't, but he heard that guards at some other point and time had done this," Hood said.

But Hood said investigators did not directly ask the detainee about a Koran being placed in a toilet. FBI documents also contained accounts of detainees telling FBI agents that US personnel at Guantanamo kicked the Koran or threw it to the floor and beat prisoners.

The issue of whether the Koran had been thrown in a toilet at Guantanamo has generated controversy globally in recent weeks. The Bush administration denounced as wrong a May 9 *Newsweek* article, later retracted by the magazine, that stated US interrogators at Guantanamo had flushed a Koran down a toilet to try to make detainees talk. Violent protests erupted in some Muslim countries following the article's publication.



AP
A supporter of the Hezbollah group flashes the V-sign as he holds a copy of the Koran during a demonstration on the outskirts of Beirut.

Anti-US protests rock West Asia

Islamabad, May 27

THOUSANDS OF Muslims marched on Friday in Islamic countries in Asia and Africa, burning American symbols to protest the alleged desecration of the Koran by military personnel at a US prison in Guantanamo Bay Cuba.

The rallies in Pakistan, Egypt, Lebanon, Indonesia, Malaysia and elsewhere followed an admission on Thursday by US investigators that Islam's holy book was mishandled at Guantanamo. But American officials claimed it was often inadvertent and denied that any Korans were flushed down a toilet, as *Newsweek* magazine had reported in a now-retracted article.

More than 15,000 people took to the streets of Pakistan's largest cities. The atmosphere at the demonstration in Islamabad was tense after a bomb at a Muslim shrine killed at least 20 people. In Quetta, 5,000 demonstrators chanted slogans against the US and Britain. Another 5,000 gathered in Karachi, demanding the expulsion of the US ambassador. Protests were also held in Lahore.

About 12,000 people, many of them supporters of the outlawed Muslim Brotherhood, gathered in Alexandria, Egypt, filling a three-story building and spilling into

surrounding streets, listening to preachers who demanded an apology from US officials. The neighbourhood was ringed by police, who arrested 12 of the organisers.

About 1,000 people — mostly lawyers — gathered in downtown Cairo and were surrounded by double that number of riot police. A similar number gathered in Beirut, carrying black banners and burning American and Israeli flags. "We will cut off the feet that desecrated the Koran!" the crowd yelled.

Thousands gathered outside the US Embassy in Khartoum, Sudan, and demanded an investigation into all actions against Muslims held in Guantanamo.

In Kuala Lumpur, protesters shouted "Go to hell, America!" and waved placards reading "Long Live Islam," as they burned US and Israeli flags outside the US Embassy.

About 50 people chanted anti-America slogans and threw tomatoes at a portrait of President Bush in the Indonesian capital of Jakarta. The protesters were outnumbered 4-1 by police officers in riot gear and left after about an hour.

In Dhaka, about 5,000 people rallied after Friday prayers, spitting on US flags, kicking them and then burning them.

AP

POLICE SOUND TERROR ALERT IN INDONESIA

USA shuts down Jakarta embassy

Associated Press

JAKARTA, May 26. — The USA today closed its embassy here and all of its diplomatic facilities in Indonesia because of an unspecified security threat, as American officials repeated earlier warnings about possible terrorist attacks in the world's most populous Muslim country.

The US action came a week after Australia urged its citizens to avoid travelling to Indonesia because of a warning by police in Jakarta about possible suicide bombings, particularly at embassies, international schools, office buildings and shopping malls.

Indonesian police repeated the warning today, saying two terror suspects — Malaysians Azahari bin Husin and Noordin Mohamed Top — may be planning fresh attacks in Indonesia. It was not clear, however, if this was the cause of alarm for US officials, and an Indonesian police spokesman said authorities knew of no specific threat against Americans.

In an e-mailed statement, US officials reaffirmed that the threat of terrorism in Indonesia "remains high", but did not say what led to the closures until further notice of the American embassy in Jakarta, and consulates in Surabaya, Medan and the island of Bali. Other American government offices would also be shuttered.

"Attacks could occur at any time and could be directed against any location, including those frequented by foreigners and identifiably American and other Western facilities or businesses in Indonesia," the statement said.

Aceh peace talks

HELSINKI, May 26. — Peace talks between the Indonesian government and Aceh rebels resumed in Finland today amid reports of new violence in the tsunami-ravaged province. The fourth round of talks, convened by former Finnish President, Mr Martti Ahtisaari, began with the parties deciding an agenda for the six days of closed-door meetings at an isolated mansion outside Helsinki. Subjects include a possible amnesty for the rebels, ways of integrating them into the local society and economic issues. — AP

Since the 9/11 attacks, the USA has closed its embassy for brief periods because of potential security threats. It also evacuated non essential staff and family members for six months after the 2002 Bali nightclub bombings that killed 202 people. The Bali attack was blamed on the Al-Qaida-linked terror group Jemaah Islamiyah, which also is believed responsible for the 5 Aug 2003 bombing of the JW Marriott hotel in Jakarta that killed 12, and last year's attack at the Australian embassy in Jakarta that left 10 dead.

Dozens of militants have been convicted in the Bali and Marriott attacks but many top terror suspects — including Azahari and Noordin — remain free and are believed to be somewhere in Indonesia. Police today repeated that they might be planning more attacks. "We are unclear about the location of their target exactly but our intelligence analysis have identified communication from the perpetrators about an attack," police chief Gen. Dai Bachtiar said, without elaborating.

THE STATESMAN

US looks for rebels in Haditha

Ramadi, May 25

AROUND 1,000 US and Iraqi troops occupied the western town of Haditha on Wednesday, searching homes and seizing suspects in an anti-insurgent sweep, the US military and residents said.

The town, on the Euphrates river about 200 km northwest of Baghdad, has been in the focus of militant activity in recent months and the scene of frequent attacks on US troops.

US forces believe fighters such as Abu Musab al-Zarqawi — America's most-wanted man in Iraq with a \$25 million bounty on his head — are operating in the area, which is on a major supply route between Syria and the rebel stronghold of Ramadi.

Insurgent attacks have soared nationwide over the past month, since the formation of a Shia-led government, with more than 600 Iraqis and dozens of US troops killed. The US military said Wednesday's operation, dubbed New Market, was "focused on disrupting insurgent activity" and followed another operation earlier this month called Matador.

"Insurgent presence and activity has recently increased in the area," the US military said in a statement, adding that the op-



A US Marine writes an identification number on the forehead of an Iraqi man detained during a search in Haditha on Wednesday.

eration involved Marines, sailors and Iraqi troops. "Over the course of the three months of the Marines' presence, numerous roadside bombs have been discovered in the vicinity of Haditha and numerous indirect fire attacks have been launched against Coalition forces."

Haditha residents said US troops began their operation at around 5 am, moving door-to-door through the largely deserted streets as helicopters hovered overhead. "They came to my house, there were about 15 of them, and

they searched everything, looking for weapons and asking if I knew any insurgents," said Maher Dali, dean of the college of arts at the province's Anbar University. "After they'd finished searching, they left, that was it."

A doctor at Haditha's hospital, Waleed al-Hadithi, said he had received two dead and one wounded person since the operation began. Residents said the troops seized several suspected insurgents. There was no word on arrests from the military.

Reuters

20 MAY 2005

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

U.S. professes diplomacy, allies wait

George W. Bush's nomination of John R. Bolton as Ambassador to the United Nations sends all the wrong signals.

Charles M. Sennott

WHEN CONDOLEEZZA Rice made her first trip abroad as Secretary of State in February, she announced: "Now is the time for diplomacy."

More than a few cynics in Europe wondered if that statement wasn't a backhanded confirmation of a widely held perception abroad that the first Bush administration viewed international diplomacy as irrelevant, especially during the run-up to the war in Iraq.

Now, almost six months into the second Bush administration, many former and current diplomats in Europe and in the United States say they believe Washington has come to understand the need to "reach out and listen," as one State Department official put it, to other allies.

But even among those diplomats who hold out hope that the new administration will embrace international diplomacy as the only way to build a functioning democracy in Iraq, the sentiment is widespread that George W. Bush's nomination of John R. Bolton as Ambassador to the United Nations sends all the wrong signals.

Last week, a Republican member of the Senate Foreign Relations committee, George V. Voinovich of Ohio, described Mr. Bolton as "the poster child of what someone in the diplomatic corps should not be" because of allegations of bullying and shaping intelligence to fit his hard-line conservative policies when he served as an Undersecretary of State.

With a full vote in the Senate expected as soon as this week, diplomats in Europe are looking at the confirmation process as a key indicator of whether the warmer tones of diplomacy that seem to be coming out of the Bush administration amount more to lip service than to a true change in how the United States projects its power in the world.

Many diplomats in Europe say the vote on the blunt 56-year-old Bolton, who has openly expressed his disdain for the United Nations, is a defining moment in the Bush administration's attempt to mend badly frayed trans-Atlantic relationships.

Sir Harold Walker, a retired 37-year veteran in the British Foreign Service who has held numerous ambassadorial postings, including envoy to Iraq in 1990-1991, said, "Bush's loudly declared policy, that diplomacy is irrelevant and that an exertion of raw military power can achieve things, has permeated the U.S. administration in a way that it never has before. Bolton embodies this belief, and his nomination would suggest that the Bush administration is going to continue in this direction."

"His confirmation," Sir Harold added, "would tell all of us who observe these things that the fundamentals of the Bush foreign policy have not changed, even though Condi's speeches to us have suggested a more polite, emollient approach."

A senior diplomat in Western Europe,

who spoke on condition of anonymity, said, "If Bolton is indeed confirmed, then all of the change we have been hoping for and to some extent observing from Washington — a sense that the Bush administration is looking to engage in traditional diplomacy — would suddenly ring hollow."

In a telephone interview from Washington, a senior Bush administration official said of Mr. Bolton: "The notion that he represents a backtrack to something harder-edged is wrong."

While the official said he understood many diplomats around the world have viewed Mr. Bolton as a "strong character," they should not forget that he "knitted together" a complex alliance and a successful approach in his recent initiative aimed at controlling nuclear proliferation. "Europe needs to recognise that," the official said.

European diplomats are not the only ones to oppose Mr. Bolton.

Fifty-nine former U.S. diplomats sent a letter in March to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee chairman, Richard G. Lugar of Indiana, stating that Mr. Bolton "is the wrong man for this position." The letter sharply criticised Mr. Bolton for his "insistence that the UN is valuable only when it directly serves the United States."

Among the most prominent signatories was Arthur A. Hartman, Ambassador to France and the Soviet Union under Presidents Jimmy Carter and Ronald Reagan and assistant secretary of state for European affairs under President Richard M. Nixon.

Mr. Hartman painted a bleak picture of diplomacy under Mr. Bush, saying, "We have expressed unilaterally our power in the past, of course. But never have we not only neglected the allies, but almost spit in their face. That is a strong point of view and it has to be balanced with the reality that Europe has also failed to do its share for too long."

"This administration totally put aside anybody else's point of view. This is Bolton's style," Hartman said in a telephone interview.

Some U.S. diplomats say privately that the Bolton nomination reflects a bullying approach from Washington in which U.S. diplomats on the ground in foreign capitals are undervalued at best.

One U.S. diplomat in Europe who has also held postings in the Middle East said a great deal of frustration has accrued in the U.S. diplomatic corps under Mr. Bush.

Speaking on the condition of anonymity, the diplomat said little attention is paid in Washington to carefully researched diplomatic cables, and often it feels as though they have not been read at all.

"There are times when we feel more like a travel agency than a diplomatic corps," the diplomat said of the elaborate preparation for visits by State Department and White House officials.

—New York Times News Service

Female US soldier gets 6-month jail term

Fort Hood: An US Army reservist who appeared in several of the infamous abuse photos taken by guards at Iraq's Abu Ghraib prison was sentenced to six months in prison for her role in the scandal that rocked the US military's image at home and abroad. The sentence for Spc. Sabrina Harman came a day after she was convicted on six of the seven counts she faced for mistreating detainees at the Baghdad lockup in late 2003.

She faced a maximum of five years in prison, though prosecutors asked the jury to give her three years. The jury

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THE HINDU

Rice makes surprise visit to Iraq amid violence

Holds talks with Jaafari; expresses concern that Sunnis are not taking part in political process

Atul Aneja

MAMAMA: Alarmed by the recent surge in violence, U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice has paid a surprise visit to Iraq, in a bid to defuse the political crisis.

Dr. Rice visited the Kurdish city of Irbil in northern Iraq and met Kurdish leader Massoud Barzani. Kurds are only second in influence to the majority Shia community that dominates the

new Government. Later in Baghdad, she met Prime Minister Ibrahim Jaafari, who belongs to the Shia Al Dawa party.

34 bodies found

The visit is timed with the drawing of a constitution before the August 15 deadline.

In escalating violence that has claimed at least 400 lives during the fortnight, four persons were killed and 15 injured in a car

bomb attack in the town of Baquba. Al-Jazeera television has reported that 34 bodies of men shot dead, beheaded or with their throats slit have been discovered across Iraq. Thirteen of them were believed killed in the last 24 hours, and were found in a shallow grave in Baghdad's Sadr City. The bodies of 10 soldiers, all with their throats cut, have been uncovered in the Sunni stronghold of Ramadi, west of

Baghdad. Dr. Rice said she was concerned that Sunnis, who form the second largest community, were not participating fully in the political process.

They also only had a token representation on a committee that has been set up to draft the constitution. The Sunnis are spearheading the resistance to the U.S. occupation.

The U.S. military has claimed that it has ended its weeklong

operation in the western Anbar province that borders Syria. It said its troops had killed 120 guerrillas, disrupted staging posts and infiltration routes in the remote desert area.

The U.S., in the past, had claimed that it had smashed guerrilla bases in Fallujah, Samarra and Talafar. Its exertions have not dented the resistance, which appears to have gathered greater momentum in recent weeks.

"Desecration" triggers anti-American demonstrations in three countries

Pakistan's Foreign Minister calls for action against "guilty" soldiers

KABUL: Protests against the alleged desecration of the Koran at Guantanamo Bay spread across the Muslim world on Friday, with three Afghans dying in fresh violence and hardliners rallying in Pakistan and Indonesia.

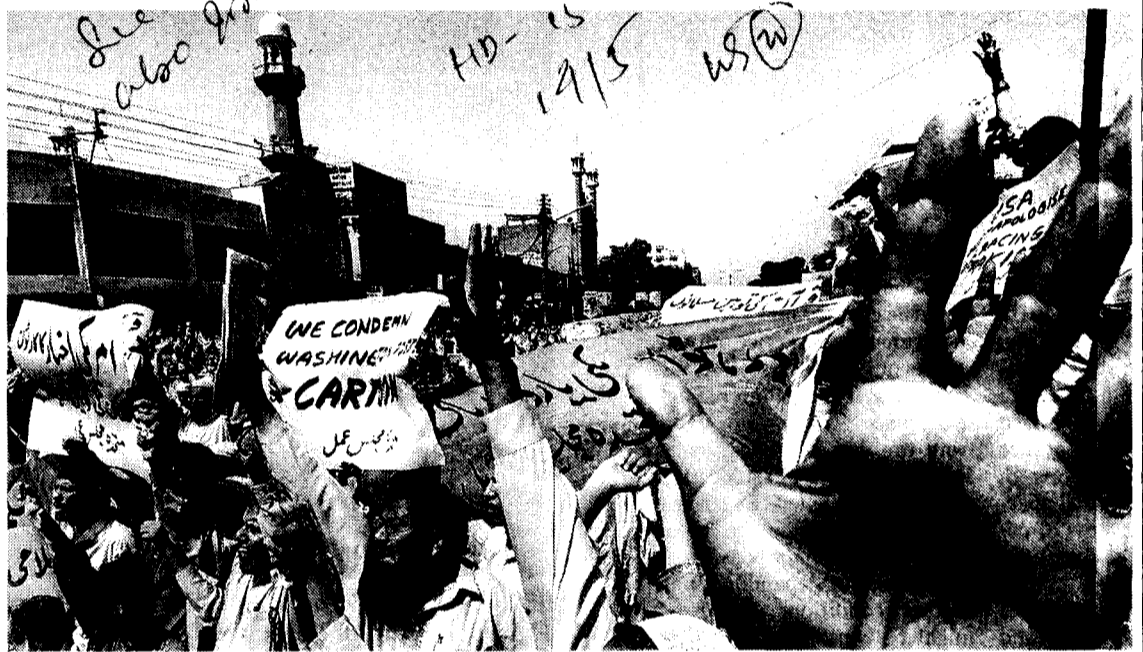
The worst anti-U.S. demonstrations since the fall of the Taliban in 2001 entered a fourth day in Afghanistan, spreading to new cities across the conservative nation where American troops maintain a heavy presence.

The latest deaths occurred when around 1,000 persons took to the streets near Faizabad, capital of the northeastern province of Badakhshan, bringing the number of persons killed since Tuesday to 10, officials said. In neighbouring Pakistan, a key ally in what the U.S. calls a war on terrorism, hundreds of hardline Muslims burned U.S. flags and effigies of President George W. Bush to vent their anger over the allegations, witnesses said.

Demonstrators in several cities chanted "Death to America" while speakers at rallies called by an alliance of religious parties demanded the U.S. government punish those involved in the incident.

During a rally in southern Karachi, a senior MMA member Mairajul Huda told protesters that people "should rise against the anti-Muslim policies of the United States."

Speaking in Sydney, Pakistani Foreign Minister Khurshid Kasuri called for severe punishment for any



DENOUNCING U.S.: Activists of the six-party Islamic alliance, Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA), raise slogans during a demonstration in Karachi on Friday.. — PHOTO: AFP

U.S. soldiers proved to have been involved in the incident.

In Jakarta, capital of the world's most populous Muslim nation Indonesia, hundreds of Indonesian Muslims staged a rally at a mosque. Students in the Indonesian city of Makassar on Sulawesi island took to the streets and searched hotels and the airport for any Americans, Detikcom news portal reported. No Americans were found. — AFP

Rice condemns "disrespect"

WASHINGTON: U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice termed disrespect to the holy book as "abhorrent" and said appropriate action would be taken against the offenders. "Before I begin my actual testimony, I want to speak

directly to Muslims in America and throughout the world. Disrespect for the Holy Koran is not now, nor has it ever been, nor will it ever be, tolerated by the U.S.," she said before the Senate Committee. — PTI

Bolton nominated, but no endorsement

GLENN KESSLER
WASHINGTON, MAY 13

A BITTERLY divided Senate Foreign Relations Committee voted along party lines on Friday to send the nomination of John Bolton to become UN Ambassador to the full Senate without any endorsement.

Republicans agreed to the rare procedural move after a key GOP Senator, George Voinovich, Ohio, made it clear he would forcefully oppose promoting the 56-year-old Undersecretary of State to the prestigious post because of allegations of arrogance and bullying, but would not object to bringing the nomination to the floor.

Administration officials and GOP lawmakers said they were confident Bolton would

win approval from the GOP-controlled Senate, where they said few if any Republicans would join Voinovich in opposition. The embattled nominee might also pick up as many as three Democratic votes, they added. Bolton "is the poster child of what someone in the diplomatic corps should not be," Voinovich said in a

From Washington Post

blistering speech that surprised even Democrats with its ferocity. "I have come to the determination that the US can do better than John Bolton," he said, adding that Bolton's behavior at the State Department would get him fired in the private sector.

Bolton's failure to win unconditional approval amounted to a rebuke of the White House, which has put

tremendous pressure on Republican lawmakers to support Bolton. Several GOP lawmakers on the committee expressed deep misgivings, though they said they would vote for him, while the committee chairman, Richard Lugar, gave only a lukewarm support.

Democrats alleged Bolton sought to oust intelligence analysts, stretched intelligence views, was abusive to subordinates and gave misleading testimony to the committee. In the past three weeks, the committee staff has interviewed nearly 30 people and examined hundreds of documents to address allegations stretching back two decades.

Sending a nomination without a recommendation has become common for judicial posts, but it has happened only twice for diplomatic positions, most recently in 1993. —LATWP

14 MAY 2001 INDIAN EXPRESS

Bush salutes Georgia Stung Putin

Tbilisi (Georgia) May 10 (Reuters): To chants of "Bushi, Bushi," President George W. Bush hailed Georgia's new democracy as a "beacon of liberty" today and in a swipe at Moscow said the sovereignty of the ex-Soviet republic must be respected.

Tens of thousands of people jammed into Tbilisi's Freedom Square — once called Lenin Square — to cheer Bush at the rallying point for a 2003 "Rose Revolution" that brought pro-western President Mikhail Saakashvili to power.

Bush threw his weight behind Georgia's efforts to gain the return of two pro-Moscow rebel regions, South Ossetia and Abkhazia, which Saakashvili says is vital for

his country to recover from years of economic decline.

But, during a 19-hour visit, Bush significantly avoided open backing for Saakashvili in his demand for the speedy closure of two Russian bases on Georgian soil.

Aware that Georgia's fledgling democracy feels intimidated by neighbouring Moscow, Bush said Washington encouraged Georgia's closer cooperation with Nato. And he got some of his loudest cheers when he said: "The sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia must be respected... by all nations".

The US-educated Saakashvili asked for Washington's help in joining the list of other ex-Soviet states to join Nato.

Moscow, May 10 (Reuters): President Vladimir Putin, stung by suggestions Russia should atone for Soviet rule of the Baltic states, today called a border claim by EU-member Latvia "total nonsense".

A day after Russia celebrated victory over Nazi Germany with a lavish ceremony, sensitivities surrounding Moscow's annexation of the Baltic states in World War II burst to the fore at a news conference following a summit with the EU.

Russia has yet to sign a border delineation agreement with Baltic neighbours Latvia and Estonia, a move that has been repeatedly delayed by poor relations and has complicated a wider rapprochement between Russia and the enlarged EU.

"We are ready to sign the agreements on borders that you asked about with Estonia and Latvia," Putin said, after signing an agreement on political and economic relations with the EU. "We hope they will not be accompanied by idiotic — in terms of their content — demands of a territorial nature," he said. "We are ready to wait while our colleagues who came up with this sort of fantasy become mature for real work."

11 MAY 2004

THE TELEGRAPH

U.S. closes book on search for Iraq WMD

Hunt has gone as far as feasible, says inspector

WASHINGTON: In his final word, the CIA's top weapons inspector in Iraq has said the hunt for weapons of mass destruction has "gone as far as feasible" and has found nothing, closing an investigation into the purported programmes of Saddam Hussein that were used to justify the 2003 invasion.

"After more than 18 months, the WMD investigation and debriefing of the WMD-related detainees has been exhausted," wrote Charles Duelfer, head of the Iraq Survey Group, in an addendum to the final report he issued last fall.

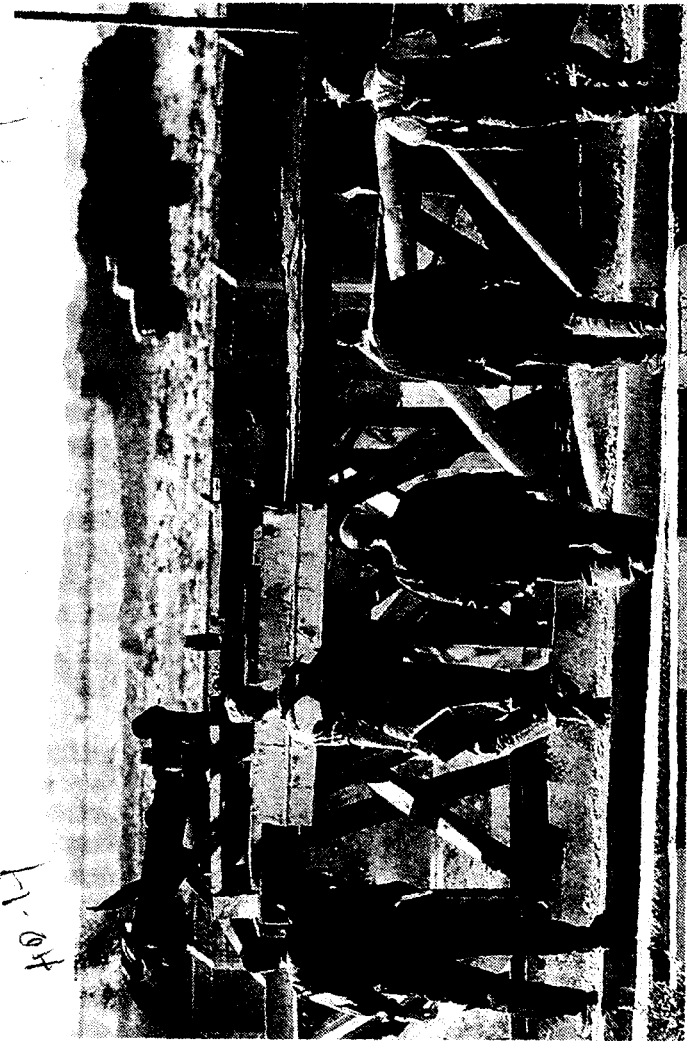
"As matters now stand, the WMD investigation has gone as far as feasible."

In 92 pages posted online on Monday evening, Mr. Duelfer provides a final look at an investigation that occupied over 1,000 military and civilian translators, weapons specialists and other experts at its peak. His latest addenda conclude a roughly 1,500-page report released last fall.

No purpose

On Monday, Mr. Duelfer said there was no purpose in keeping many of the detainees who are in custody because of their knowledge on Iraq's weapons, though he did not provide any details about the number. A U.S. official, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said the ultimate decision on their release would be made by the Iraqi authorities.

The survey group also provided warnings.



A FUTILE CHASE: U.N. weapons inspectors inspect a metal structure for WMD in the "Graphite Rod Factory" in Amariyah, 40 km southwest of Baghdad, in this November 27, 2002 file photo. — PHOTO: REUTERS

The addenda conclude that ities, it remains an important concern," one addendum said.

Another addendum also noted that military forces in Iraq may continue to find small numbers of degraded chemical weapons — most likely misplaced or improperly destroyed before the 1991 Gulf War. In a militant's hands, "the use of a single even ineffective chemical weapon would likely cause more terror than can advance certain WMD activities," another addendum said.

And still another said the survey group found some potential nuclear-related equipment was "missing from heavily damaged and looted sites." Yet, because of the deteriorating security situation in Iraq, the survey group was unable to determine what happened to the equipment, which also had alternate civilian uses.

sold for its scrap value. Other pieces might have been disassembled" and converted into motors or condensers, an addendum said. "Still others could have been taken intact to preserve their function."

Leaving the door to the investigation open just a crack, the U.S. official said a small team still operated under the U.S.-led multinational force in Iraq, though the survey group officially disbanded earlier this month. Those staying on continue to examine documents and follow up on any reports of weapons of mass destruction.

Final instalment

In a statement accompanying the final instalment, Mr. Duelfer said a surprise discovery would most likely be in the biological weapons area because clues, such as the size of the facilities used to develop them, would be comparatively small.

Among unanswered questions, Mr. Duelfer said a group formed to investigate whether WMD-related material was shipped out of Iraq before the invasion was not able to reach firm conclusions because the security situation limited and later halted their work. Investigators were focusing on transfers from Iraq to Syria. No information gleaned from questioning Iraqis supported the possibility, one addendum said. The Iraq Survey Group believes "it was unlikely that an official transfer of WMD material from Iraq to Syria took place." — AP

US - west Eric

Top army officers cleared in Abu Ghraib abuse

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Report contradicts findings by former U.S. Defence Secretary

WASHINGTON: Four top U.S. Army officers, including a former commander of American forces in Iraq, have been cleared of any wrongdoing in the prisoner abuse scandal at Baghdad's Abu Ghraib prison, Defence officials said late on Friday.

Only Brigadier General Janis Karpinski, who commanded a military police unit found responsible for sexually humiliating prisoners, forcing them into stress positions and intimidating them with guard dogs, was relieved of her command and is being recommended for a career-ending reprimand, the officials said.

However, Lieutenant-General Ricardo Sanchez, who as commander of the U.S. forces in Iraq from June 2003 to July 2004 had briefly issued a set of tough interrogation guidelines that some say had encouraged the abuse, was fully exonerated, according to the officials, who spoke on condition of anonymity.

The U.S. probe, completed by Army Inspector General Lieutenant-General Stanley Green, comes on the heels of a slew of independent and internal Pentagon investigations undertaken since April 2004, when information about the pervasive abuse at Abu Ghraib leaked into the media.

The U.S. President, George W. Bush, expressed shock at the reports, calling the abuses "abhorrent," but insisted the treatment of inmates at the notorious Baghdad prison "does not represent the America that I know."

In the intervening months, seven rank-and-file soldiers who had been assigned to guard duty at Abu Ghraib were charged with physically and sexually abusing the detenus. Five of them have already been found guilty or pleaded guilty, while two court-martial are still pending.

Escape punishment

But top U.S. commanders in Iraq have largely escaped punishment despite allegations some of them might have tacitly encouraged soldiers to rough up prisoners in order to "soften" them before interrogation.

The Green report sought to address these concerns, but found fault only with Ms. Karpinski, who is accused of failing to provide proper oversight of her troops, the officials said.

Though not released to the public, the document is seen as the military's final word in the year-long saga that has tar-



HIGHLIGHTING TORTURE: A demonstrator, depicting an image from the Abu Ghraib prison torture scandal, and other activists stage a protest demanding justice in Washington, DC, last week. - PHOTO: AFP

nished the reputation of the U.S. armed forces and fuelled multiple calls for the resignation of the Defence Secretary, Donald Rumsfeld. "The Army is currently in the process of briefing members of Congress on the comprehensive results of an Inspector General legal review of senior member involvement in Abu Ghraib," Army spokeswoman Major Elizabeth Robbins told AFP.

"We are currently not addressing questions on the find-

ings until we have addressed the questions of Congress."

According to the sources, the officials cleared include Lt.-Gen. Sanchez's former deputy, Major General Walter Wojdakowski, who stood accused of failing to staff the prison with trained guards, Major General Barbara Fast, the former chief intelligence officer at Abu Ghraib, and Colonel Marc Warren, the command's top legal officer.

All continue to hold top jobs in the U.S. military. Lt.-Gen.

Sanchez, for example, is now commander of the Army Fifth Corps based in Germany, while Maj. Gen. Fast has been given command of an Army intelligence centre located at Fort Huachuca, Arizona.

However, the findings appear to contradict last year's report by an independent panel led by the former Defence Secretary, James Schlesinger, who argued that commanders should be held accountable "for their action or inaction." - AFP

Rumsfeld warns Iraq against purges

Reuters

Baghdad, April 12

US DEFENCE secretary Donald Rumsfeld delivered a terse warning to Iraq's new leaders on Tuesday, urging them to avoid political purges that could lead to charges of corruption in the new government.

Rumsfeld expressed particular concern about any clear-out of Iraq's defence and interior ministries, which are at the heart of efforts to put Iraq's security forces in charge of battling the country's Sunni Muslim-led insurgency.

Some fear the Shia and Kurdish parties that came to power in the January 30 election could dismiss Sunni officials after suffering decades of oppression under Saddam Hussein's regime. Former interim Prime Minister Iyad Allawi, a secular Shia who led the country from June 2004 until last week, kept many former members of Saddam's Baath Party in government.

But many in the new Shia leadership want to see a thorough clearing out, a process known as de-Baathification, which could fuel the two-

year insurgency.

Iraq's current authorities appear to be making inroads against the insurgency and Rumsfeld said he hoped those successes would not be overlooked when it came to deciding who would stay and who would go in the next administration. Rumsfeld also warned against delays in the political process, particularly the drafting of a new constitution that is due for completion by mid-August, ahead of elections in December.

During his visit, Iraq's security forces announced the capture of a senior former member of the Baath Party, Fadhil Ibrahim Mahmud Al-Mashadani, who was believed to have planned and funded several insurgent attacks.

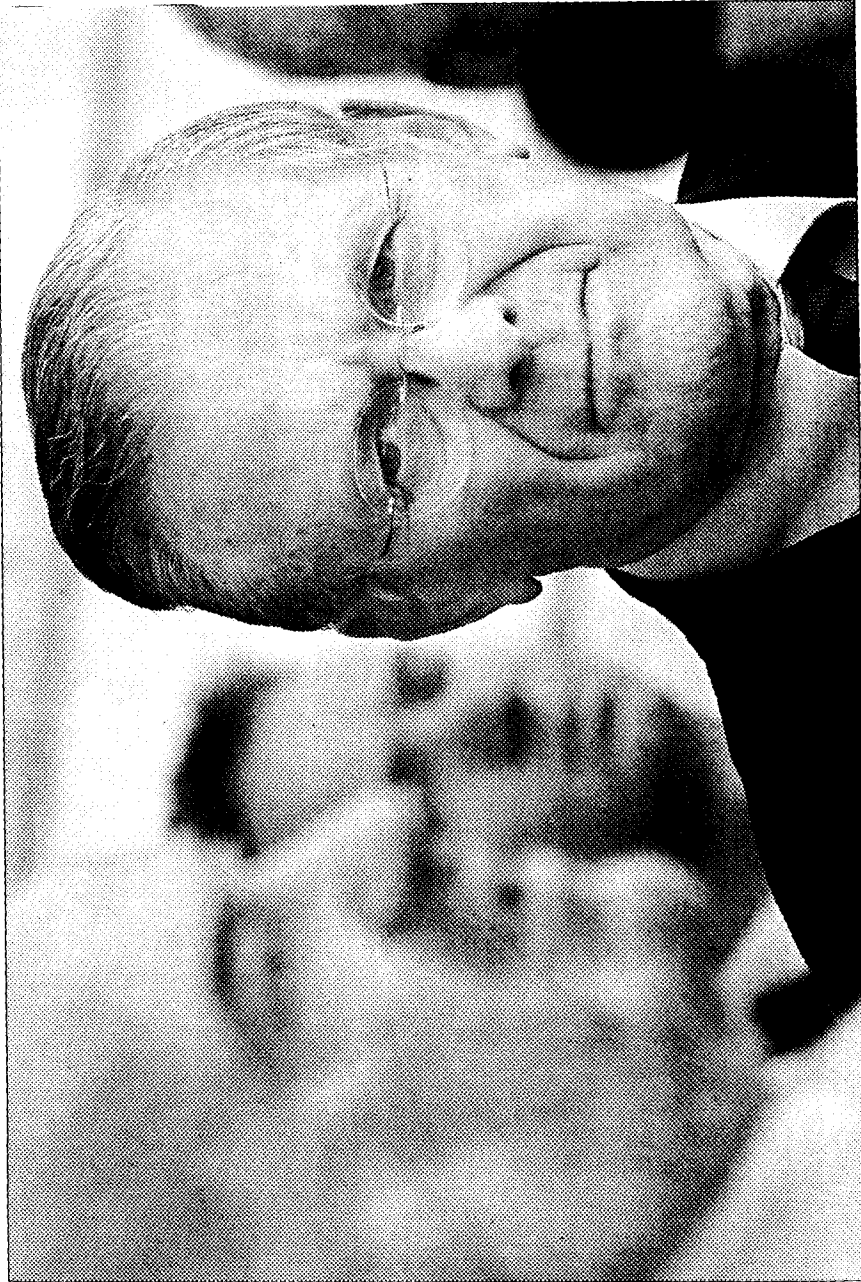
After meeting Rumsfeld, new Prime Minister Ibrahim Jaafari told reporters he hoped for a stable political transition. "I don't deny that there are challenges," said Jaafari, a moderate Islamist who heads Dawa, a Shia political party that opposed Saddam's regime for decades in exile. "I am sure we are going to form very good ministries. All of them (workers) are good technocrats. They are very effective. So, I think

we can cooperate, all of us, and face these challenges successfully."

Despite progress with the naming of Jaafari and President Jalal Talabani, a Kurd, to lead the transitional government, political factions are still jockeying for power. But Talabani said he hoped a government would be finalized soon. "We need time to form the Cabinet, which we hope will be finished before the end of this week," he said.

Noting a legal provision allowing a delay of six months in writing the constitution before the next round of elections, Rumsfeld said the US would oppose such a move.

The US military hopes to cut troop numbers next year as long as Iraqi security forces continue to improve. "The presence of (US) security forces is not going to be something that is going to go on forever," Rumsfeld said before meeting General George Casey, commander of US forces in Iraq, who said Iraqi forces were improving but not ready to rule yet. The army is hoping to cut soldiers' yearlong tours to six months and send more troops home as Iraqi forces grow.



Rumsfeld is all ears as new Iraqi Prime Minister Jaafari addresses the media at the Green Zone in Baghdad.

AP

AMERICAN POWER

How Long Will It Last?

By SANKAR SEN

The US today bestrides the globe like a Colossus. Today's international system, says Robert Kagan, "is built not around a balance of power but around American hegemony". American military power is now far stronger than that of any other nation. The USA today accounts for 40 to 50 per cent of global defence spending. In every sphere of warfare US now has clear preponderance over other powers. No other power has the capacity to move large forces around the globe and support its troops with precision firepower and unsurpassed amount of information and intelligence.

Military resources as a result of the \$400 billion military budget are formidable. The defence research establishment of the US receives more money than the entire defence budget of its largest European ally. No other power has B2 bombers, the satellite constellations, the aircraft carriers or the long range unmanned aircraft like that of the US Navy and Air Force.

Sources of strength

But no power can sustain itself by military strength alone; it must possess other sources of strength. Another pillar of American strength is its economy. It is indeed the world's largest and most vibrant. In 2000 the US economy was equal in size to that of the next four national economies (Japan, France, Germany, Great Britain) combined. However, the economic gap is smaller than the military gap when the US economy is compared to that of the European Union. Nevertheless, the American dominance remains remarkable.

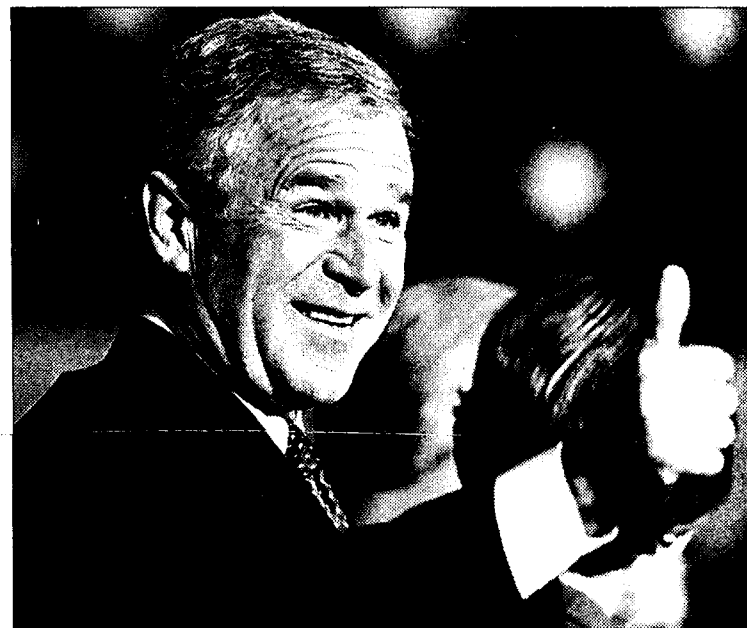
There are other sources of strength. The US today is the third most populous country. Unlike other developed countries it has a birth rate which is near the replacement rate. It has a stable political system and in the realm of knowledge and ideas, it has, as Joseph Nye of Harvard University calls it, "a clear lead over others". American universities dominate in the field of higher education and American culture, both high-brow or low-brow, music, food, work styles and manners.

The values of democracy, personal freedom, upward mobility and openness that find expression in American education and culture contribute to American power. It has been aptly said that American soft power looms larger than its economy and military assets and radiates with an intensity last seen in the days of the Roman empire. Globalisation wears a "made in USA" model.

There are some scholars and thinkers who feel that this Ame-

rican predominance will be ephemeral and this unipolar moment will be brief. In international relations, if one nation becomes too strong, others will join hands to balance its power. There is also an opposite school holding the view that the present American pre-eminence will last well into the 21st century, only if the US is able to display strategic restraint and uses its power wisely.

Predicting the rise and fall of nations is a hazardous guess.



When Britain lost its American colonies in the 18th century, Horace Walpole visualised Britain's reduction to a little island as insignificant as Denmark or Sardinia. He failed to foresee the coming industrial revolution that would give Britain another century with greater power. Similarly, there were others who after the Vietnam war prophesied that American power will gradually contract and its hegemony will not last. But they did not foresee the third industrial revolution, which would give US new power and strength and a "second century". Today the US has assumed leadership of the global information revolution.

Hegemonists and globalists

Now the question is how America as a global superpower is going to use its vast resources. Geopolitical considerations that guided American policy for more than 100 years are no longer in existence. There are analysts who feel that soon America, which has over-extended itself, will retreat from further engagements and withdraw military forces from Europe and Asia. This viewpoint is erroneous because of the profound changes that have taken place in global politics. In this age of globalisation American foreign policy no longer revolves around geography. Today al Qaeda offers great threats to American security whether they operate from Afghanistan, Philippines or Western Europe. So in the coming

years America has to remain engaged abroad, but the question is regarding the manner and way of expanding an international order that suits American interests. On this there are two schools of thought among the American foreign policy-makers. There are hegemonists who are of the view that American power and influence is threatened by a combination of terrorism, rogue states, weapons of mass destruction as well as ambitions of other powers. They feel that to

safeguard American safety as well as that of its allies there should be confident exercise of American power with few constraints on its freedom of action.

Hegemonists see American primacy as the key to achieving its foreign policy goals. The other viewpoint is represented by globalists who feel that, instead of dictating, America should work in cooperation with other countries and international institutions. Unilateral American action will be counter-productive.

This is because economic globalisation has been accompanied in recent days by military globalisation. Previously, distance neutralised military advantages and provided a buffer. Modern technology has now changed the situation. With widespread diffusion of technology, many states have acquired the capability of producing biological, chemical and nuclear weapons of mass destruction. Not only states but terrorist organisations are likely to be in possession of sophisticated and lethal weapons, which they can use with deadly effect against the most powerful states.

To deal with catastrophic terrorism there is need for both the shield and the sword. The shield of preventive measures has to be strengthened, but defence measures at home alone will not help. Effective counter terrorism measures by Washington will be successful only if it obtains the support of other countries. The

Bush Administration's National Security Strategy correctly points out that America today is threatened less by "conquering states than by the failed and failing ones". It is these states which offer opportunities to terrorists to exploit grievances and places to operate. The rebuilding of these states will require joint working with America's major allies. American military success in Afghanistan and precision bombing destroyed only a fraction of al Qaeda's cells. It retains cells in 60 other countries. Mere bombing cannot wipe them out from different parts of the world. The best response to transnational terrorism networks is the network of cooperating government agencies.

Spreading disenchantment

American hegemonic power is of course generating animosity. The imperial power always looks like a bully. The claim of a superpower to act in the interest of others is always taken with a grain of salt. It always creates fears and anxieties among other powers. The First World War had its genesis in Germany's rise to power and the fear it caused in Great Britain. Similarly in this century China's growth will create fear in the US and may generate conflict.

Indeed anti-American sentiment is sweeping the world after the Iraq war. It has, of course, been aggravated by the aggressive style of the present American President. Under George Bush, anti-Americanism is widely thought to have reached new heights.

In the coming years the USA will lose more of its ability to lead others if it decides to act unilaterally. If other states step aside and question the USA's policies and objectives and seek to de-legitimise them, the problems of the USA will increase manifold. American success will lie in melding power and cooperation and generating a belief in other countries that their interests will be served by working with instead of opposing the United States. It is aptly said that use of power without cooperation becomes dictatorial and breeds resistance and resentment. But cooperation without power produces posturing and no concrete progress.

There is also another disquieting development. It seems American soft power is waning and it is losing its allure as a model society. Much of the rest of the world is no longer looking up to the USA as a beacon. Rising religiosity, rank hostility to the UN, Bush's doctrine of preventive war, Guantanamo Bay etc are creating disquiet in the minds of many and turning them off America. This diminution of America's soft power will also create disenchantment and may gradually affect American pre-eminence.

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BUSH IN EUROPE

Diplomacy Has Become The New Mantra

By MANISH DABHADE

President George W Bush's four day visit to Belgium, Germany and Slovakia at the end of February attracted a lot of media and scholarly attention worldwide. His visit assumed significance for a variety of reasons: it was his first visit abroad after assuming office for the second time in January this year; it supposedly emphasised the strategic importance his administration attached to Europe; it also reflected his desire to bury the bitter differences with Europe that had marked his first term. "Diplomacy" was the new mantra.

Herein lay the key questions: why did Bush decide to re-engage Europe at this point of time? Have the issues that divided them disappeared or are simply being ignored? Is Bush seeking a compromise in his foreign policy agenda? Does it mark a fundamental shift in US foreign policy and security strategy? Or is it merely a tactical shift?

Transatlantic rift

It might be recalled that President Bush had similarly began his first term by visiting Europe. This trip, however, marked the beginning of the now-clichéd "transatlantic rift". The issues that divided US and Europe then were the US approach to the Kyoto Protocol, the International Criminal Court, the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty and the Middle East peace process. It was, however, the US war in Iraq and related US diplomacy that brought the underlying rift to the fore and strained diplomatic relations beyond repair. The US Defence Secretary, Donald Rumsfeld, was perceived to be dividing Europe by talking about "old" and "new" Europe. Also, National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice's statement about "forgiving Russia, ignoring Germany and punishing France" further dealt a body blow to the transatlantic relations. In his first term, Bush was

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also seen to be actively and overtly opposing the emergence of a strong and united Europe. He was then increasingly seen, by European elites and commoners alike, as a unilateralist, arrogant, insensitive, abrasive and uncompromising leader lacking both diplomatic style and substance.



It was in this context that Bush decided to reengage Europe at the beginning of his second term. The issues that had created the "rift" in the first place, were still the bone of contention between the US and Europe. In fact, differences on new issues of Iran and the proposed lifting of EU arms sales embargo on China seemed to further divide them. But, Bush in his second term went ahead with his task of repairing the earlier damage to the transatlantic relations.

Value of Europe

One of his first foreign policy initiatives after assuming office was to dispatch his new Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice to Europe in the first week of February to prepare a favourable climate for his own visit later in the month. It was Rice's much awaited speech on transatlantic relations in Paris that sowed the seeds for a strong US re-engagement with Europe. She expressed earnest US desire to repair the rift, engage the European allies in a "dialogue" as equals and give diplomacy a

chance.

Bush began his visit to Europe by making a hugely symbolic gesture: making Brussels his first stop in Europe. Brussels is the headquarters of the European Union as well as Nato, the institutions most valued by Europe. Here, Bush's support for a

"united and strong Europe" — the idea of Europe — created the desired positive atmosphere the US was hoping for. Bush's speeches and press declarations repeatedly recalled the bonds that bound the US and the Europe: a shared history, shared values and a shared agenda.

Bush recalled the same sentiments in his bilateral talks with the French President Jacques Chirac and the German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder, his most bitter critics of the Iraq war. Acknowledging the differences he had with Europe on a range of issues, Bush repeatedly expressed his desire to "listen" to and "engage" Europe, and give diplomacy a chance. It was this change in the diplomatic style in Bush's second term that somewhat softened European criticism of President Bush and his foreign policy during his European tour. It made European leaders more comfortable in engaging Bush in a "dialogue" they wanted to have with the US.

So, why did Bush in his second term decide to give diplomacy a

chance vis-à-vis Europe? The answer can be found in a number of reasons. The primary reason is Bush's new, more ambitious, foreign policy agenda of promoting democracy abroad, especially in the Greater Middle East. The Bush administration has realised that if this neo-Wilsonian ideal has to be accomplished, it needs to have allies that would support, not obstruct, its strategy toward this goal. The US is also firmly wedded to the pre-emptive/preventive use of its military power to topple the totalitarian regimes seeking to acquire weapons of mass destruction, its post-9/11 quest to achieve "absolute security". And it is here that the European support, tangible or intangible, would provide the much needed legitimacy to the US use of its military power.

Tactical shift

In his second term, Bush has also learned a few lessons from its war in Iraq and its aftermath. Though the US has an overwhelming dominance in the military sphere that would ensure victory over the so-called totalitarian states, it realised that it needs European allies to support nation building and democratic institution building in such states. The European support would, thus, provide the much needed politico-diplomatic cover to pursue its ambitious foreign policy agenda.

Thus, "diplomacy" has become the new mantra for Bush. This does not mean that the US is seeking a compromise on its strategic goals. Nor does it mean that the US has softened its stand on the pre-emptive use of military power.

Bush still adheres to a "maximalist" vision of US foreign policy and security strategy initiated during his first term and especially after 9/11. The renewed engagement of Europe is only a tactical shift toward securing its strategic goals. However, it remains to be seen whether such a change in US approach would make Europe jump onto the US bandwagon in pursuit of its ambitious foreign policy agenda.

THE STATESMAN

30 MAR 2005

Europe arms for China irks Rice

Associated Press

BEIJING, March 20. — US Secretary of State Ms Condoleezza Rice suggested today that European governments are irresponsible if they sell sophisticated weaponry to China that might one day be used against US forces in the Pacific.

“It is the USA, not Europe, that is defending the Pacific,” Ms said. She was speaking in Seoul, the penultimate stop on her week-long tour of Asia.

South Korea, Japan and the United States are all Pacific powers and all contribute resources to keep the Asia-Pacific region stable, Ms Rice said.

The European Union may soon lift an arms embargo on China that was imposed after the deadly 1989 crackdown on pro-democracy protesters in Tiananmen Square. Lifting the embargo would allow sale of technology and weapons that China badly wants to modernise its creaky military. China has recently gone on a military spending spree that Ms Rice said concerns the USA.

“The European Union should do nothing to contribute”, to the possibility that Chinese forces might turn European technology



Ms Rice has said China might use sophisticated weapons from Europe against US forces in the Pacific. — AFP

on Americans, the US Secretary said after meetings with the South Korean President and foreign minister.

Religious freedom push

Ms Rice attended a Palm Sunday Church service in Beijing, underscoring Washington's desire to see the Chinese authorities improve their record on religious freedom, adds AFP. She attended mass at the official Protestant Church in the parish of Gangwashi, in the centre of the Chinese capital, following talks with Chinese President Mr Hu Jintao and the Prime Minister, Mr Wen Jinbao.

স্বনিযুক্ত জগদীশ্বর

প্রেসিডেন্ট জর্জ ডব্লিউ বুশ শাসিত মার্কিন যুক্তরাষ্ট্র গুজরাতের মুখ্যমন্ত্রী নরেন্দ্র মোদীকে সে দেশের মাটিতে পদার্পণের অনুমতি দেয় নাই। কেননা মোদী 'গুরুতরভাবে সংখ্যালঘুদের ধর্মীয় স্বাধীনতা খর্ব' করিয়াছেন। স্বয়ং মোদী এবং তাঁহার দল বিজেপি তো বটেই, ভারত সরকারও মার্কিন প্রশাসনের এই অবাঞ্ছিত সিদ্ধান্তে যারপরনাই ক্ষুব্ধ। নয়াদিল্লিতে মার্কিন কূটনীতিককে ডাকিয়া সে কথা জনাইয়াও দেওয়া হইয়াছে। ভারতীয় বিদেশ মন্ত্রক বুশ প্রশাসনকে সিদ্ধান্ত পুনর্বিবেচনার অনুরোধও করিয়াছে। সিদ্ধান্ত পুনর্বিবেচনা করা হইবে, এমন আশ্বাস মিলিয়াছে বটে, কিন্তু মার্কিন বিদেশ সচিব কন্ডোলিসা রাইসের ভারত সফরে ভারত-মার্কিন সুসম্পর্কের বাগাড়ম্বরের পর ভারতীয় প্রজাতন্ত্রের এক নির্বাচিত মুখ্যমন্ত্রীর মার্কিন সফরে নিষেধাজ্ঞা জারি সকলকেই বিস্মিত করিয়াছে। দৃশ্যত, মার্কিন কংগ্রেসের খ্রিস্টান ও মুসলিম লবির চাপেই বুশ প্রশাসন এ রূপ সিদ্ধান্ত লইয়াছে। ২০০২ সালে আমদাবাদ-সহ গুজরাতের বিভিন্ন শহরে মোদী সরকারের নিষ্ক্রিয়তা, এমনকী প্রচ্ছন্ন প্রশ্রয়ে সংঘটিত মুসলিম-বিরোধী দাঙ্গা এবং তাহারও আগে ডাংস-সহ জনজাতি অধ্যুষিত নানা জেলায় খ্রিস্টান ধর্মাবলম্বী জনজাতীয়দের উপর হিন্দুত্ববাদী তাণ্ডবের নৈতিক দায় যে নরেন্দ্র মোদীর, তাহা অস্বীকার করা কঠিন। তৎসঙ্গেও মোদী ভোটদাতাদের বিপুল রায়ে গণতান্ত্রিক ভাবে নির্বাচিত হইয়া মুখ্যমন্ত্রী পদে পুনর্নিযুক্ত হন। বিশ্বময় গণতন্ত্রের রফতানিকারক ও রক্ষাকর্তা মার্কিন প্রশাসন সেখানে কেমন করিয়া মোদীর ভিসা আটকাইয়া দেয়? এই সিদ্ধান্তে ব্যক্তিগত ভাবে মোদীর সুবিধাই হইবে। যে ৬০ জন দলীয় বিধায়ক তাঁহার কার্যপদ্ধতির বিরুদ্ধে ক্ষোভ ব্যক্ত করিয়া কেশুভাই পটেলের নেতৃত্বে বিকল্পের সন্ধান করিতেছিলেন, তাঁহারা মুখ লুকাইবেন। হিন্দুত্বের 'পোস্টার-বয়' বলিয়া গণ্য মোদী নিজেও তাহা বিলক্ষণ জানেন। তাই মার্কিন ভিসা প্রত্যাখ্যানের ঘটনাটিকে তিনি 'গুজরাতের অস্মিতা'র উপর আঘাত রূপেও বর্ণনা করেন, যাহার লক্ষ্য এক ধরনের গুজরাতি প্রাদেশিকতা উস্কাইয়া দেওয়া।

কিন্তু মার্কিন সিদ্ধান্তের অন্যান্য এবং অযৌক্তিকতার তুলনা নাই। ইহা সর্ব বিষয়ে মার্কিন মানদণ্ড প্রয়োগ করার একতরফা মনোভাবেরই পরিচায়ক, যাহা গণতান্ত্রিকতার বহুত্ববাদী সারমর্মকে অস্বীকার করে। অথচ সেই অবস্থানটিও প্রতারণাপূর্ণ। যে রাষ্ট্র নাপাম বর্ষণ করিয়া ভিয়েতনাম ছারখার করিয়াছে, চিলি-নিকারাগুয়ায় গণতান্ত্রিক ভাবে নির্বাচিত শাসকদের হত্যা বা অন্তর্ঘাতের মাধ্যমে বিনষ্ট করিয়াছে, আফগানিস্তান ও ইরাকের জনসাধারণের উপর নামাইয়াছে আগ্রাসনের মারক তরবারি, তাহার কি মোদীর বিরুদ্ধে আনীত সংখ্যালঘু-পীড়নের অভিযোগে বিচলিত হওয়ার অধিকার আছে? মার্কিন স্বেচ্ছাচারের এই নিদর্শন অবশ্য অভিনব নয়। ইতিপূর্বে প্যালেস্টাইনের নির্বাচিত প্রেসিডেন্ট ইয়াসার আরাফতকে মার্কিন প্রশাসন রাষ্ট্রপুঞ্জের অধিবেশনে যোগ দিতে নিউ ইয়র্কে নামিতে দেয় নাই এই যুক্তিতে যে আরাফত 'সন্ত্রাসবাদী'। অথচ রাষ্ট্রীয় সন্ত্রাস সৃষ্টিতে হাত-পাকানো লাতিন আমেরিকার বিতাড়িত স্বৈরাচারীরা ফ্লোরিডার মায়ামি সৈকতে সরকারি আতিথেয়তায় বিলাসব্যসনের জীবন কাটাইয়া চলিয়াছেন। সাদ্দাম হুসেন ইরাকে গণতন্ত্রের টুটি টিপিয়া ধরিয়াছেন বলিয়া সেখানে লক্ষ-লক্ষ মার্কিন নৌসেনা অভিযানে নামিয়াছে, অথচ সৌদি আরব, কুয়েত, ওমান, সুদান, আলজিরিয়া, মরক্কো সহ পশ্চিম এশিয়া ও উত্তর আফ্রিকার অসংখ্য স্বৈরাচারী শাসক মার্কিন প্রশ্রয়, অনুদান ও ত্রাণসাহায্যে নিয়ত পুষ্ট হইয়া চলিয়াছেন। নিজের ভূরি-ভূরি। এই দুমুখো নীতি বস্তুত মার্কিন বিদেশনীতি তথা রণনীতির সার হইয়া উঠিয়াছে। তাই গণতন্ত্র লইয়া প্রেসিডেন্ট বুশের বক্তৃতা আজ বিশ্বময় এমন তিক্ত হাস্যরসের উদ্রেক করে। নিজে কাচের ঘরে বাস করিয়া অন্যকে লক্ষ করিয়া টিল ছুড়িবার এই খেলা বুশ প্রশাসনের পক্ষে বিপজ্জনক হইয়া ওঠে নাই কেবল আমেরিকার অমিত সমরশক্তির কারণে। কিন্তু এই শক্তির দণ্ড মাত্রা না ছাড়াইলেই মঙ্গল। নরেন্দ্র মোদীর অপরাধের বিচার তাঁহার দেশবাসী, রাজ্যবাসী, ভারতীয় আইন ও বিচারালয় করিবেন। মার্কিন যুক্তরাষ্ট্র জগদীশ্বর নহে।

US to reduce prisoners at Guantanamo

DOUGLAS JEHL

WASHINGTON, MARCH 11

THE Pentagon is seeking to enlist help from the US State Department and other agencies in a plan to cut by more than half the population at its detention facility in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, in part by transferring hundreds of suspected terrorists to prisons in Saudi Arabia, Afghanistan and Yemen, according to senior administration officials.

The transfers would be similar to the renditions, or transfers of captives to other countries, carried out by the CIA, but they are subject to stricter approval within the government, and face potential opposition from the CIA as well as the State and Justice Departments, the officials said.

Administration officials say those agencies have resisted some previous handovers, out of concern that transferring the prisoners to foreign governments could harm American security or subject the prisoners to mistreatment. A Feb. 5 memorandum from Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld calls for broader interagency support for the plan, starting with efforts to work out a significant transfer of prisoners to Afghanistan, the officials said. The proposal is part of a Pentagon effort to cut a population at Guantanamo that stands at about 540 pris-

oners by releasing some detainees outright and by transferring others for continued detention elsewhere.

The proposal comes as the Bush administration reviews the future of the naval base at Guantanamo as a detention center, after court decisions and shifts in public opinion have raised legal and political questions about the use of the facility.

The White House first embraced using Guantanamo as a holding place for terrorism suspects taken in Afghanistan, in part because the base was seen as

beyond the jurisdiction of US law. But recent court rulings have held that prisoners there may challenge their detentions in federal court.

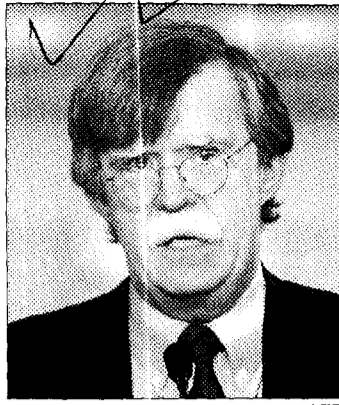
For the last six months, the Pentagon has halted the flow of terrorism suspects into the prison, according to Defense Department officials.

Officials said that the court rulings had contributed to their determination to reduce the population at Guantanamo, in part by persuading other countries to bear some of the burden of detaining terrorism suspects. Under the administration's approach, the State Department is responsible for negotiating agreements in which receiving countries agree "to detain, investigate and/or prosecute" the prisoners and to treat them humanely.

—NYT

Inmates may be moved to prisons in Saudi Arabia, Afghanistan and Yemen

12 MAR 2005



AFP

John R. Bolton at the US State Department on Monday.

LSW
America
names ✓
hardliner
UN envoy

9/3 H0-13
S. Rajagopalan
Washington, March 8

PRESIDENT GEORGE W. Bush has nominated John Bolton, a scathing critic of the United Nations, as the next US ambassador to the world body. The decision sparked a controversy with Democrats immediately attacking the choice. A Republican Senator also disapproved of the move.

Secretary of state Condoleezza Rice, however, defended the nomination of the 56-year-old conservative. She called Bolton a tough-minded diplomat with a proven track record of effective multi-lateralism. She maintained that Bolton is "personally committed to the future success of the United Nations".

But Bolton's past could haunt him when the Senate vets his nomination. He had once commented that "there's no such thing as the United Nations". If the UN building in New York lost 10 of its 38 stories, it "wouldn't make a bit of difference," he had remarked.

Bolton, currently undersecretary of state for arms control, has also been known for his uncompromising approach vis-a-vis Iran and North Korea and a lack of enthusiasm for some international treaties. On Monday, Bolton acknowledged his sharp criticism of the UN in the past. But he said his emphasis was always on the criticality of American leadership for a UN that was effective and remained true to its original charter.

"Close cooperation and the time-honoured tradition of frank communication is central to achieving our mutually-held objectives. The United Nations affords us the opportunity to move our policies forward together with unit of purpose," he said.

Senate Democratic leader Harry Reid, attacking the nomination, said, "This is a disappointing choice and one that sends wrong signals." Republican Senator Chuck Hagel was also obliquely critical of Bolton's appointment. "We need alliances, we need friends... To go up there and kick the UN around doesn't get the job done," he commented.

09 MAR 2005

THE HINDU

09 MAR 2005

BUSH IN EUROPE

THE UNITED STATES and the European Union sought to put their differences over issues pertaining to West Asia behind them during President George W. Bush's recent trans-Atlantic visit. However, the EU's moves to lift the embargo on arms sales to China have emerged as a fresh cause for friction. This ban was imposed after the Tiananmen Square incidents of 1989. In Washington's view, the lifting of the ban is not justified as the People's Republic has not undertaken sufficient democratic reforms since then. The U.S. also argues that the supply of advanced equipment to China would alter the balance of forces in the Taiwan Straits area. The fear that some of this weaponry might be transferred to 'rogue non-state' elements has also been expressed. These arguments appear intended to obscure the real reason for the U.S. opposition to the EU's plans. As set out in its strategic doctrine, the superpower is determined to ensure that no country develops the military capacity to compete with it on anywhere near equal terms.

The nature of the relationship between the EU and China might also change if the arms embargo is ended. Many of the major producers of defence equipment in Europe have standing contracts with the American military. These contracts could be jeopardised if plans to supply arms to China are pursued. For this reason, EU leaders say they will work out jointly with the Americans the conditions under which weapons can be sold to China. The Europeans appear to have their task cut out as they try to implement

policies against the wishes of a superpower that can exert influence in multiple ways. This reality appears to explain the European reaction to the U.S. demand that they contribute to the training and equipping of the newly raised Iraqi security forces.

The Europeans did finally agree to participate in this training programme run by the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation. However, their contributions are likely to be negligible. For instance France, which shed its inhibitions at the last minute, is to post a mid-level officer in the Brussels headquarters of the NATO department that runs the programme. Responses of this nature clearly show that the European countries do not agree with Washington's assessment that the January election marked a turning point even though they did not openly dispute this claim. They appear to consider the Iraqi situation a *fait accompli* as well as a mess that Washington should be left to clean up on its own. In an effort to push these differences to the background, France and Germany preferred to highlight issues on which they and the U.S. have compatible positions. Given the stakes France has in Lebanon, its endorsement of the U.S. call for a withdrawal of Syrian forces came as no surprise. For all that, the European gestures of friendliness may have induced the Bush administration to modify its Iran policy slightly. In signalling that incentives can be provided if Iran gives up its nuclear weapon programme, Washington appears to have followed the advice of the Europeans — for now.

THE HINDU

05 MAR 2005

Bush for complete Syria withdrawal

Westfield (New Jersey), March 4 (Reuters): President George W. Bush today demanded Syria's complete withdrawal from Lebanon.

"When we say withdraw we mean complete withdrawal — no half-hearted measures," Bush said at an event in New Jersey promoting his Social Security plan.

His comments followed reports that Syrian President Bashar al-Assad was expected to announce today a partial pullout of troops from Lebanon, with some leaving completely and the rest redeploying close to the border.

"Syrian troops, Syrian intelligence services must get out of Lebanon now," Bush said. He said he was pleased a similar message was delivered to Assad by Saudi Crown Prince Abdullah, a leader with close Syrian ties.

"We want democracy in Lebanon to succeed. And we

know it cannot succeed so long as she is occupied by a foreign power," Bush added.

Earlier, Britain urged Syria to withdraw its troops from Lebanon today and said international peacekeeping troops could be sent to ease the way.

Pressure has mounted on Syria to leave Lebanon since former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Hariri was assassinated in a car bomb attack in Beirut last month.

"It's got to (leave Lebanon). Every one of its neighbours is saying: 'You've got to leave'," British foreign minister Jack Straw told BBC radio.

"If they pull their forces out... then they can come back into the fold of the international community. If they don't, they will be treated as a pariah not just by the West but by most of their Arab neighbours." Syrian troops have helped Damascus secure influ-

ence over its small neighbour for decades and some observers are worried that a swift pullout could destabilise the area.

Straw raised the possibility of more international peacekeepers being sent to Lebanon. A 2,000-member peacekeeping force has been in southern Lebanon since 1978. "It is possible that as part of the phased withdrawal from Lebanon by Syria — it has to be swift but phased — there could be some more peacekeeping troops," Straw said.

Bush pushes Putin on democracy

US dials Iran

Bratislava (Slovakia), Feb. 24 (Reuters): President George W. Bush met Vladimir Putin today and said he had told the Russian President about his concerns over democracy in Russia.

After a summit in Slovakia, both leaders stressed their close ties and common ground and Bush said they shared the goal that neither Iran nor North Korea should have nuclear weapons.

But Bush — who had set the tone for the meeting by predicting a march of democracy across Russia's ex-Soviet backyard — said strong countries needed to be democratic.

"Democracies have certain things in common — a rule of law and protection of minorities and a free press and a viable political opposition," he told a joint news conference.

"I was able to share my concerns about Russia's com-

mitment in fulfilling these universal principles. I did so in a constructive and friendly way."

The meeting comes amid growing concern in the West that Putin is backsliding on democracy, with critics saying his tough policies towards opponents have curbed true democracy. Putin said western fears were unfounded.

"Russia has made its choice in favour of democracy," he said. "Any return to totalitarianism... would be impossible." The leaders have warm personal ties and put a brave face on differences as they stood side-by-side at Bratislava Castle, the final stage of Bush's fence-mending trip to Europe.

Addressing 4,000 people in a central square in snow-bound Bratislava earlier, Bush praised democratic change that swept ex-communist east-

ern Europe over a decade ago and was now spreading to ex-Soviet republics.

"The advance of freedom is the concentrated work of generations," said Bush, who has made supporting democratic change around the world a theme for his second term.

"It took almost a decade after the (1989) velvet revolution for democracy to fully take root in this country. And the democratic revolutions that swept this region over 15 years ago are now reaching Georgia and Ukraine," he said.

Bush said elections in Moldova could aid democracy in the ex-Soviet Union and even isolated Belarus would one day fall into the democratic fold. "Inevitably, the people of Belarus will some day proudly belong to the country of democracies."



Bush and Putin in Bratislava, Slovakia. (AFP)

Washington, Feb. 24 (Reuters): In a rare, direct contact, a senior state department official telephoned the Iranian government yesterday to offer aid after an earthquake killed more than 500 people in southeast Iran but was politely rebuffed, US officials said.

The offer was conveyed by assistant secretary of state William Burns to Iran's ambassador to the UN, Javad Zarif, who declined it, saying Iran was not accepting additional international aid for now, the officials said. Zarif, speaking through an aide, largely confirmed this account but denied that the Iranian response was a refusal. "Iran did not refuse the help but said we can handle it domestically," he said. After originally saying it would not accept help from abroad, Iran has requested and received about \$180,000 worth of tents and blankets from Japan.

Washington's offer appeared to be part of a US effort to show it is willing to deal with the Iranian government despite its accusations that Tehran is seeking nuclear weapons and its refusal to join a European effort to negotiate a solution.

Tuesday's magnitude 6.4 earthquake was centred on the town of Zarand about 700 km southeast of Tehran. Iran's interior minister said the death toll would likely reach 550 and other Iranian officials said it could go higher.

Bush plays perfect guest in Europe

Judy Keen

A FRONT-PAGE headline in *De Morgen*, a Belgian newspaper, captured the essence of President Bush's visit to Europe: "Charm offensive."

Inside the Flemish-language newspaper, another headline anticipated Bush's dinner with French President Jacques Chirac, the most relentless critic of the war with Iraq. "The mission: a night kiss for Chirac before bedtime," it said.

Bush is visiting Belgium, Germany and Slovakia this week, making nice with allies who were angered by the war with Iraq. Although the speech he delivered in Brussels on Monday included some tough words, it was apparent on the first day of his trip that he wants to ingratiate himself.

He joked in the speech that he worried about how he'd be received. "More than 200 years ago," he said, "Benjamin Franklin arrived on this continent to great acclaim." Citing John Adams' description of Franklin's popularity, he said, "There was scarcely a peasant or a citizen ... who did not consider him as a friend to humankind."

"I have been hoping for a similar reception," Bush told his audience, "but secretary (of state Condoleezza) Rice told me I should be a realist." The crowd laughed knowingly. Belgium's coat of arms, featuring twin lions, was affixed to the lectern Bush used instead of his usual presidential seal. After his remarks, Bush spent a few minutes shaking hands with the diplomats and academics in the audience — something he rarely does after formal speeches.

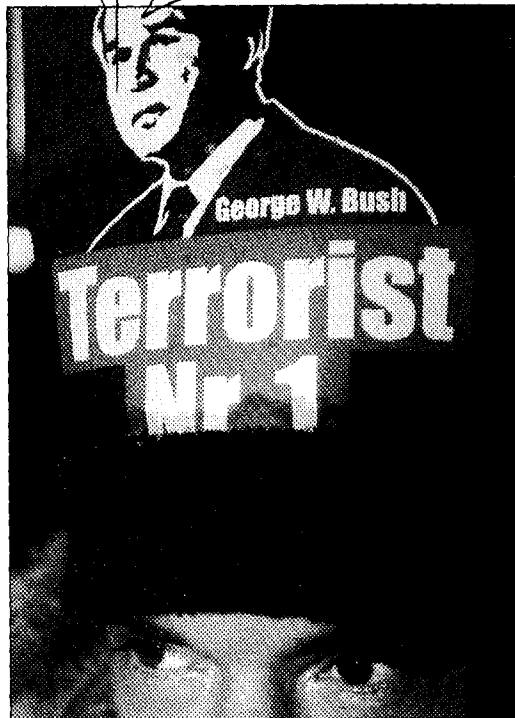
Bush sent mollifying signals all day. At the Royal Palace, he told King Albert II, "Great to be here again. Thank you." He kept his arm around Belgian Prime Minister Guy Verhofstadt as they headed into their meeting, which was supposed to last 30 minutes but went on twice that long. Bush asked Verhofstadt's advice on how to handle issues that came up in Nato and European Union meetings.

Later, at a photo session with Verhofstadt, Bush called his host, who broke an arm in a bicycling mishap in 2002, a "great biker." Bush added, "I need a little training."

Bush's speech included several indirect references to France. Bush quoted French author Albert Camus saying, "Freedom is ... a long-distance race." The John Adams quote included a reference to French author and philosopher Voltaire. And Adams' description of Franklin's popularity referred to his stay in — of course — France.

Bush went all-out to court Chirac, hosting him at a small working dinner at the residence of the US ambassador that also lasted longer than scheduled. Bush told reporters the fact that Chirac was his guest at his first dinner "on European soil" since his re-election "ought to say something."

Bush plied his counterpart with French-flavoured gourmet fare, including lobster risotto with truffle sauce and beef filet with bordelaise sauce. Chardonnay and cabernet wines were poured, but the menu released by the White House didn't specify whether they originated in France or were the product of somewhere else, such as California.



REUTERS

A man participates in an anti-Bush demonstration during the President's visit to Berlin on Wednesday.

Bush's itinerary the rest of the week has another sign that he wants to be the perfect guest. Bush rarely finds time on overseas trips to join his wife visiting cultural sites, but on Wednesday in Mainz, Germany, he stopped at the Gutenberg Museum, which honours hometown boy Johannes Gutenberg, inventor of the printing press.

'Move out of Lebanon'

President Bush said on Wednesday that Syria should withdraw not only its military but also its secret services from Lebanon. He added Washington would wait to see how Syria responded before possibly seeking United Nations sanctions. "We will see how they (the Syrians) respond before there are any further discussions about going back to the UN," Bush told a news conference after talks with German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder.

Lebanon made light of Bush's message, while the Syrian Opposition appealed to the world community to take concrete action to force Syria out.

As an UN-appointed team launched an inquiry into the assassination of Lebanon's ex-Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri, Syrian foreign minister Mahmoud Hammoud rubbished the transatlantic call for an immediate Syrian withdrawal as "nothing new." British foreign secretary Jack Straw said there was a "high level of suspicion" that Syria was involved (in the killing) and urged an independent investigation.

USA Today

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

24 FEB 2005

After Iraq, time to differ over China

EU Worries US With Its Plan To Lift Arms Embargo Against Beijing



end the ban. He said that "we intend to lift the last obstacles in our relations" with China. But he also said the ban should be lifted "under conditions that Europe and the United States define together". Officials on both sides said that underneath the diplomatic words was a deep philosophical divide, and that the Americans were taking a hard line against European willingness to engage the Chinese in negotiations and promises.

◀ German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder and President Bush inspect a guard of honour at Mainz Castle on Wednesday

By Elisabeth Bumiller

Brussels: A simmering dispute with Europe came to the forefront on Tuesday when President George W. Bush said there was "deep concern" in the United States that lifting the European Union's arms embargo against China would change the balance of relations between China and Taiwan.

The issue has been one of the few disagreements to spill into the open during Bush's trip to repair relations across the Atlantic. He and European leaders have worked intently to ease hard feelings over the Iraq invasion, and they have played down the conflict that has risen in the last few months over the arms embargo. Even as he expressed his concerns on Tuesday, Bush insisted that he was willing to listen to European views on the issue.

In his most explicit public argument, the president said lifting the ban would allow the transfer of critical military technology to the Chinese that would "change the

balance of relations between China and Taiwan, and that's of concern".

The administration also fears that such technology, especially advanced radar and communications systems, might be passed on to other countries.

For Europe, the end of the embargo, which was imposed in 1989 after China's crackdown on pro-

democracy protesters in Tiananmen Square, would open a profitable new avenue for arms sales. But leaders also say allowing the sales, which they propose to do by June, would be an important way to forge ties with China.

President Jacques Chirac of France said Tuesday that Europe remained steadfast in its desire to

The European Union is almost certain to lift the 15-year-long embargo by June, but it has tried to quell American fears by saying it will limit the transfer of advanced technology to the Chinese by developing a tough new "code of conduct" for arms exports.

Bush said he was interested in looking at that code of conduct, and went so far as to say on his second day of a four-day trip to Belgium, Germany and Slovakia that he was on a "listening tour". But he expressed skepticism about the ability of the Europeans to come up with a proposal for curbing the transfer of technology to the Chinese that would satisfy the US.

US officials are most concerned that lifting the embargo would allow the Europeans to sell such advanced technology to the Chinese that they will be able to move to a "next generation" warfare capacity and develop the kind of sophisticated military systems that the US has used in Afghanistan and Iraq. NYT News Service

US spooks wary of the dragon



Washington: China will have deployed several nuclear-armed missiles, both land and sea-based, aimed at the US by 2015 and confrontations between the two nations over the Taiwan issue by this time are possible, National Intelligence Council has said.

US-China confrontations over Taiwan or other broader competing security interests are "possible" by 2015, the NIC, which represents 15 spy agencies of the US, including the CIA, said. In the event of a confrontation, the report, said it was not sure how a US-Japan alliance would shape up as Tokyo may pursue initiatives internally and overseas that are designed to safeguard its interests. Agencies

Bush power snub to EU

Vijay Dutt
London, February 19

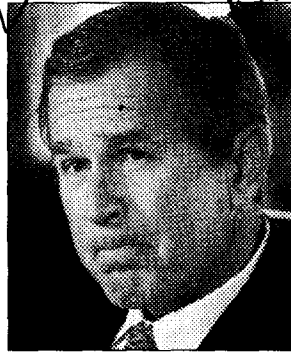
ON THE eve of what is being described as a fence-mending visit to Europe, President George W. Bush bluntly rejected European leaders' moves to boost EU military might.

During an exclusive interview with the Telegraph, the President alternating between being brusque and soft said, there was no need for the Franco-German goal of forming an alternative superpower.

He pointedly rejected a call by German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder for Nato to be over-hauled. It was widely believed that the Chancellor was attempting to give the EU's fledgling foreign and military bodies more muscle.

"I disagree," said Mr Bush. "I think Nato is vital". It is one that has worked in the past and will work in the future just so long as there is that strong commitment to Nato."

The daily said there was no hiding Mr Bush's view that the EU should not try to counter-balance the power of America. "Some have said we must have a unified Europe to balance America. Why, when in fact we share values and goals? As opposed to counter-balancing each other, why don't we view this as a moment when we can move in a concerted



George W. Bush

fashion to achieve those goals", said Mr Bush.

But he agreed that the time for unilateralism was over. America needed Europe and it could not "spread freedom" alone.

He played down differences with Europe over Iran. Asked why The US was not joining the diplomatic initiative of Britain, Germany and France towards Iran, he said, "We have made it clear that we agree with the objective to get rid of the weapons." But he added a note of threat to the ruling clerics and asked them to give up their nuclear programme.

On the war of terror, Mr Bush said, "We must confront the ideology of hate."

On Russia, he said there was still some distrust between the two countries and that is why it was important to have a personal relationship (with Mr Putin).

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

19 FEB 2005

Probe Hariri killing or face sanctions, US tells Syria

Reuters

Washington, February 19

THE UNITED States has warned Syria that it must help investigate the assassination of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik al-Hariri or face the possibility of further sanctions.

Washington this week recalled its ambassador from Damascus because of its displeasure over Hariri's killing as well as its longstanding accusations that Syria allowed people in the country to help the Iraqi insurgency and to support attacks on Israel.

Washington has previously told Syria to withdraw its 14,000 troops from neighbouring Lebanon, crack down on anti-Israel militants it believes operate in the country and stop what it says is support for the Iraqi insurgency across its border.

The call for Syria to join

an investigation of the bombing that killed Hariri in Beirut on Monday was a new US condition that Syria must meet if it is to avoid further punitive measures.

Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said the US wanted to force Syria to change its policies, which would help remove the threat of sanctions. "We are not trying to isolate Syria, what we are trying to do is to get Syria to engage in more responsible behavior and that responsible behavior includes agreeing to ... participate in an investigation of what happened to Prime Minister Hariri," Rice told reporters after meeting the Dutch foreign minister.

Explaining her comments, State Department spokesman Richard Boucher told reporters: "The goal is to send a strong signal to Syria. We have done that in a variety of ways, we may ha-

ve to do more things like that at some point, we'll see."

"I'm not predicting anything in particular, but I'm not ruling anything out in terms of the various tools that we have available to send a strong diplomatic message to Syria," he added. "We'll see if Syria gets the message and takes action."

Washington has not blamed Syria for the assassination on Monday that killed 14 other people but Lebanese opposition leaders have pointed the finger at Damascus, which has been the main power-broker in the country for decades.

Syria has condemned the killing of Hariri, who opposed Syrian interference in Lebanon. The UN Security Council has asked Secretary-General Kofi Annan to look into the killing, a measure the US hopes will lead to further action by the world body.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

19 FEB 2005

US PRESIDENT TERMS IRAN, SYRIA AS DESTABILISING FORCES Bush push for diplomacy

Associated Press

WASHINGTON, Feb. 18. — President George W Bush has criticised Syria and Iran as destabilising forces in West Asia but stopped short of threatening new US action against either. Expressing sympathy with Israeli concern about a nuclear-armed Iran, the President said that America would protect its ally.

Addressing a press conference yesterday, Mr Bush said Syria was “out of step” with progress being made in West Asia. He cited the 15,000 troops that Syria has in Lebanon and accused it of harbouring terrorist groups and assisting Iraqi insurgents. He did not assert involvement by Syria, as many suspect, in the assassination of former Lebanese Prime Minister, Rafik Hariri.



Iranian President Md Khatami welcomes Syrian Prime Minister Md Najji Otri before their meeting in Teheran. — AFP

“I’m going to withhold judgment until we find out what the facts are,” Mr Bush said at a news conference and endorsed an international investigation into Hariri’s assassination.

The president repeatedly chose the language of negotiation over intimidation. He said that “some of the behaviour in the Middle

East is unacceptable” referring to Iran’s alleged pursuit of nuclear weapons and support by Iran and Syria of terrorist organisations.

But he emphasised diplomatic solutions. “There’s a lot of progress that can be made,” he said. Mr Bush dodged several questions about potential new penalties against Syria.

Iran doesn’t have nukes: Putin

MOSCOW Feb. 18 — Russian President Mr Vladimir Putin today said that he is convinced that Iran does not have nuclear weapons and that he plans to visit that country. He also said Russia would continue its nuclear cooperation with Teheran. Moscow has helped Iran build a nuclear reactor, a project that has been heavily criticised by the USA, which fears it could be used to help Teheran develop nukes. He was speaking at a meeting with Iran’s National Security Council chief Mr Hasan Rohani.

He “hoped that Iran will adhere to all international agreements in relation to Russia and the international community”. — AP

US hails Indo-Pak bus deal

By Chidanand Rajghatta/TNN

Washington: The US has welcomed the bus agreement between India and Pakistan, describing it as a significant breakthrough, amid some stray and discordant war rhetoric from Islamabad.

A Pakistani cabinet minister has startled sub-continent watchers by suggesting that war with India is the only option to resolve the Baglihar water issue. Education minister Javed Ashraf Qazi was reported to have made the remark in the Pakistani legislature on the eve of external affairs minister Natwar Singh's visit to Islamabad.

"What is the option?" Qazi, who is also the former chief of ISI, was reported to have asked opposition parties in the Senate earlier this week. Without waiting for their reply, he is then reported to have said "war is the only option."

A state department official said Qazi's remark was "disturbing" but took a charitable view of the episode saying he must have been playing to the galleries. Qazi will be visiting Washington next month when the administration can better ascertain his views on the matter. Under Qazi's watch, Pakistan has also rejected US education aid to reform madrassas, even as Islamabad has desperately sought more arms.

Qazi's inexplicable remark was not the only discordant note during Singh's Pakistan visit, despite the gloss of the bus agreement. Analysts here noted that Singh and his counterpart Khurshid Kasuri issued separate individual statements—apart from a brief joint statement on the bus agreement—that were striking for their differing tone and emphasis.

► **Peace hopes back on tracks: Natwar, Page 14**
► For more, log on to www.timesofindia.com

THE TIMES OF INDIA

19 FEB 2005

US points finger at Syria for Beirut bombing

White House To Turn Up Heat, UN Security Council To Discuss Attack Today

By Steven R. Weisman

Washington: The Bush administration, condemning the assassination of former prime minister Rafik Hariri in Lebanon, suggested on Monday that Syria was to blame and moved to get a new condemnation of Syria's domination of Lebanon at the UN Security Council.

American and European officials also said the administration was studying the possibility of tougher sanctions on Syria, effectively tightening penalties imposed in May, when Washington said the Syrian government had failed to act against militant groups in Israel and against a supply line from Syria to the insurgents in Iraq.

"We condemn this brutal attack in the strongest possible terms," said Scott McClellan, the White House spokesman, adding that the killing was "a terrible reminder that the Lebanese people must be able to pursue their aspirations and determine their own political future free from violence and intimidation and free from Syrian occupation".

American officials said the killing was an ominous development on two counts: first, because it raised concern that Lebanon could plunge back into the civil war that it suffered throughout the 1980s, and second, because it underscored growing American impatience with the role played by Syria in the Middle East.

McClellan and other administration spokesmen said they had no concrete evidence of Syria's involvement in the killing of Hariri, a prominent opposition leader and critic of Syria's role in Lebanon, who died along with at least 11 others when a car bomb blew up next to his motorcade in Beirut.

And in fact the Syrian foreign minister, Farouk al-Sharaa, speaking at a news conference in Damascus, also condemned the attack.

But the target of the American criticism was unmistakable, as several officials condemned Syria's role in Lebanon as part of their comments on the attack.

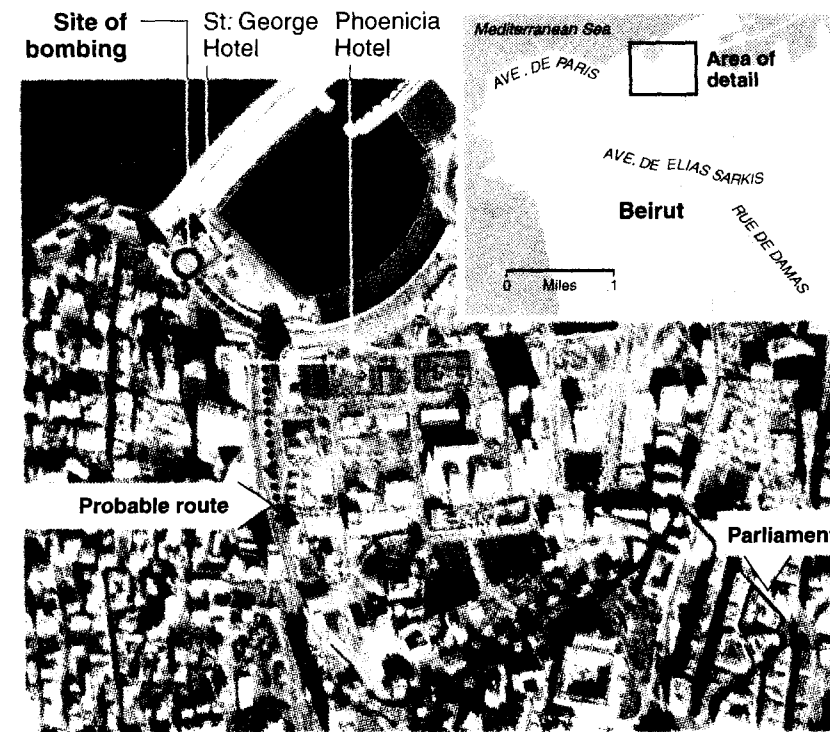
"We're going to turn up the heat on Syria, that's for sure," said a senior State Department official. "It's been a pretty steady progression of pressure up to now, but I think it's going to spike in the wake of this event. Even though there's no evidence to link it to Syria, Syria has,



A man puts a poster of slain Lebanese ex-PM Rafik Hariri in his car in Beirut on Tuesday

BOMB ON THE WATERFRONT

Rafik Hariri, the former prime minister, was killed when a car bomb exploded as his motorcade approached the St. George Hotel. Hariri had been at the Parliament earlier in the day.



The New York Times; satellite image from Space Imaging Middle East

by negligence or design, allowed Lebanon to become destabilised."

At the UN, the Security Council

called for a meeting on Tuesday to discuss the bombing, but there was some doubt that the Council would vote to

condemn Syria by name. In a resolution passed last year to condemn Syria's role in Lebanon, Syria was not specifically mentioned; there was only a reference to foreign forces in Lebanon.

Syria has effectively controlled Lebanon since it moved troops into the country in 1976, at the outset of the civil war. In 1981 Syria forced the Beirut government to sign a treaty declaring that Syria would play the dominant role in its foreign policy.

In the view of American

trying to rebuke Iran, signalling that American tolerance of such behavior was diminishing. On the other hand, there are few sanctions available that the US has not already imposed on Syria.

Western diplomats have sometimes suggested that Syria is "low-hanging fruit" in the campaign against terrorists: a nation that could be punished by further isolation and sanctions because its economy is in poor shape. Iran, by contrast, is awash in oil revenues, and the difficulties of mounting an international campaign against it are becoming increasingly obvious as

Europeans call for engagement with Iran rather than confrontation.

Lebanon mourns

Beirut: Lebanon was in mourning the day after five-time prime minister and billionaire tycoon Rafiq Hariri was assassinated here in a huge bomb blast that stoked fears of fresh sectarian strife 15 years after the end of the civil war.

Lebanon's anti-Syrian opposition quickly blamed the governments in Beirut and Damascus of responsibility for the assassination of Hariri, who was killed along with at least nine other people when the explosion ripped through his motorcade. About 100 people were also wounded in the blast that left a trail of carnage and devastation in a busy seafront area in scenes reminiscent of the 1975-1990 war.

The attack plunged Lebanon into grief and raised worries about the stability of the country, which is treading a delicate path between its Sunni, Shiite and Christian communities. Relatives of Hariri said his family would hold a private funeral ceremony on Wednesday. Agencies

analysts, Syria has in turn done the bidding of Iran, using Syrian territory to support Hezbollah, a major presence in Lebanon, and other Islamic groups that have attacked Israel.

The US has focused mounting attention on Iran in recent weeks, both because of its suspected nuclear arms program and because of its support of groups trying to disrupt a peaceful resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

A Western diplomat said the US, in condemning Syria's possible role in the Beirut attack, may also be

however, administration officials say Last May President Bush barred virtually all American exports to Syria, except for food and medicine, and barred flights between Syria and the US, except for emergencies. The treasury department also moved to freeze assets of Syrians with ties to terrorists, lethal weapons or the Lebanon occupation.

Administration officials have raised the pressure on Syria since President Bush's inaugural address and the Congressional testimony of Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice during her confirmation hearings, when she called Syria one of several "outposts of tyranny" in the world. NYT News Service

16 FEB 2005

Rumsfeld praise for Iraqi forces

A USO WEB AD-1

Associated Press
Mosul, February 11

DEFENCE SECRETARY Donald Rumsfeld, observing Iraqi security forces in action Friday, declared, "there's no question progress has been made" in securing the war-torn nation for building a new government.

At Camp Victory outside of Baghdad, Rumsfeld watched an Iraqi counter-terrorist team assault a compound in a demonstration that included live weapons fire, stun grenades and a squad of masked commandos rappelling from a helicopter.

"The professionalism of these units is advancing," Rumsfeld said of Iraqi forces.

In talks with soldiers, both Iraqi and American, Rumsfeld emphasised the importance of handing over security to Iraqi forces so American troops can come home. But he acknowledged that it takes time to train

Response Team, a special police assault unit, fired AK-47s and sidearms at targets on a firing range outside of Baghdad.

After the demonstration, he told them, "If you all do your jobs well, you'll end up in a fine country with a bright future."

After a review of an Iraqi army unit, Lt. Gen. N. Abadi, Iraq's deputy chief of staff, told US defence officials that Iraq's military needed two things: more equipment, and time to get his forces trained.

Bakery, mosque attacked

Meanwhile, armed men sprayed gunfire into a crowd at a bakery in a mostly Shia neighbourhood in Baghdad on Friday, killing 11 people, the police said. Meanwhile, a car bomb exploded outside a Shia mosque 45 miles northeast of Baghdad, killing 13 and injuring more than 40, a police official and witnesses said.



REUTERS
US defence secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld leaves Iraq's interim PM Iyad Allawi's headquarters in Baghdad on Friday.

have earned.

Ultimately, American forces can only help, he said. "It is the Iraqis who will have to over time defeat the insurgency."

Later on Friday, with Rumsfeld watching a few feet away, members of Iraq's Emergency

Reconnecting across the Atlantic

By Vaiju Naravane

“OH, SHE was sugar and spice and all things nice, but wait until the outer coating wears off. What will we find underneath, the same American arrogance, the same inability to consider or even listen to views opposed to their own,” asked Irene, a doctoral student at the French Institute of Political Science (Science-Po) where U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice extended an olive branch to the French, saying the time had come to open a “new chapter” in transatlantic relations damaged in the wake of the war on Iraq.

In somewhat more measured, ponderous language, Francois Heisbourg, who heads the Paris-based Foundation for Strategic Research described Dr. Rice's speech as “a very real change in atmospherics.” But that, he said, did not mean the Americans and the Europeans had a common project. “There is no point in trading insults. It's better to bury the hatchet. But that does not signify our differences have gone away.”

His view was echoed by Guillaume Parmentier, head of the French Centre on the United States: “The speech and its tone was very good. But it was not strong on perspective and did not go beyond the usual messianic calls for spreading freedom around the world.”

The European media dubbed the simultaneous diplomatic initiative undertaken by Dr. Rice and U.S. Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, now in the French Riviera town of Nice for an informal meeting of NATO Defence Ministers, as “operation charm.” Dr. Rice trotted out all the required conciliatory phrases, newspapers commented, but did this new, softened tone indicate a genuine change in substance and policy or was it just a tactical response prompted by the difficulties encountered in Iraq?

Dr. Rice's trip was precisely timed and aimed at giving the message that Europe continued to remain a major plank in President George W. Bush's foreign policy. Iraqi elections and the fig leaf of “democracy” in that battered country made it easier for the French to receive her with open arms. The French establishment is ecstatic at this new turnaround in relations. Dr. Rice had wished to “punish” the French for their opposition to the war, and French industry has suffered economically despite

Does Condoleezza Rice's new, softened tone towards the French indicate a genuine change in the substance of U.S. policy or is it just a tactical response prompted by the difficulties encountered in Iraq?

stout official denials. The most telling approval of Dr. Rice's visit came from Ernst Antoine Selliere, the chief of the French industrialists' association, who said it was time to forget the past and get on with the essentials — trade and commerce.

Dr. Rice's and Mr. Rumsfeld's European visits also prepared the ground for President Bush's trip to Europe later this month. While there is continued opposition to sending troops to Iraq on the part of NATO member-states that opposed the war, in the face of Washington's softer approach, Germany, France and the UAE have offered to train Iraqi personnel outside Iraq. Their earlier refusal to allow their officers to be deployed in Iraq effectively scuttled a NATO training programme for Iraqi officers agreed upon last year.

Dr. Rice's tough comments on Iran barely hours after she left Paris and Mr. Rumsfeld's renewed demands for more troops, money and equipment however made it clear that this is a need-based turnaround, not a policy change at all.

Dr. Rice chastised the Europeans (represented by France, Britain and Germany) who are conducting negotiations with Teheran, aimed at convincing Iran to accept stricter IAEA controls and eschew its uranium enrichment programme, for not brandishing the United Nations Security Council referral. Although U.S. officials say they support the EU initiative, Washington has resolutely stayed out of the negotiations. And Europeans fear that even if they were to persuade the Iranians to give up their enrichment programme, Washington's real intentions, which are of a belligerent nature, would torpedo their success.

“This is not a process that is going to be solved by the Europeans alone,” IAEA director Mohamed El-Baradei said. “The United States needs to be engaged. If Washington continues to say they are going to fail, it will become a self-fulfilling prophecy.”

Differences over Iraq and Iran, environmental and trade issues aside,

analysts feel the transatlantic relationship has been so badly damaged that any attempts to paper over the cracks at this late stage are bound to fail. The Europeans (not just those who opposed the Iraq war but members of the Coalition of the Willing as well) are beginning to realise that Washington's policy of pre-emptive war is in reality one of preventive war — without a requirement of warning of an imminent attack. Most Europeans do not share this view and the Coalition of the Willing has since been eroded by the dangers present in the Iraq situation and the fact that no weapons of mass destruction (WMD) were found. At a deeper level, the U.S. and Europe do not see eye to eye on issues of sovereignty, legitimacy and intervention. They therefore see a unilateral attack by the U.S. against a sovereign state, howsoever repressive in its domestic policies, as illegitimate.

Since the end of the Cold War, the conditions governing the Euro-U.S. alliance (military interdependence, unity in crisis and agreed use of force) have undergone such fundamental changes that it is absurd to talk of “mending” the transatlantic relationship. Europe and America have increasingly divergent foreign policy priorities. The European view is more regionalist and globalist, while Washington's perspective is hegemonist. The immediate consequence of this is that foreign policy is less pivotal in the transatlantic relationship.

The old Euro-Atlantic order has to be transformed taking into account new convergent interests while marginalising divergences. For, all things considered, the core of the relationship, dominated by a commitment to democracy and capitalistic free enterprise, remains intact. The economies of Europe and America are now so intertwined that political differences will perforce have to be dissolved in the higher interest of commerce. Outside NAFTA (the North American Free Trade Agreement) a third of all U.S. exports are to Europe, while the EU accounts for

over 60 per cent of all direct foreign investment into the U.S.

There is immense frustration within Europe at its inability to develop a strong defence arm and a cohesive foreign policy. Until Europe develops such a capability, it will not be in a position to meet the U.S. as an equal partner. Europeans will have to demonstrate greater willingness to carry the burdens of peacekeeping, not just in Europe but beyond its boundaries. This means Europe will have to extend its strategic vision beyond its own geographic confines. In return, Washington must demonstrate an increased willingness to give Europe a greater, if not equal, voice and show its commitment to international treaties — something the Bush administration has systematically and deliberately ignored.

The Iraq war marked a turning point in transatlantic relations. But differences over the war only hastened a process that had begun with the collapse of the Soviet Empire. The real source of transatlantic conflict is America's role as a global hegemon and the accompanying power imbalance between America and Europe. U.S. foreign policy pundits feel that America's hegemony is unlikely to be either curtailed or threatened. Their arguments are familiar: America's power — technologically, militarily, economically and financially — dwarfs everyone else. America continues to instrumentalise NATO to its own big power ends. But it is likely that the disenchantment that has crept into European voices in the wake of the Iraq war (particularly the noises emerging from supporters such as Britain, Poland, the Czech Republic and Italy) could lead Europe towards greater efforts at counterbalancing American hegemony.

President Jacques Chirac's renewed calls for an independent defence capability within Europe that fell on deaf or indifferent ears a year ago are receiving greater attention now. Mr. Bush's policies and personal style, the way he puts forth his views, his religious fervour, and his simplistic worldview have aggravated the existing fissures between Europe and the U.S. The U.S. misadventure in Iraq, now largely seen as a failure, and preparations for a distasteful and unwelcome strike against Iran or Syria, have begun to turn the tide against blind adherence to its dictates.

HD-17 Europe not firm with Iran, charges Rice

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By Valju Naravane

PARIS, FEB. 9. After a charm offensive in Paris on Tuesday that managed to soothe ruffled French feathers and laid a tentative new base for a renewed trans-Atlantic dialogue between Paris and Washington, the U.S. Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice, was back to pugilistic form today accusing the Europeans of not being firm enough with Iran over the nuclear issue.

In an interview to be broadcast by the ultra conservative TV channel Fox News, Dr. Rice said the Europeans had failed to impress upon Iran the real threat of U.N. sanctions.

"The international community has got to be certain to speak with one very tough voice to the Iranians that it is not going to be acceptable for Iran to build a nuclear weapon under cover of civilian nuclear power. The Iranians need to hear that if they are unwilling to live with verification measures... then the Security Council referral looms. I don't know that anyone has said that as clearly as they should to the Iranians."

Major issue

The negotiations over Iran's suspected nuclear ambitions have been a major issue throughout Dr. Rice's eight-nation tour of Europe, her first trip as chief U.S. diplomat since taking over from Colin Powell last month.

The Europeans have expressed frustration that the U.S. has kept a relatively low profile in the talks with the Islamic republic while making what are seen as veiled threats about the possibility of military action.

In Paris on Tuesday, however, there was a clear deployment of operation charm with the French and Americans trying hard to mend broken fences.

Dr. Rice's speech at a venerable political science institute drew lavish praise from the French President, Jacques Chirac, who stressed the importance of Franco-American cooperation and urged maintenance of a "constructive dialogue."

She promised to work in partnership with the Europeans on a variety of issues, from West Asia peace to terror, but did not once refer to the March 2003 invasion of Iraq or mention Saddam Hussein.

The Foreign Minister, Michel Barnier, took to heart Dr. Rice's call for the opening of a "new chapter" in Franco-American relations, saying: "Today the time has come to open a new phase, to start a new chapter, to start in a new way within this very old relationship and to start in this new way to write this new chapter."

Cautious approval

The French press gave cautious approval to this somewhat overdone gesture of goodwill. "Can we trust Rice" asked the daily *France Soir*. The Left leaning *Liberation* applauded an excellent "performance" but asked if Dr. Rice could "walk the walk." The *Republique du Centre*, a major regional daily said the task of re-forging a constructive and positive relationship still lay ahead.

The conservative daily *Le Figaro* was among the most positive saying the time had come to bury the hatchet and conclude a crisis whose "prolongation would bring even greater difficulties."

Opinion polls published here just prior to Dr. Rice's visit showed that the French animosity and suspicion of the Bush administration remains as high as ever. Over 70 per cent of those questioned disapproved of Mr. Bush and his policies.

Rice to Iran: Accept EU deal

Khatami firm on nuke future

Brussels, Feb. 9 (Reuters): US secretary of state Condoleezza Rice urged European allies today to get tougher with Iran, highlighting continuing policy differences despite her call for a new chapter in transatlantic relations.

Rice held talks with Nato foreign ministers and was due to visit the EU after saying Iran should be warned it faces referral to the UN Security Council for possible sanctions unless it accepts an EU deal on its nuclear programme.

"(The) Iranians need to hear that if they are unwilling to take the deal, really, that the Europeans are giving ... then the Security Council referral looms," she told Fox News.

"I don't know that anyone has said that as clearly as they should to the Iranians," she said in a comment intended not only to pressure Tehran but also to spur the three main European powers to be firmer in their negotiations with Iran.

British Prime Minister Tony Blair played down any division with Washington over Iran, telling parliament in London. "We are pursuing the policy of engagement which we have conducted with France and Germany — and with US' full support."

Blair took a step towards the US view of the Islamic Re-

public pleas for the Bush administration to bolster the EU's leverage by getting involved in the bargaining and offering incentives of its own for Iran to end uranium enrichment, which Washington says are part of a secret drive to build a bomb. Iran denies the charge.

The EU has, meanwhile, rebuffed US pleas to reverse course on plans to lift an arms embargo on China this year.

Rice's first stop was at Nato, the transatlantic military alliance whose members disagreed over the Iraq war and are still willing to give only limited collective support for the US-led operation in Iraq, mostly by training Iraqi officers.

Diplomats said both Washington and Brussels appeared to be preparing the ground for a possible failure of the talks.

A senior state department official, who asked not to be named, said: "We are giving them the chance (to get Iranian compliance). We appreciate their efforts, good for them. But if the Iranians don't take the opportunity, then we have to be talking of the alternatives."

The policy splits could undermine Rice's appeal yesterday in Paris for an end to the US-European rift over the Iraq war — an appeal that was well received in France.



Condoleezza Rice at a music school in Paris. (AFP)



Mohammad Khatami

atomic energy programme. But Khatami, echoing tough comments by other Iranian officials in recent days, said Iran would never halt enrichment — which can be used to make weapons-grade fuel — and indicated Iran's patience with the EU talks was wearing thin.

"We consider enrichment our clear right and will never give it up. We suspended it voluntarily to show our goodwill," he said.

Tehran, Feb. 9 (Reuters): No Iranian government, present or future, will give up the country's drive to master peaceful nuclear technology, including uranium enrichment, President Mohammad Khatami said today.

In a toughly worded speech to foreign ambassadors in Tehran, Khatami also warned Iran could adopt "a new policy" which would have "massive consequences" if Iran's nuclear talks with the EU did not prosper.

"We give our guarantee that we will not produce nuclear weapons because we're against them and do not believe they are a source of power. But we will not give up enrichment — which can be used to make weapons," Khatami said. "Neither my government nor any other government could be accountable to the nation for compromising over halting this technology," he added.

Iran denies US accusations that it is developing nuclear arms under cover of a civilian

FEB-13 12:50 PM
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U.S. to send peace monitors to West Asia

By Atul Aneja

MANAMA, FEB. 7. The U.S. Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice, ended her visit to Israel and the West Bank today, after stating that a "security coordinator" was being appointed for the region and pledging a \$40-million aid package for the Palestinian Authority.

Dr. Rice, accompanied by the Palestinian Authority President, Mahmoud Abbas, said at a news conference in Ramallah that the U.S. would also send peace monitors, signalling Washington's intent to get actively involved in the Israel-Palestinian conflict. Earlier, Dr. Rice had told CNN, "If there can be a period of calm in which there is no fighting, the most important elements will be to have some monitoring of that situation". A CIA-led group was in the past involved in a monitoring mission, but withdrew in 2003 after three Americans were killed in Gaza.

Dr. Rice reiterated that the U.S. was committed to Palestinian independence.

"Don't undermine him"

Mr. Abbas, on his part, said Palestinians were abiding by their commitments under the internationally-backed "road-map for peace," and "we hope the Israeli side will do the same."

Asked whether the unofficial ceasefire undertaken by militants would last, he said: "I believe everyone is committed to



The U.S. Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice, and the Palestinian leader, Mahmoud Abbas, in Ramallah on Monday. — AFP

this ceasefire and they showed this in the past few days."

During talks with the Israeli Prime Minister, Ariel Sharon, Dr. Rice said Israelis must do their bit to support Mr. Abbas. She said Israeli leaders must convey to the Palestinians that non-violence produces results. "Don't undermine him," she warned, while referring to the

PA President.

Besides, Dr. Rice stressed that the Israelis must not take any steps to change the situation in East Jerusalem — the area occupied by Israel from Jordan in 1967, and which the Palestinians see as their future capital. Mr. Sharon, in his response, stressed that Israel would give Mr. Abbas a chance, but his

country's response in the future would depend on how effectively the Palestinian leader worked to ensure Israeli security. Mr. Sharon said he would not be satisfied with a ceasefire alone. The Palestinians, he emphasised, must take action to dismantle militant groups and the infrastructure that generates violence.

"U.S. will pull out if new Iraqi regime wants it"

Feb. 19
By Amit Baruah

NEW DELHI, FEB. 4. The United States would "comply" with any request from a new Iraqi Government to pull out its forces from Iraq, the U.S. Ambassador to India, David Mulford, pledged today at a joint press conference with the Iraqi Charge d'Affaires to India, Muayad S. Hussein.

The press conference itself was a novel one, with Mr. Mulford travelling to the 21, Prithviraj Road residence of Mr. Hussein

The last press conference was that of the former Iraqi Ambassador to India, Saleh Al-Mukhtar, who had lambasted U.S. designs on Iraq.

Today, the American and Iraqi flags flew together in the Iraqi Ambassador's residence as Mr. Hussein and Mr. Mulford stood together to extol the virtues of the just-concluded elections for a constituent assembly in Iraq.

According to Mr. Mulford, American troops would remain in Iraq for some more time till their job was done.

He also referred to the recent statement made by the U.S. President, George W. Bush, that Washington had no plans of its own to pull out of Iraq.

Troops needed: Hussein

On his part, Mr. Hussein committed a new Iraqi government to retaining American troops. He argued that in the "present security scenario" American forces were required for "some more time."

"I am confident that even the opponents in Iraq are not demanding immediate withdrawal of the foreign forces. They want a time-table for the pull-out of these forces, which cannot be decided at this time," he told presspersons.

In defence of his position, Mr. Hussein claimed that foreign troops in Iraq were present for security and not for political reasons.

The presence of these forces, he maintained, was necessary to "avert civil war" in Iraq. No government in Iraq would be able to deal with this situation on its own.

Asked if the new Government would take on the task of trying the former President, Saddam Hussein, the Iraqi official said that he was from the past. "We don't even want to be reminded of his name," he said.

About Indian assistance to Iraq, Mr. Mulford said that such cooperation would be an issue for the new government in Baghdad and the Government of India. Mr. Hussein felt that Iraq would like to learn from the experience of Indian democracy.

"In [the] new Iraqi scenario, there are lots of opportunities for the Indian business community who can re-establish their old position. India had been very actively involved in constructing [the] Iraqi economy during last several decades.

"Indians have long experience in working in that region and Iraq can benefit from their expertise in various fields: construction, engineering, oil exploration and information technology ... today economy drives politics ... " he added.

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Attack on Iran not on agenda, says Rice

Associated Press
London, February 4

US SECRETARY of state Condoleezza Rice on Friday said a US attack on Iran "is simply not on the agenda," despite the United States' continued criticism of Iran's human rights record and suspected nuclear weapons ambitions.

Rice would not say whether the US supports a change of government in Iran, although deputy secretary of state Richard Armitage has expressly said that regime change is not the US goal.

Speaking in London, first stop on a weeklong tour of European capitals, Rice said there is broad international agreement that Iran cannot be allowed to use a civilian nuclear power project to conceal a weapons programme.

After a meeting with British foreign secretary Jack Straw,

Rice was asked directly whether the US might attack Iran. Doing so could presumably head off the threat that Iran could use a nuclear device against Israel or other nations.

"The question is simply not on the agenda at this point," Rice said at a news conference.

Rice said "We believe particularly in regard to the nuclear issue that while no one ever asks the US president to take all his options, any of his options off the table, that there are plenty of diplomatic means at our disposal to get the Iranians to finally live up to their international obligations."

She called the Iranian human-rights record "abysmal." A day earlier, however, Rice had said the Iranian regime's behaviour in that area "is something to be loathed."

London is the site of a one-day conference in March to help the Palestinian govern-

ment build democratic institutions. En route to London on Thursday, Rice indicated the US may take a back seat for now in the international effort to bring Israel and the Palestinians closer to a lasting peace. Rice said she does not

plan to attend next week's West Asia summit meeting in Egypt, although she will be close by for talks in Jerusalem and the West Bank.

"Not every effort has to be an American effort," Rice said. "It is extremely important that the parties them-

Beware of cunning Britain, says cleric

IRAN'S SUPREME leader on Thursday said Bush's policies toward Iran would fail.

"America is like one of the big heads of a seven-headed dragon," Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said in Tehran. "The brains directing it are Zionists and non-Zionist capitalists who brought Bush to power." A top Iranian cleric too warned the government to

beware of UK in Tehran's nuclear negotiations with three European powers, saying it was trying to force it to give up sensitive technology.

"The English are the father of the Great Satan," Ayatollah Ahmad Janati said after Friday prayers, using the term hardliners employ to describe the US.

AFP, Tehran

selves are taking responsibility. It is extremely important that the regional actors are taking responsibility."

She said the US welcomes Egypt's help in hosting the summit and called it one of several hopeful signs for peace.

West Asia peace is one of the main topics for Rice's discussions with European leaders over the coming week, as is Iran. She will visit eight European capitals and the Vatican, with a weekend side trip to see the Israeli and Palestinian leaders.

In stops in Berlin later on Friday and Paris next week, she may run into opposition to the US-led war in Iraq. Iran's nuclear ambition is also expected to be a topic of discussion with Europeans who are trying to head off nuclear weapons development.

It is not clear how much international support there is for any potential action against Iran. The Europeans have offered Iran technological and financial support, and have hinted at a trade deal if weapons development stops. The Bush administration has been cool to the European diplomacy, preferring economic sanctions against Iran.

At her Senate confirmation hearings last month, Rice said the US wants "a regime in Iran that is responsive to concerns that we have about Iran's policies, which are 180 degrees antithetical to America's interests."

Earlier, Rice met British Prime Minister Tony Blair for talks on Iraq and West Asia.

Blair and Rice were having a 90-minute breakfast meeting at 10 Downing Street in her first meeting with a foreign leader since taking over from Colin Powell at the helm of US diplomacy last week.



REUTERS
Tony Blair greets Condoleezza Rice before the start of their meeting at 10 Downing Street, London, on Friday.

Social security on Bush agenda

PTI and AP

WASHINGTON, Feb. 3. — Laying out his second-term agenda, US President Mr George W. Bush, in his annual State of the Union address, pledged to confront governments that promote terror and pursue weapons of mass destruction. He also hailed the success of elections in Iraq as proof of democracy's march.

Mr Bush promised to persist with endeavours for ushering in peace in West Asia, including an offer of \$350 million in aid to Palestinians.

For the first time since 9/11, Mr Bush spent most of his speech on domestic affairs, largely on his plan to change the 70-year-old national pension system known as Social Security, which is very popular with Americans. He challenged a hesitant Congress to take political risks to "strengthen and save" Social Security, saying it was headed for bankruptcy without changes and pledged to work with it to find the most effective combination of reforms. He ruled out the raising of Social Security taxes. Democrats, however, criticised Mr Bush's proposal to divert Social Security revenues into private investment accounts saying it was dangerous.

Ruling out "an artificial timetable" for leaving Iraq, Mr Bush said USA and its allies will withdraw only when Iraqi nationals are ready to defend their country.



Mr George W Bush is applauded by Vice-President Mr Dick Cheney and Speaker Mr Dennis Hastert on Thursday. — AFP

"We will not set an artificial timetable for leaving Iraq as that would embolden terrorists and make them believe they can wait us out," he said.

Observing that the goal of having two democratic states, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace, "is within reach," he said USA will help them achieve it. He nudged key allies, Saudi Arabia and Egypt, towards greater freedom for their people.

Iraq erupts again

BAGHDAD, Feb. 3. — Insurgents struck back after a post-election lull, waylaying a minibus carrying new Iraqi army recruits, firing on Iraqis heading for work at a US base and gunning down an Iraqi soldier in the capital, officials said today. Two US Marines were killed in action. At least 20 people, including the Marines, died in the fresh wave of violence starting yesterday night. — AP

Bush warns Syria and Iran over terror

Julian Berger
Washington, February 3

PRESIDENT GEORGE BUSH issued clear warnings to Syria and Iran that they were next in his sights in his declared mission to spread democracy around the world.

The state of the Union Address to Congress had been billed as reconciliatory, but, along with a series of references to alliances and international initiatives, there were some blunt words.

After recounting the fall of the Taliban in Afghanistan and Saddam Hussein in Iraq, Bush said, "There are still governments that sponsor and harbour terrorists, but their numbers have declined. There are regimes seeking weapons of mass destruction, but they are no longer without atten-

tion and without consequence."

The President then singled out Syria, which he said "still allows its territory and parts of Lebanon to be used by terrorists who seek to destroy every chance of peace in the region. We expect Syria to end all support for terrorists and open the door to freedom," he said, to heavy applause from members of Congress. He turned to Iran, which he said "remains the world's primary sponsor of terror" and he issued a direct message to Iranians to stand up to the clerical regime in Tehran.

He said the US was working with European states to make clear to Tehran it must give up its uranium enrichment programme, but he also signalled a much broader agenda, aimed at the ultimate removal of the clerical regime itself.

Bush declared "to the Iranian people, I say tonight, 'As you stand for your own liberty, America stands with you.'"

He heralded the start of a "new phase" in the Iraq occupation, in the hope of shifting US military efforts from fighting the insurgency to training Iraqi troops. However, he rejected calls for a timetable for withdrawal. "While our military strategy is adapting to circumstances, our commitment remains firm and unchanging."

In a clear indication Bush has no intention of allowing his radical presidency to lose momentum in its second term, he used the speech to outline an ambitious agenda both at home and abroad. It included a call to restructure the federal pension scheme to allow for private accounts, a step towards the President's ideal of an

"ownership society", and a pledge to create a tax code that was "easy to understand and fair to all".

In a significant nod to his Christian conservative supporters, he vowed support for a constitutional amendment banning gay marriage "for the good of families, children and society".

Bush committed the US to engage diplomatically in the Middle East, claiming that a permanent peace based on independent Palestinian and Israeli states was "within reach" with US help.

"The goal of two democratic states, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace is within reach — and America will help them achieve that goal," Bush said. "It's a rejection of the status quo and a call for something better," said Frank Luntz, a Republican pollster and analyst. "Like



George W. Bush and First Lady Laura Bush arrive for the State of the Union Address to Congress in Washington on Wednesday.

him or not, you have to acknowledge there is a Bush doctrine." The President's speech carried echoes of the "freedom speech" he delivered a fortnight ago, but it went into specifics, laying out a blueprint for the next four years.

The Guardian

AP

US jets flying over Iran to spot potential targets

WSJ
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Guardian News Service
Washington, January 29

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THE US is increasing pressure on Iran by sending military planes into its airspace to test the country's defences and spot potential targets, according to an intelligence source in Washington.

The overflights have been reported in the Iranian Press and head of Iran's air force Brigadier-General Karim Qavami declared recently he had ordered his anti-aircraft batteries to shoot down any intruders, but there have been no reports of any Iranian missiles being launched.

"The idea is to get the Iranians to turn on their radar, to get an assessment of their air defences", an intelligence source in Washington said. He said the flights were part of the Pentagon's contingency planning for a possible attack on sites linked to Iran's suspected nuclear weapons programme.

"It makes sense to get a look at their air defences, and also makes the *mul-lahs* nervous during the EU negotiations (over suspension of Iranian uranium enrichment)", said John Pike, head of GlobalSecurity.org, an independent military research group.

The flights come after reports of American special forces' incursions into Iran. However, former US intelligence officials have said they believe the incursions are being carried out by Iranian rebels drawn from the anti-Tehran rebel group, the Mujahedin-e-Khalq, under US supervision.

30 JAN 2005

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

Bush goes soft on ending tyranny

S. Rajagopalan

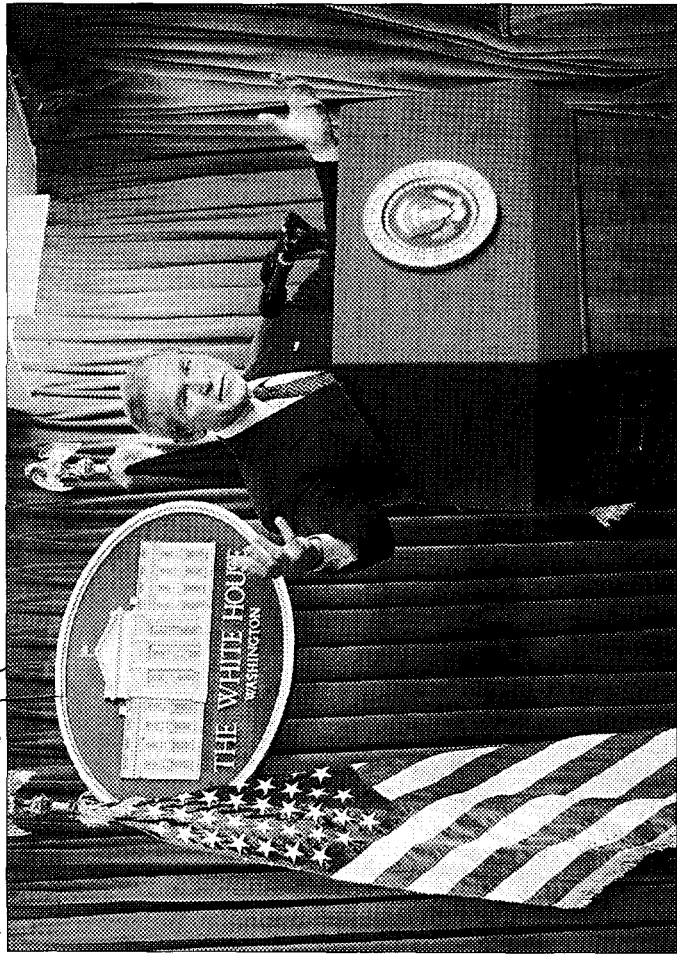
Washington, January 27

US PRESIDENT George W. Bush has softened his pitch on ending tyranny and spreading freedom around the world, saying that he has only set out "a long-term goal" that will require "the commitment of generations".

The clarification of sorts over his inaugural address last week came in the wake of concerns in some world capitals that Bush II's foreign policy could assume an aggressive tenor on the issue of freedom, democracy and human rights. "Obviously we're discussing a process... Not every nation is going to immediately adopt America's vision of democracy, and I fully understand that. But we expect nations to adopt the values inherent in a democracy," Bush said at a White House news conference on Wednesday.

He scotched speculation of a foreign policy shift and said his pronouncement "reflects the policy of the past, but it sets a bold, new goal for the future". During his inaugural on January 20, Bush had declared: "All who live in tyranny and hopelessness can know: the US will not ignore your oppression, or excuse your oppressors. When you stand for your liberty, we will stand with you."

Pundits interpreted it as a signal of policy shift and wondered what would be-



US President George W. Bush during a Press conference in the White House on Wednesday. AFP

come of the US's relations not only with countries like China and Russia, but with allies like Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Egypt as well. At his Press conference, Bush stressed that there won't be anything like instant democracy and went on to say that the US itself was "a work in progress" on this score. "We declared all people equal, and yet, all people weren't treated equally for a century. We said, everybody counts, but everybody didn't count."

Rice takes over as Secy of State

WITH A smile and a wave, Condoleezza Rice took over on Thursday as America's 66th secretary of State to confront an agenda laden with difficult and potentially explosive foreign policy problems. At the top is a grinding war in Iraq that has taken the lives of more than 1,400 US troops. Echoing Bush's inaugural theme, she told a large gathering of State Department employees, "The US will stand for freedom and for liberty. It's great to be here." "My door will be open," she said. During Senate confirmation hearings last week, Rice was strongly challenged on Iraq and the war.

AP, Washington

Zhao funeral to be held on Saturday

THE FUNERAL of purged Chinese leader Zhao Ziyang will take place on Saturday, his family and the government said on Thursday, but his official legacy looks set to remain in limbo.

"It's happening on the 29th, that's true," said a family member who did not want to be identified.

The State Council Information Office confirmed the funeral would be held at 9 am on Saturday at the Babaoshan Revolutionary Cemetery in western Beijing but stopped short of saying which officials would attend.

Hong Kong-based Information Centre for Human Rights and Democracy quoted Zhao's daughter Wang Yan-nan as saying the family was expecting more than 1,000 people to attend Zhao's funeral. Security has been intensified to prevent some mourners attending the ceremony. Witnesses said China has detained dozens of people before the event, some of whom have been severely beaten.

Zhao, who was premier and head of the communist party in the 1980s, died aged 85 on January 17. He was purged for opposing the military crackdown on the 1989 Tiananmen Square pro-democracy protests in which hundreds were killed.

AFP, Beijing

28 JAN 2005

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

Problems ahead in Iraq, admits U.S. envoy

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BAGHDAD, JAN. 24. The U.S. Ambassador to Iraq acknowledged serious problems ahead of next weekend's election but offered assurances that "great efforts" were being made so every Iraqi can vote.

A U.S. soldier was killed on Saturday on a security patrol in Mosul, the military said on Sunday. Large explosions and heavy gunfire also were heard in eastern Mosul late on Sunday.

The U.S. and Iraqi officials fear more such attacks in the run-up to the January 30 election and have announced massive security measures to protect voters. Iraqis will choose a 275-seat National Assembly and provincial councils in the 18 provinces in the first nationwide balloting since the fall of Saddam Hussein in 2003.

"The Iraqis will be — will be just fine," the U.S. Secretary of

State nominee, Condoleezza Rice, told reporters on Sunday at the White House. "They're starting a process and this is an important step, a first step for them in this democratic process."

In a series of interviews Sunday on American television talk shows, the U.S. Ambassador, John Negroponte, acknowledged an increase in rebel intimidation of Iraqi officials and security forces and said serious security problems remained in the Sunni Triangle north and west of Baghdad.

Zarqawi aide held

Iraqi forces have captured one of the Al-Qaeda allies Abu Musab al-Zarqawi's top bomb-makers in Iraq, said the Prime Minister's spokesman today.

Sami Mohammed al-Jafi, known as Abu Omar al-Kurdi, is

accused of being behind some 32 car bombings since the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq, he said.

Kurdi was arrested on January 15 but his capture was announced now, just a week before Iraq's landmark elections.

Suicide car bomb

A suicide driver detonated a car bomb at a guard post outside the Iraqi Prime Minister's party headquarters in Baghdad on Monday, injuring at least 10 persons. The Al-Qaeda affiliate in Iraq claimed responsibility a day after its leader declared all-out war on democracy.

Mortar rounds slammed into an Iraqi National Guard camp near Baghdad International Airport on Monday, as the rumble of distant explosions reverberated through the capital. — AP, AFP, Reuters

THE HINDU

United States and the world

By Hamid Ansari

IT WAS billed as 'the liberty speech.' George W. Bush, beginning his second term as President, said: "It is the policy of the United States to seek and support the growth of democratic movements and institutions in every nation and culture, with the ultimate goal of ending tyranny in our world." Enemies of freedom the world over were put on notice and American resolve asserted in words that bore the imprint of John Kennedy, perhaps even of Rousseau. The President also revealed his intent and limitations by being repetitive, and by ignoring subjects demanding attention — freedom from want, human security, freedom of choice, respect for law, and regard for international community. So will U.S. policy and conduct be different in the next four years?

Observers like Professor John Gaddis and others had hoped that the second term would provide for midcourse corrections. The speech gives no clue of it. A hand is held out to allies but without diluting the prescriptive intent. The new Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice, has stressed the need for diplomacy but refrained from defining the contents of a possible new approach. Continuity rather than change may therefore well be the new order.

If so, what insiders like Deputy Secretary for Defence Paul Wolfowitz say needs to be noted. "Our military expeditions to Afghanistan and Iraq," he wrote in a Memorandum on May 20, 2004, "are unlikely to be the last such excursions in the global war on terrorism. We may need to support an ally under attack by terrorists determined

to replace the legitimate government; we may need to effect change in the governance of a country that is blatantly sustaining support for terrorism; or we may need to assist an ally who is unable to govern areas of his own country"; hence the need for "effective intelligence preparation of the battlefield in the years preceding hostilities."

The Memorandum appointed a special Task Force on 'Transition to and from Hostilities.' Answers to specific questions were sought: "Are there techniques and technologies

ion," and said a global strategy of communicating ideas was essential if "the global battle for ideas" was to be won. It recommended steps that "will greatly improve the ability of the United States to communicate with and thereby influence worldwide audiences."

While the bulk of the Report is focused on the use of informational and cultural means to further the strategic objectives in a new situation, Chapter 2 offers an interesting analysis of the perceptions in the "Arab-Muslim world," beginning with the

hostile to the U.S." and instead of preaching Western values to the Muslim world, the effort should be to reassure them that America does not require submission to "the American Way."

The operational parts of the Report draw upon private sector marketing and political campaigning techniques to differentiate between individual preferences and group impulses and to "target those who support, or are likely to support, our views based on their own culture, traditions and aspirations about such things as personal control, choice and change, personal mobility, meritocracy, individual rights (and, particularly, women's rights)." America, in a word, "must adopt the strategies and tactics of the insurgent, not the incumbent: waging a proactive, bold and effective U.S. strategic communication effort." This would include promotion of "a more robust dialogue within Islam" since "driving a wedge between moderates and extremists is a top strategic priority." The Report altogether is candid and clinical in its diagnosis, simplistic in its preoccupation with marketing techniques, noteworthy in its myopia on the cure for anti-Americanism.

"We will persistently clarify the choice before every ruler and every nation" — and make reforms the test of relationship — said the President. Such an agenda can lead to turmoil. Is this the American intent? Does America have the capacity to contain it? Is the agenda altogether altruistic?

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

Continuity rather than change may well be the mark of the second Bush administration's foreign policy.

assertion that in a war of ideas for hearts and minds, delivering a message to an audience should be preceded by listening to it to ascertain the "language, symbols, and images that resonate with the target audience."

The Task Force does so unambiguously: "American direct intervention in the Muslim world has paradoxically elevated the stature of and support for radical Islamists, while diminishing support for the United States to single-digits in some Arab societies."

The Report also points to the deficit of political legitimacy in many countries; as a result the weight of numbers is in favour of those who oppose the regimes that, in turn, are supportive of the U.S. "Thus it is incumbent on the U.S. strategic information campaign to first find a way to address this near unanimity of Muslim opinion

APD-1
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Cheney admits to Iraq mistakes, yet harps on Iran ^W ^W ^(u) ^W ^W ^{Ami}

By Sridhar Krishnaswami

WASHINGTON, JAN. 21. The U.S. Vice-President Dick Cheney, has acknowledged that he had miscalculated on how quickly the Iraqis would be able to recover from the regime of Saddam Hussein and run their own country.

"I think the hundreds of thousands of people who were slaughtered at the time including anybody who had the gumption to stand up and challenge him made the situation tougher than I would have thought. I would chalk that one up as a miscalculation where I thought things

would have recovered more quickly," he told a talk show. His admission was aired just a few hours ahead of the inauguration of the President, George W Bush.

Top of threat list

Mr. Cheney said Iran was on top of the threat list in West Asia and it was sponsoring terrorism against Americans.

He said it was involved in building a "fairly robust" nuclear programme. He warned that Israel "might well decide to act first" if the U.S. and its allies failed to resolve the standoff diplomatically.

"Given the fact that Iran has a stated policy that their objective is the destruction of Israel, the Israelis might well decide to act first and let the rest of the world worry about cleaning up the diplomatic mess afterwards," he said.

"We don't want a war in the Middle East (West Asia), if we can avoid it." In his inaugural address, Mr. Bush did not mention Iran but said the U.S. would fight for those seeking freedom from "rulers of outlaw regimes." There is fear in some quarters that Mr. Bush in his second term will use military force against Iran.

Parties in U.S., despair elsewhere

By Robin Cook

INAUGURATION DOES not do justice to the exuberant celebrations of this week. Coronation would come closer. Washington ended Thursday with nine official balls. The night before, George W. Bush gave a new spin to the phrase moveable feast by fitting in three separate banquets. He then expended as much ordinance in peppering the sky over the Capitol with fireworks as would get his occupation forces in Iraq through 24 hours.

The contrasts between this uninhibited triumphalism and the real world are as wide as the American continent. One visible contrast was provided by the demonstrators camping out on the streets to protest such extravagant waste by an administration waging its own 'jihad' on programmes against poverty on the grounds that the federal budget cannot afford welfare. On Thursday, Mr. Bush gave a new spin on welfare cuts by presenting them as progress to an ownership society. The thousands of wealthy donors to the campaign to re-elect the President who turned up at those dinners adore this concept of an ownership society in which they get hefty tax cuts paid for by the poor who get their budgets cuts.

Then there is the sharp contrast between the self-indulgent hubris of the festivity and the fragile political victory it celebrated. Mr. Bush was re-elected by the smallest margin in 100 years of those Presidents who won a second term. His approval ratings this week are the lowest ever plucked by any President at the date

Iraq was the flagship project of the Bush administration and has turned into its greatest disaster. Thursday's jollities cannot conceal the brutal truth that they neither know how to make the occupation succeed nor how to end it without leaving an even worse position behind. And, God help us, thanks to the unshakeable loyalty of Prime Minister Tony Blair, we are left trapped in Basra shamed by the latest pictures of prisoner

dent that if he broke Iraq he would own the process of putting it back together again.

Perhaps wisely, those who crafted Thursday's inauguration speech hit the erase button any time the word Iraq crept into the text. Sinai and the Temple Mount got walk-on parts to provide biblical flavouring, but no lo-cation of contemporary controversy in the region got a mention. The only hint in the speech that there might be a war going on was a reverential reference to the sacrifice and service of U.S. troops. Piquantly, at this point the television cameras cut away to a shot of Dick Cheney looking suitably solemn, neatly reminding the informed viewer of the humbug of a President and Vice-President thanking U.S. troops for facing dangers in Iraq which they took care to avoid for themselves in Vietnam.

Not that Iraq was unusual in being left out of the script. There were no specifics about anything else, either. Instead, we were invited to drift along with a stream of generalities, untroubled by hard problems or real-world solutions.

Freedom and liberty are universal values. The founding fathers of the U.S. Constitution, admirable though they may have been, do not hold patent rights over those concepts. They are embedded in the roots of the separate tradition of European social democracy and we must not let George Bush appropriate them to provide an ideological cover for his new imperialism. — ©Guardian Newspapers Limited 2005

The Bush administration is in denial about its disastrous failure in Iraq.

abuse and dependent for any shift of strategy on decisions taken in Washington by an administration that has repeatedly ignored British advice since its first monumental blunder of disbanding the Iraqi army.

A successful search for a new strategy can only start with a recognition that the present strategy has comprehensively failed. But the Bush administration II that took office on January 20 is stuffed with people who are in denial about the dire situation of their forces occupying Iraq. In the couple of months since election day, Mr. Bush has promoted the very people who thought conquering Iraq was a good idea and eased out anyone with a record of worrying about the consequences. Thus Condoleezza Rice, who was author of the alarmist claim that Saddam Hussein could produce a mushroom cloud, replaces Colin Powell, who warned the Presi-

of all between the smug complacency of the administration over its electoral victory and the disastrous military failure of its adventure in Iraq. Since Mr. Bush was re-elected, over 200 more U.S. soldiers have been killed in Iraq. Each new day brings another 70 attacks on the occupation forces as the territory dominated by the insurgents expands and the area the occupiers can safely patrol shrinks. This week, a senior Kurdish leader, although a supporter of the occupation, admitted that for a lot of its citizens, "the Iraqi Government exists only on television."

The lawless background to the coming elections has imposed new dimensions to the concept of a secret ballot. Most candidates will remain a secret lest they are assassinated. Polling stations are kept secret lest they are blown up before the election day in a week's time.

Iran tops trouble list: US

Cheney worried Israel might 'act first'



Dick Cheney at an inaugural ball. (AFP)

Washington, Jan. 21 (Reuters): Vice-president Dick Cheney said yesterday that Iran was at the top of the administration's list of world trouble spots and expressed concern that Israel "might well decide to act first" to eliminate any nuclear threat from Tehran.

"You look around the world at potential trouble spots, Iran is right at the top of the list," Cheney said in an interview aired on MSNBC on the day that George W. Bush was sworn in for a second four-year term as President.

Cheney, one of the chief architects of the Iraq war, said the administration would continue to try to use diplomacy to address what he said were serious concerns about Iran's nuclear weapons programme and ties to terrorism.

The administration has also accused Iran of interfering in the affairs of neighbouring Iraq.

If Iran resists demands to rein in its nuclear programme, Cheney said the next step would be to take the matter to the UN Security Council and seek international sanctions "to force them to live up to the commitments and obligations."

Cheney described Iran's nuclear programme as "fairly robust." Iran denies its nuclear facilities are to be used to make weapons. Cheney, who was a leading advocate for the Iraq invasion, said one concern was that Israel might act against the Iranians "without being asked."

"If, in fact, the Israelis became convinced the Iranians had significant nuclear capability, given the fact that Iran has a stated policy that their objective is the destruction of Israel, the Israelis might well decide to act first, and let the rest of the world worry about cleaning up the diplomatic mess afterwards," Cheney said.

Israel set a precedent for such action in 1981 when it sent warplanes to destroy Iraq's French-built Osiraq reactor, seen as the key to President Saddam Hussein's nuclear ambitions.

Bush twirls through 9 balls but is home by 10



President George W. Bush dances with his wife Laura at an inaugural ball in Washington. (Reuters)

Washington, Jan. 21 (Reuters): President George W. Bush capped the first night of his second term yesterday with a whirlwind tour of nine inaugural balls and an early return home at 10.03 pm.

In a scene repeated throughout the evening, the President arrived to applause, thanked revellers in packed ballrooms and then took a quick spin around the stage with First Lady Laura Bush, who wore a blue-and-silver evening gown by designer Oscar de la Renta.

Bush quipped that this was perhaps the first time he had danced with his wife in the last four years. After a brief spin, the couple headed on to the next ball. Conveniently, six of the nine balls were held at the Washington Convention Center.

Not known for keeping late hours, Bush was back at the White House just after 10 pm, close to his usual bedtime and 82 minutes ahead of schedule.

Vice-president Dick Cheney kept up the early-night theme in an appearance at the "Texas-Wyoming" ball, before the Bush party arrived.

9/11 shapes Bush II's global goals

The New York Times
Washington, January 21

ANALYSIS

EIGHT WORDS near the very beginning of President Bush's inaugural address well define the speech and perhaps his presidency: "And then there came a day of fire."

Those nearly biblical words, used to describe the horrific events of 9/11, lay the foundation for a foreign policy mission as ambitious as any offered by an American President since Woodrow Wilson implored his countrymen to "make the world safe for democracy".

The tragic moment of terrorism, etched in the memory of most Americans, shaped the President's first term, his domestic and global priorities and his campaign for re-election. It shaped Thursday's security-laden inauguration, conducted under a no-fly zone crowded with fences, cement barricades and thousands of police.

And Bush made plain in his 21-minute speech that it will shape the remainder of his time in office. "We have seen our vulnerability," Bush said, calling the spread of freedom the "one force of history" that can prevent another such tragedy.

Bush did not elaborate on how he would pursue "the expansion of freedom" around the globe. There was no mention of Iraq, where Bush took the nation to war nearly two years ago. Nor did he mention Iran or North Korea, which along with Iraq he once branded "the axis of evil."

Yet the global aims and security priority of a man who once campaigned for a more "humble" American foreign policy were on dis-

play for the entire world.

"From the day of our founding, we have proclaimed that every man and woman on this earth has rights, and dignity, and matchless value, because they bear the image of the maker of heaven and earth," Bush declared.

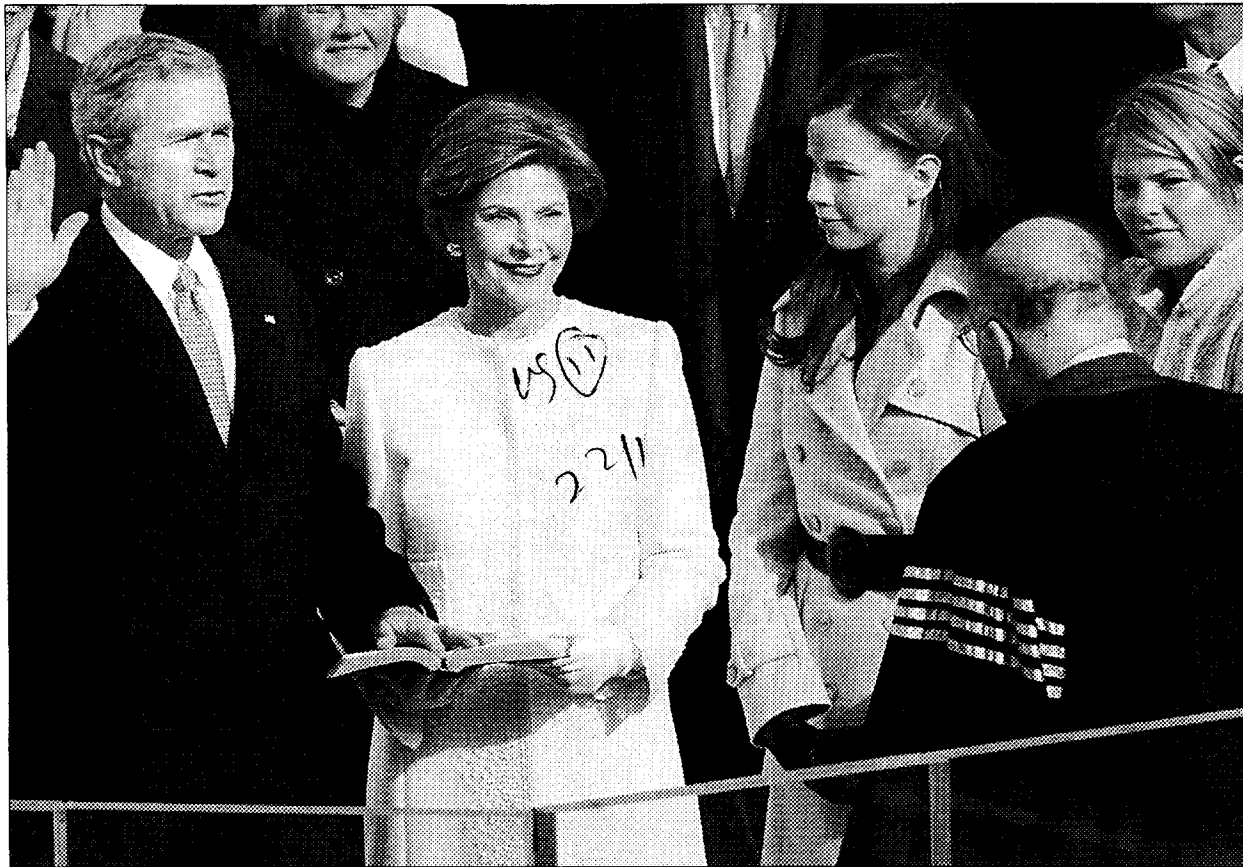
"Advancing these ideals is the mission that created our nation. It is the honorable achievement of our fathers. Now it is the urgent requirement of our nation's security and the calling of our time."

Using the declarative language that is his oratorical style, Bush spoke of nothing less than the "survival of liberty," "breaking the reign of hatred" and achieving "the ultimate goal of ending tyranny in our world."

Bush has long acknowledged the profound effect the terrorist attacks had on his worldview.

"September the 11th changed me, and it changed my outlook about how to protect you, about how to do my duty to protect the American people," Bush said on the eve of his re-election in November. "Ever since that day, I wake up every morning trying to figure out how to better protect our country."

It was September 11 that provided soaring public approval — and for many, legitimacy — for a president who had lost the popular vote. It was the justification for attacking Afghanistan, enhancing police powers at home and restructuring the nation's intelligence apparatus, and it was among the often-cited motives for invading Iraq.



Clockwise from left: President George W. Bush takes the oath of office from Chief Justice William Rehnquist (right) with First Lady Laura Bush, and his daughters Barbara and Jenna at his side at the US Capitol in Washington; Bush dances with the First Lady at the inaugural Freedom Ball at Union Station in Washington DC; members of the Veterans for Peace hold coffins draped with American flags during a protest in Miami on Thursday.



Pageantry and pomp sweep in second term

GEORGE W. Bush doesn't like to drink, dance or party late into the night.

But at least he danced, sort of, as he and first lady Laura Bush gamely made their way through 10 Inaugural Balls, where 50,000 victorious Republicans waited hours to see them twirl for a few seconds on Thursday night.

Over and over, beginning shortly after 7, the Bushes arrived at a ball, said a few words, usually danced a bit, waved, and were off to the next one. Unlike some of his predecessors, Bush keeps to schedules. And the schedule called for the first couple to be back at the White House by 11:25 p.m., just in time for *Nightline* and almost two hours after the President's usual bedtime.

"I love my wife, Laura, and I'm looking forward to dancing with her — maybe for the first time in four years," Bush joked at the Constitution Ball, where the orchestra played *Laura*, the theme song from the 1944 movie.

Bush's aversion to these mob scenes is well known, but there are some things a President just has to do. Inaugural organisers added two more balls than in 2001, nine official and one unofficial. The latter honoured Medal of Honour recipients. "I can't tell you how much confidence I have in the members of our military," Bush said.

USA Today, Washington



REUTERS

Mock coffins and jeers

FLAG-DRAPED COFFINS and jeering anti-war protesters competed with pomp and circumstance on Thursday at the inauguration of President George W. Bush along the snow-dusted, barricaded streets of central Washington.

As the President's motorcade made its way from the Capitol to the White House amid the tightest security in inaugural history, thousands of protesters along the parade route and nearby downtown streets booed, chanted slogans and carried placards condemning Bush's policies at home and abroad. Some turned their back as the President drove slowly past. Others yelled, "George Bush, you can't hide. We charge you with genocide." One group of protesters carried hundreds of mock coffins to remind Americans of the mounting casualties in Iraq.

Reuters, Washington

A reserved First Lady begins to open up

The New York Times
Washington, January 21

SHE SITS on a red damask settee in the White House Map Room. Her gray pinstriped pantsuit is soft and perfectly put together, and so is she.

But even a brief visit with Laura Bush as she anticipates the second inauguration of the man she married on the promise that she would never have to make a political speech reveals some of the complexity that

ripples just beneath her surface calm.

The book on her night table these days? The "really, really wonderful" *Essays of E.B. White*, that gentle liberal. Her favourite topic of campaign conversation with her mother-in-law last year? "We loved to complain about various media." Institutions or individuals? "All."

In her own careful way, she began revealing more of herself on the campaign trail last year — with results that only seemed to help

both her and President Bush. She said she did not find attacks on Sen. John Kerry's record in Vietnam particularly unfair, dismissed questions about her husband's National Guard record as "obviously political", and let it be known that Karl Rove's role as political guru was "definitely overstated".

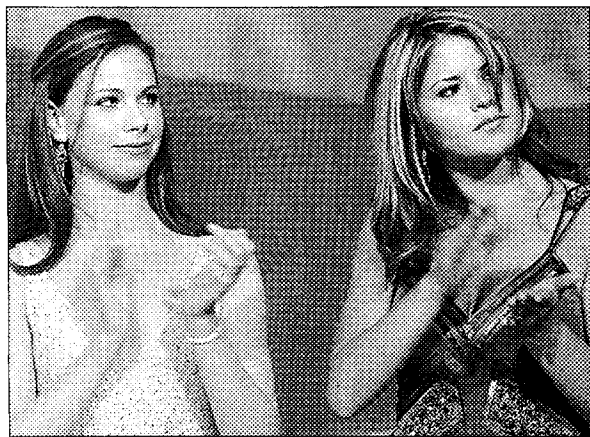
In a 45-minute interview with reporters in Washington the other day, she continued the trend, allowing that she hates it when people suggest that her hus-

band "doesn't like to read or, you know, whatever". So is she a more complicated, interesting, opinionated person than she is inclined to let the world see? "That's true," she said, then added, "No, I'm only kidding."

Carl Sferrazza Anthony, the author of several books on first ladies, predicted that over the next four years, Mrs Bush would be inclined to open up even more, as many of her predecessors did. "Once the second election has been won,

a more authentic vision of a first lady tends to emerge," Anthony said. "She can also walk a little easier, a little less on eggshells, without that constantly looming fear that she'll inadvertently say or do something that the media will turn into a controversy that adversely affects the administration."

Mrs Bush said she intends to continue her efforts to promote books and reading; to focus on cardiac health, especially for women.



REUTERS

President Bush's daughters Barbara (left) and Jenna at an Inauguration Ball at the Washington Hilton on Thursday.

BUSH BEGINS SECOND TERM

"We have obligations difficult to fulfil, dishonourable to abandon"

By Sridhar Krishnaswami

WASHINGTON, JAN. 20. Stressing that freedom in the world is the surest path to peace, the United States President, George W. Bush, formally began his second four-year term taking the oath of office amid serious questions of the wisdom, depth and direction of his domestic and foreign policies.

"In a world moving toward liberty we are determined to show the meaning and promise of liberty," the nation's 43rd President remarked in an address that kept the focus on the meaning of freedom in the world and in the implications of all this to America.

"Our country has accepted obligations that are difficult to

fulfil and would be dishonourable to abandon," Mr. Bush said as he was watched by thousands in the capital city and millions across the nation after taking the oath of office administered by the Chief Justice of the United States Supreme Court, William Rehnquist.

During his address, Mr. Bush also made the point that America did not want to impose "our own style of government on the unwilling," rather that the goal was to help others find "their own voice, attain their own freedom." But the President made it clear that the U.S. would be on the side of the oppressed. "When you stand for your liberty, we will stand with you," he said.

Mr. Bush also had a simple

message to Americans at home — that the fabric of the nation was made up of many races and cultures. "... Our country must abandon all habits of racism. Because we cannot carry the message of freedom and the baggage of bigotry at the same time," he said.

The elder George H.W. Bush and the former Democratic Presidents, Bill Clinton and Jimmy Carter, along with three former First Ladies looked on as Mr. Bush raised his hand to swear that he would faithfully execute the office of President and to preserve, protect and defend the Constitution of the land.

For Mr. Bush, becoming the 16th second-term President goes much beyond the Nine Of-

ficial Inaugural Balls and the \$40 million inauguration expenses tag that comes along with the event. Political observers point to the fact that recent Presidents elected to second terms started with high approval ratings but soon floundered on account of scandals or policy decisions not carefully thought out.

Lowest approval rating

In fact, what has not been lost in all the ongoing hoopla is that Mr. Bush, 58, begins his second term with the lowest approval rating — 49 per cent, according to one poll — at the time of any recent two-term Presidents, with Iraq the biggest concern of the American people. Further, Mr. Bush's three per cent mar-

gin win in the popular vote last November was the lowest of any incumbent President to win re-election.

More than 500,000 people braving the chill weather in the capital witnessed the 55th inauguration of a President, both for the swearing-in on the West Front of the Capitol to the traditional parade along the Pennsylvania Avenue from the Capitol to the White House.

Protests all over

Hundreds of thousands more were protesting all over the country against the President and for a variety of reasons. Demonstrators in the District of Columbia found it quite hard to get close to the inaugural events for reasons of tight security. But

this did not dampen the mood of the protestors who have taken the position that the President has not only turned his back on a number of important issues that matter at home but also embarked on disastrous adventures abroad that threaten national security interests.

Mr. Bush has given every indication that his second term will be driven by domestic issues, which are primarily reforms of social security system, torts and education besides leaving his imprint on the Supreme Court.

And in the realm of foreign policy, the President and his new team will have to find a way out of the mess in Iraq, all of this going back to the decisions of the last four years.

Foreign policy challenges likely to worry Bush

By Jal Taraporevala/TNN



Mumbai: Despite the confidence expressed by the White House, the foreign policy challenges which the Bush administration will face in its second term are likely to increase in scale and complexity.

For instance, even after the elections in Iraq on January 30, the US will have its hands full in countering questions about the legitimacy of the poll exercise, tackling the alienation in parts of the Sunni Triangle and shaping the details of a new Iraqi polity. Washington's so-called war

on terror will continue to be undermined as a result of its preoccupation with events in Iraq, the inability of the Karzai administration in Afghanistan to stamp its authority over vast areas of the countryside, the unwillingness of the US to place pressure on Israel to commence final-status talks with the Palestinians and the failure of Bush to address the underlying political and socio-economic causes of militancy.

Washington will find it difficult to step up the pressure on North Korea on the nuclear issue since the latter has politico-strategic reasons to maintain a tough line on the subject and because Pyongyang is widely believed to have a few crude N-bombs in

the basement. It will also be hard for the US to substantially turn up the heat on Iran despite Tehran's move to temporarily suspend its uranium enrichment programme. After all, the West European powers, which have played a mediation role in this ongoing crisis, have strong reservations about the current US stance and both the moderate and conservative factions in Tehran support the stand of not making further unilateral concessions on the subject.

Besides, the ability of the US to focus attention on its main foreign policy objectives could be weakened by the underlying tensions in such hot spots as Kosovo, South Asia, Congo and the Darfur region of Sudan.

যুদ্ধ-নীতি, না কূটনীতি

কূটনীতি শ্রেয়, না রণ-নীতি? যদি যুদ্ধ না করিয়া, অসংখ্য নিরস্ত্র মানুষের মৃত্যু ও রক্তপাত না ঘটাইয়া, কেবল আলাপ-আলোচনা, দর কষাকষি ও চাপ সৃষ্টির মাধ্যমে জাতিবৈরর সমস্যাগুলি মিটাইয়া ফেলা যায়, তবে তাহার চেয়ে শুভ কর্ম আর কী আছে? কিন্তু শক্তিদ্বারা সর্বদাই কূটনীতির বদলে লাঠি বা তরবারির ভাষায় কথা বলিতে অভ্যস্ত। বর্তমান বিশ্বের মার্কিন যুক্তরাষ্ট্র ব্যতিক্রম নয়। তাহার প্রেসিডেন্ট জর্জ ডব্লিউ বুশ তাই অন্যায়সে 'বেয়াদপ' রাষ্ট্রগুলিকে আমেরিকার বশে আনিতে শক্তিপ্রয়োগ বা যুদ্ধের বিকল্প খোলা রাখার সিদ্ধান্ত ঘোষণা করেন। মার্কিন নির্বাচকমণ্ডলীর সংখ্যাগরিষ্ঠের রায় তাহার যুদ্ধনীতির অনুকূলেই গিয়াছে। কিন্তু একমেরু বিশ্বের অধীশ্বরকে কি কেবল তাহার দেশের জনাদেশ লইলেই হইবে? এ ধরনের অনুমোদনের নৈতিক বৈধতা ব্যতিরেকে মুক্ত দুনিয়া ও অবাধ গণতন্ত্রের সম্প্রসারণে আমেরিকার 'জন্মগত অধিকার'ই বা শিরোধার্য হইবে কেন? ইরানের পরমাণু শক্তি ব্যবহার বন্ধ করিতে জর্জ বুশের হুমকির পাশাপাশি তাহার ভাবী বিদেশ সচিব কন্ডোলিসা রাইস-এর বক্তব্যের বিরোধভাষটি তাই প্রাসঙ্গিক। রাইস আন্তর্জাতিক সমস্যা সমাধানে কূটনীতির পক্ষপাতী। আমেরিকার নিঃসঙ্গতা ও একঘরে দশা ঘূচাইতে তিনি বিশ্বের সহিত স্বগতোক্তি নয়, সংলাপের পক্ষপাতী।

সংলাপ একতরফা হয় না, তাহাতে মতবিনিময়ের অবকাশ থাকে। আফগানিস্তান ও ইরাকে বুশের যুদ্ধ-নীতি যে-অবকাশ রাখে নাই। ইরানের বেলাতেও তেমন সম্ভাবনা বুশ অস্বীকার করেন নাই। ইরান পরমাণু বিদ্যুৎ তৈয়ারির আড়ালে পরমাণু মারণাস্ত্র বানাইতেছে, এই অভিযোগে বুশ প্রশাসন তাহাকে 'শয়তানের অক্ষ'-এর অন্তর্ভুক্ত করিয়াছিল। অভিযোগটি যে আমেরিকার প্রতি বিরূপ ইসলামের ভুবনের প্রতি মার্কিন স্পর্শকাতরতা-প্রসূত হইতে পারে, ইহা বুশ মনে রাখিতেছেন না। সাদ্দাম হুসেনের অস্ত্রাগারে গণধ্বংসের অস্ত্র মজুতের অভিযোগের মতো ইরানের পরমাণু বোমা বানাইবার অভিযোগটিও যে সর্বৈব মিথ্যা নয়, তাহা কে বলিবে? লক্ষণীয় যে অভিযুক্ত ওই 'ইসলামি বোমা' বানাইতে পাকিস্তানের পরমাণু বিজ্ঞানীদের সহায়তা ও প্রযুক্তি পাচারের বিষয়টিকে বুশ প্রশাসন তত গুরুত্ব দিতেছে না। পাকিস্তান তাহার রণনৈতিক অংশীদার বলিয়াই কি তাহার নিজস্ব পরমাণু বোমাকেও ইসলামি বোমা গণ্য করা হইতেছে না? বিশেষত ক্ষেপণাস্ত্র নির্মাণে ইরানকে সাহায্য করার জন্য যখন চিনের বৃহৎ কয়েকটি সামরিক সরঞ্জাম নির্মাতাকে কালো তালিকাভুক্ত করা হইয়াছে?

ইতিহাস কেবল সমসময়ের শক্তিবিন্যাসকে চিরস্থায়ী মনে করে না। ইতিহাসের কাছে, অনাগত প্রজন্মের কাছে জবাবদিহির দায় কাহারও পক্ষেই এড়ানো সম্ভব নয়। জর্জ ডব্লিউ বুশ যদি এখনও তাহার রণনীতির ভুল স্বীকার না করেন, কিছু সমসাময়িক করতালি জুটিলেও ভবিষ্যতে তাহার ও আমেরিকার জন্য অনন্ত অভিশাপ সঞ্চিত থাকিতে পারে। তিনি তাহার নূতন বিদেশ সচিবের পরামর্শ শুনিয়া চলিলেই ভাল করিবেন। তবে কন্ডোলিসা রাইস গত চার বছর বুশের জাতীয় নিরাপত্তা উপদেষ্টা হিসাবে তাহার ইরাক-নীতির কটুর সমর্থক ছিলেন এবং বিদেশ সচিব পদে তাহার পূর্বসূরি নরমপন্থী কলিন পাওয়েলের পরামর্শে বুশ বিশেষ কর্ণপাত করেন নাই। তাই ভবিষ্যৎ খুব আশাপ্রদ নয়। পশ্চিম এশিয়ায় যুদ্ধ ও রক্তপাতের আখ্যানে এখনও যবনিকাপাতের সম্ভাবনা নাই।

DISAVOWAL OF RESPONSIBILITY

WHILE THE FIRST American soldier to be convicted for torturing Iraqi prisoners was unable to convince jurors that he had merely carried out the orders of his superiors, it appears unlikely that officers of higher rank will escape punishment. Commanders of the military units that controlled the Abu Ghraib prison, where the record of abuse first came to light, might soon have to face disciplinary action. Investigators working for the United States Department of Defence are apparently of the opinion that these officers were at fault for not enforcing discipline on the lower ranks even if they did not instigate or condone the abuse. However, it would be a travesty of justice if punitive action is instituted against these middle-level officers while their senior commanders and civilian officials are absolved of responsibility. Official documents unearthed in the course of the investigations reveal that the pattern of abuse extended well beyond Abu Ghraib. Personnel of the various uniformed services tortured and humiliated prisoners in almost all detention centres established by the U.S. in different parts of the world after it launched its war against terrorism." In many instances, the soldiers who carried out interrogations claimed they had been ordered to use whatever means they thought was necessary to gather intelligence. The higher echelons of the military and civilian establishments did not intervene even after the International Committee of the Red Cross and other agencies informed them that prisoners were brutalised from the time the Guantanamo Bay facility was set up in 2002.

There is no evidence that either the U.S. President George W. Bush or any functionary of his administration specifically authorised resort to torture. However, the White House counsel, Alberto Gonzales, and the Justice Department suggested in several legal briefs that the Geneva Conventions as well as U.S. statutes that prohibit

prisoner abuse would not apply in a war against terrorists. (The rationale was that Al Qaeda and the Taliban did not subscribe to these norms.) The term torture was also re-defined to exclude everything but extreme forms of cruelty. Mr. Bush apparently acted on this advice when he sent a message to his commanders that "as a matter of policy, the United States Armed Forces shall continue to treat detainees humanely and, to the extent appropriate and consistent with military necessity, in a manner consistent with the principle of Geneva." In other words, soldiers were told to go by the spirit but not necessarily the letter of the conventions and it was hinted that the prohibitions could be overlooked if they were not consistent with military necessity. Given the ambiguity of this directive on the one hand and the urgent need to collect information about elusive enemies in Afghanistan and Iraq on the other, even senior commanders could have believed that the shackles had been loosened. In this situation, inexperienced regular soldiers and ill-trained reservists would have few benchmarks to follow.

Aghast at these revelations, public-spirited U.S. citizens observed that the litany of cruel treatment not only tarnished the image of their country but also impaired the operations in Iraq. Those Iraqis who passively support the insurgency and who the U.S. would like to win over were likely to have turned even more hostile after they heard about the savagery inflicted on their compatriots. While the Bush administration recently repudiated the opinion tendered by its legal advisors, it is not prepared to pin responsibility for the abuses on any senior official. On the contrary, as exemplified by the decision to nominate Mr. Gonzales for the post of Attorney General, the White House appears determined to brazen its way through this trail of torture and other forms of morally repugnant treatment of prisoners.

US conducting secret missions in Iran: Report

Washington: The United States has been conducting secret reconnaissance missions in Iran to help identify potential nuclear, chemical and missile targets, The New Yorker magazine reported on Sunday.



Seymour Hersh

The article, by award-winning reporter Seymour Hersh, said the secret missions had been going on at least since last summer with the goal of identifying target information for three dozen or more suspected sites.

Hersh quotes one government consultant with close ties to the Pentagon as saying, "The civilians in the Pentagon want to go into Iran and destroy as much of the military infrastructure as possible."

One former high-level intelligence official told The New Yorker, "This is a war against terrorism, and Iraq is just one campaign. The Bush administration is looking at this as a huge war zone. Next, we're going to have the Iranian campaign."

The White House said Iran was a concern and a threat that needed to be taken seriously. But it disputed the report by Hersh, who last year exposed the extent of prisoner abuse at the Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq.

"We obviously have a concern about Iran. The whole world has a concern about Iran," Dan Bartlett, a top aide to President Bush, told CNN's 'Late Edition.'

Of The New Yorker report, he said, "I think it's riddled with inaccuracies, and I don't believe that some of the conclusions he's drawing are based on fact."

Bartlett said the administration "will continue to work through the diplomatic

initiatives" to convince Iran — which Bush once called part of an "axis of evil" — not to pursue nuclear weapons.

"No president, at any juncture in history, has ever taken military options off the table," Bartlett added. "But what President Bush has shown is that he believes we can emphasise the diplomatic initiatives that are underway right now."

Bush has warned Iran in recent weeks against meddling in Iraqi elections.

The former intelligence official told Hersh that an American commando task force in South Asia was working closely with a group of Pakistani scientists who had dealt with their Iranian counterparts.

The New Yorker reports that this task force, aided by information from Pakistan, had been penetrating into eastern Iran in a hunt for underground nuclear-weapons installations.

In exchange for this cooperation, the official told Hersh, Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf has received assurances that his government would not have to turn over Abdul Qadir Khan, the father of Pakistan's atomic bomb, to face questioning about his role in selling nuclear secrets to Iran, Libya and North Korea.

Hersh reported that Bush had already "signed a series of top-secret findings and executive orders authorising secret commando groups and other Special Forces units to conduct covert operations against suspected terrorist targets in as many as 10 nations in the Middle East and South Asia."

Defining these as military rather than intelligence operations, Hersh reported, will enable the Bush administration to evade legal restrictions imposed on the CIA's covert activities overseas. Reuters

US, Indonesia patch up on Byrd Amendment

AMITI SEN
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 16

THE US, which is yet to bring its controversial 'Byrd Amendment' in conformity with World Trade Organisation (WTO) regulations, has reached an agreement with Indonesia on the issue. Indonesia, together with 10 other countries including India, EU, Australia, Brazil, Canada, Chile and Japan had asked the US to repeal the Act as it went against the letter and spirit of the WTO law.

The 'continued dumping and subsidy offset Act', popularly known as the Byrd Amendment, enacted by the US in 2000, directs the US government to distribute the collected anti-dumping and anti-subsidy duties to the US companies that brought the cases.

This gives an unfair edge to the US domestic companies and makes competition for exporting countries paying the

anti-dumping duties stiffer.

Since the US was not taking any measures to change the amendment to make it WTO compliant despite the WTO declaring the amendment non-compliant in 2002, the complaining countries had warned that they would suspend tariff concessions and related obligations extended to the US.

Indonesia, however, seems to have changed its mind after bilateral discussions with the US.

According to the understanding reached between the two countries, Indonesia will not at this stage request authorisation from the WTO's dispute settlement body (DSB) to suspend concessions or other obligations to the US.

If Indonesia at some future date decides to request DSB authorisation to suspend concessions or other obligations, it will provide the US advance notice and will consult it making such a request.

US soldier guilty of Abu Ghraib abuse

Graner faces 15-yr term for mistreatment

Guardian News Service
Washington, January 15

THE ARMY reservist labelled the "primary torturer" of Abu Ghraib was convicted by a military jury yesterday of abusing Iraqi prisoners after a trial the Pentagon hopes will cleanse the reputation of the US military.

After deliberating for less than five hours, the jury of four officers and six enlisted men found Specialist Charles Graner guilty on nine of ten charges of maltreatment, assault and dereliction of duty — charges with a maximum sentence of 15 years.

For the Pentagon, the verdict from the tribunal at Fort Hood army base in Texas could prove instrumental in its efforts to ease America's conscience and soothe the wrath of the Arab world about the abuses at the Iraqi prison.

The decision also supports the contention of the Bush administration that the photographs of naked and cowering Iraqi detainees that emerged from the prison last spring were the work of a small band of rogue soldiers.

Graner was already linked indelibly in the public mind with the most searing images from Abu Ghraib: the burly figure giving a thumbs up sign over a pyramid of naked Iraqi detainees. He was also associated with another image that came to symbolise the abuse: the photograph of his lover, Private Lynndie England, holding a dog leash around the neck of a naked prisoner.



AP
Army Spc. Charles Graner Jr., is followed by reporters after he was convicted at Fort Hood, Texas, on Friday.

"What we have here is plain abuse, no doubt about it. There is no justification," prosecutor Captain Chris Graveline told the jury yesterday in the prosecution's final argument. "It is for sport, it is for laughs. He sends it back home by email for laughs." "Fortunately, he does not have the final word on the abuse at Abu Ghraib. You do, and it will speak volumes."

Graner was described by fellow soldiers and former detainees as a brutal sadist who whistled as he administered beatings — to the point that he broke chairs or

damaged his own hand — and threw prisoners' rations into the toilet.

The court was told Graner forced Iraqi prisoners to masturbate and simulate oral sex, and that he took photographs of a woman prisoner after forcing her to show her breasts.

In the Alpha Tier One cellblock where the abuse captured in the damning photographs took place in November 2003, Graner was described as a mesmerising force. He conducted affairs with at least two women — including Pte England, with whom he fathered a son.

Open skies pact with US soon, India looks for some interim gain

■ For now, Civil Aviation Minister hopes Indian carriers get to fly to more US cities

PRANAB DHAL SAMANTA
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 14

AS India and US begin talks in Washington on signing an open skies agreement, Civil Aviation Minister Praful Patel will hope to seal some immediate gains by increasing the number of US cities to which Indian carriers can operate.

The open skies agreement, which was proposed by the US more than six months ago, is a more far-reaching arrangement that removes all restrictions on number of cities, aircraft or airlines. US has signed such an agreement with 66 countries and hopes to add India to its list at the earliest.

While the Civil Aviation Ministry has indicated that it may take another couple of months before the agreement can be signed, sources said that US Transportation Secretary Norman Y Mineta is expected to visit India next month and Washington hopes to sign the agreement then.

For now, the Indian delegation will seek to remove certain restrictions on the number of flights that can be mounted by Indian carriers

from London to Chicago. Air India, which has been facing problems in increasing services to Chicago, had taken up the matter with the Ministry.

This apart, India will look to add more points of call to the existing list of New York, Newark, Chicago and Los Angeles.



Patel may ink deal next month

Also, the issue of a more liberal code-sharing facility for Indian carriers is an item on Patel's agenda.

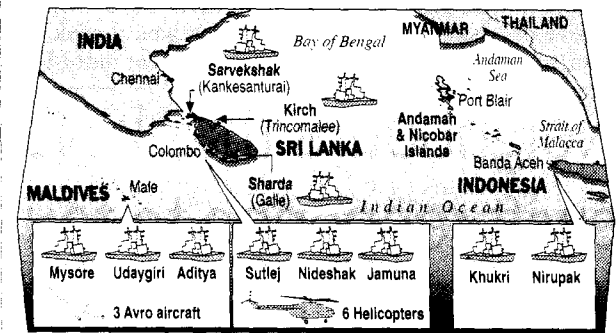
But these measures are largely interim in nature given the prospects that the open skies agreement holds for the future. Some of the salient features of the agreement are:

- Flights to any point in each other's territory
- Enshrining privileges amounting to seventh freedom rights

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Neighbours thank New Delhi for swift response to SOS

■ Indian Navy help timely, says Maldives; Colombo praises IAF



IE Graphics/B.K. SHARMA

SHISHIR GUPTA
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 14

THE speed with which New Delhi responded to its neighbours' call for help in the wake of the tsunami strike has gone down very well with Sri Lanka, Maldives and even Indonesia and officials here believe it will cement ties further.

Maldives' Minister for Defence and National Security Ismail Shafeeu has sent South Block a "thank you" note and Sri Lanka has conveyed its apprecia-

tion through diplomatic channels.

Even before the Crisis Management Group met in New Delhi on December 26, two Indian Navy ships, Kirch and Suttlej, set out for Colombo and Trincomalee with relief supplies following a request from the Sri Lankan government.

It was the same with Maldives. Western Naval Command Chief Vice Admiral Madanjit Singh sent guided missile destroyer Mysore, frigate Udaygiri

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

on the examination curriculum could be taken up later there was an immediate need to introduce a psychological test, aptitude assessment and group discussions. The idea is to see public dealing and general presen-

to be outlined in its Annual Report. Departments would also have to spell out final deliverables to consumers, citizens and the common man and devise mechanisms to evaluate successes.

nel and training, it was suggested.

The Core Group has however warned that validation checks by a high level committee would be necessary to eliminate single-point assessments.

Open skies pact with US soon, India looks for some interim gain

that would allow an airline of either country to carry traffic to any point beyond each other's territory

■ No restriction on tourist and cargo charters

■ Allowing airlines to pick up traffic for intermediate points

The only roadblock could be the US condition for a separate clause on aviation safety. India does not provide for such an exclusive provision as it follows the standard norms

set by the International Civil Aviation Organisation.

These issues will, however, be addressed during the ongoing talks. Following the discussions, both sides would get busy preparing the drafts for the agreement with the objective of having them signed when Mineta visits India.

Another issue which both sides would seek to address is to get more US

airlines to operate directly to India.

Most US airlines have code-sharing arrangements with European carriers and very few of them operate regular flights to India. In contrast, there are 20 non-stop services to China.

Flights to US register 85 per cent booking, indicating a high demand. In 2003, passenger traffic between both countries was 1.5 million.

Neighbours thank New Delhi for swift response to tsunami SOS

and tanker Aditya to Maldives with 50 tonnes of supplies.

In his letter to New Delhi, Shafeeu admits it was only because of the timely arrival of the Indian Navy ships that relief was instantly provided to the southern atoll, totally cut-off from Male.

Air Chief S Tyagi ordered three Avros with relief material to Male and they did 80 sorties. Six helicopters (five Mi-8s and an Mi-17) were placed under the "command" of the Indian High Commissioner in Colombo, Nirupama Rao, for the relief effort in Sri Lanka.

So far, the IAF has lifted 1,800 tonnes of material in Sri Lanka, flown 14,000 pas-

sengers and done 320 sorties. The six helicopters are still available for the relief work and Colombo has conveyed its appreciation to Air Headquarters in New Delhi.

Six ships were sent to the aid of Trincomalee, Kankasanturai, Galle and Colombo. This included hospital ship INS Nirdeshak, still docked at Colombo with a medical support team and an operation theatre.

Two ships, corvette Khukri and medical ship Nirupak, of the Eastern Naval Command went to Banda Aceh in Indonesia, the worst-hit, and returned only this week.

There was some concern in New Delhi after a US diplomat in Colombo men-

tioned that some 1,200 Marines would be landing in Sri Lanka. This led to some diplomatic consultation with New Delhi asking Washington to coordinate relief work and avoid duplication.

South Block's anxiety dissipated once Washington said that not more than 80 Marines would be landing on Lankan soil. It also agreed to coordinate the relief effort.

Foreign Secretary Shyam Saran has sent a letter of thanks to the chiefs of the armed forces. New Delhi considers the Indian Ocean its backyard and hopes to have an area of influence stretching from the Gulf of Aden to the Strait of Malacca

Americans say no to Abu Ghraib

Most object to extreme interrogation tactics

USA Today
Washington, January 13

AMERICANS STRONGLY disapprove of harsh interrogation tactics the US government has used to try to extract information about possible terrorist attacks from detainees held in Afghanistan, Iraq and Cuba, a new USA TODAY/CNN/Gallup Poll says.

The poll, conducted Friday-Sunday, found that sizeable majorities of Americans disagree with tactics ranging from leaving prisoners naked and chained in uncomfortable positions for hours, to trying to make a prisoner think he was being drowned.

Most Americans surveyed also said they believe the abuse and sexual humiliation of Iraqi detainees by US Army reservists at Baghdad's Abu Ghraib prison have damaged the America's reputation as a protector of civil liberties — and made it more likely that US soldiers captured by America's enemies will be tortured.

In part, the results reflect how interrogation methods exposed by the Abu Ghraib scandal have raised questions about the Bush administration's efforts to get information about terrorist plots.

Attorney General-designate Alberto Gonzales — who as White House counsel was a key player in developing the administration's legal strategy against terrorism

White House opposed bar on torture

AT THE urging of the White House, congressional leaders scrapped a legislative measure last month that would have imposed new restrictions on the use of extreme interrogation measures by US intelligence officers. *The New York Times* has reported. The Senate had approved the new restrictions, by a 96-2 vote, as part of the intelligence reform legislation, the article said. They would have explicitly extended to intelligence officers a prohibition against torture or inhumane treatment and would have required the CIA as well as the Pentagon to report to Congress about the methods they were using. In a letter to members of Congress, sent in October, national security adviser Condoleezza Rice expressed opposition to the measure on the grounds it "provides legal protections to foreign prisoners to which they are not now entitled under applicable law and policy."

Reuters, New York

— says the war on terrorism is a unique conflict that has rendered the internationally accepted Geneva Conventions' limits on questioning prisoners "obsolete". Government documents released in recent weeks in response to a lawsuit by the American Civil Liberties Union have revealed that FBI agents witnessed but did not participate in tactics such as leaving prisoners in hot or cold rooms, having female interrogators touch male Muslim captives during religious periods that prohibit such contact, and depriving prisoners of sleep.

Al-Qaida leaders appear to have faced the harshest tactics.

ing naked prisoners in cold rooms was wrong; 85 per cent were against female interrogators touching male Muslim captives during religious observances, and 48 per cent opposed depriving captives of sleep.

The poll's findings suggest that the public wants the administration to reclaim "the moral high ground" in the war on terrorism, as Sen. Lindsey Graham has urged by drawing a line between acceptable interrogation tactics and torture. Ann Beeson, associate legal director of the ACLU, said the poll reveals "a total disconnect" between the public and the administration.

US troops could leave soon

The US might be able to withdraw some troops from Iraq this year if Iraqi forces can take a greater role in security, Secretary of State Colin Powell said on Wednesday. "With the assumption of that greater burden, the burden on our troops should go down, and we should start to see our numbers going in the other direction," Powell said in an interview with National Public Radio. "But I cannot give you a timeline as to when they'll all be home." The Pentagon has increased the number of US troops in Iraq to 150,000 ahead of elections for a transitional national assembly.

Al-Sistani's aides killed

TWO AIDES to Iraq's top Shia leader Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani have been killed in separate attacks, a Sistani representative said on Thursday, deepening fears of sectarian bloodshed ahead of January 30 elections.

Cleric Mahmoud al-Madaeni, Sistani's representative in the ancient town of Salman Pak south of Baghdad, was killed on Wednesday along with his son and four bodyguards.

Another aide, a cleric working in Sistani's office in Najaf, was also found dead on Wednesday. He was not named.

Iraqi officials say a series of attacks on Shia targets in Iraq show that Sunni Muslim insurgents are mounting a campaign to inflame sectarian distrust, which has already been stoked by divisions over the elections.

Reuters, Baghdad



SOUTH EASTERN RAILWAY

Corrigendum

Corrigendum to Tender Notice No. M/Contract/8/KGP/RT published earlier by Sr. Divl. Mech. Engineer, S. E. Ry., Kharagpur is as follows. The cost of tender form/down loaded tender form from S. E. Ry. Mechanical website on above tender notice may please be read as Rs. 1,000/- instead of Rs. 500/- (PR-777/C)

Finally, US gives up WMD hunt

But feels Iraq still unsafe for polls

Agencies

Washington, January 12

THE US has finally given up the search for weapons of mass destruction (WMD) in Iraq, which was cited by the first administration of President George W. Bush as the main reason for invading the country, a report said today quoting American officials, even as Iraqi leaders acknowledged today that parts of the country remain too dangerous to conduct the elections.

"The hunt for biological, chemical and nuclear weapons in Iraq has come to an end nearly two years after President Bush ordered US troops to disarm Saddam Hussein", *The Washington Post* said. "The top CIA weapons hunter is home, and analysts are back at Langley (Virginia)", it added.

In interviews, officials who served with the Iraq Survey Group (ISG) told the *Post* that the violence in Iraq, coupled with a lack of new information, led them to fold up the effort "shortly before Christmas". The move comes four months after Charles A. Duelfer, who led the weapons hunt in 2004, submitted an interim report to Congress that contradicted nearly every asser-

tion about Iraq made by top Bush Administration officials, a senior intelligence official said. The findings will stand as the ISG's final conclusions and will be published this spring, the *Post* said. President Bush, Vice-President Dick Cheney and other top administration officials asserted before the US invasion in March 2003 that Iraq was reconstituting its nuclear weapons programme, had chemical and biological weapons and maintained links to al-Qaida affiliates to whom it might give such weapons to use against the US.

Meanwhile, against a backdrop of ongoing insurgent attacks, foreign minister Hoshyar Zebari told an Egyptian newspaper the elections would go ahead as planned on January 30 but conceded there would be problems in ensuring a nationwide vote.

"The elections won't be perfect, nor organised 100 per cent. There will be problems, but we'll hold them because the majority of the people want them", Zebari said. He told the government newspaper, al-Ahram, that it would be possible to hold voting in 14 of Iraq's 18 provinces, but that, in the four troublesome provinces, efforts would be made to ensure participation.

Quiet end to Iraq WMD search

Associated Press

WASHINGTON, Jan. 12. — The search for weapons of mass destruction in Iraq has quietly concluded without any evidence of the banned weapons that President Mr George W Bush cited as justification for going to war, the White House said today. The Iraq Survey Group, made up of some 1,200 military and intelligence specialists and support staff, spent nearly two years searching for military installations, factories and laboratories whose equipment and products

might be converted quickly to making weapons.

White House press secretary Mr Scott McClellan said there no longer is an active search for weapons. "There may be a couple, a

few people, that are focused on that" but that it has largely concluded, he said.

The Iraq Survey Group, made up of 1,200 military and intelligence specialists and support staff, spent nearly two years searching for the weapons

mentally alter the findings of his earlier report," Mr McClellan said, referring to preliminary findings from last September. Mr Duelfer reported then that Saddam Hussein not only had no weapons of mass destruction on those reports," Mr McClellan said. "A lot of

since 1991, but that he had no capability of making any either. Mr Bush unapologetically defended his decision to invade Iraq.

Mr Duelfer is expected to report on the removal of enriched uranium, a key ingredient in nuclear weapons production, and that the United States was offering jobs to Iraqis engaged in weapons programs, another administration official said on condition of anonymity.

Mr Bush has appointed a panel to investigate why the intelligence information about Iraq's weapons was wrong.

Mosul ambush
BAGHDAD, Jan. 12. — Insurgents ambushed a convoy of American and Iraqi forces in Mosul, killing three Iraqi National Guardsmen, the US military said today.

The troops were bringing heaters and other supplies to a school when they came under attack yesterday, a military statement said. The convoy was first hit with a roadside bomb and then sprayed with gunfire from a nearby mosque. Three members of the Iraqi National Guard were killed and six were wounded. No Americans were reported hurt. — AP

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Pentagon orders review of Iraq strategy 9/1

By Julian Borger

WASHINGTON, JAN. 8. The Pentagon has ordered a comprehensive review of its Iraq strategy in the face of mounting casualties and an increasing strain on the U.S. army and its reserve ranks, it was reported yesterday.

A retired four-star General, Gary Luck, is due to arrive in Iraq next week to conduct an "open-ended" rethink of tactics, troop levels and the training of Iraqi forces, reflecting growing concern in Washington over the resilience of the Iraqi insurgency.

"He will have a very wide canvas to draw on," Lawrence Di Rita, the Pentagon spokesman, told journalists. General Luck is due to report to the Defence Secretary, Donald Rumsfeld, within a month. "We've

always known the insurgents were going to do everything they can to disrupt the elections, and that is going to continue through the elections, and even if the elections are successful, it is going to go through to the spring," said Robert Kilbrew, a retired army colonel and counter-insurgency specialist.

The U.S. President, George W. Bush, said yesterday: "What you're beginning to see is an assessment of how to make sure our policy dovetails with the elections in the post-election period

"And that's precisely why the assessment team is going to Iraq: to make sure that, at this historic moment in the history of Iraq, there is a focused, determined strategy to help the new government to stand up the

forces necessary to defend themselves."

Three weeks before the Iraqi elections, the commander of U.S. ground forces, Lieutenant-General Thomas Metz, conceded that significant areas in four of the country's 18 provinces, Baghdad, Anbar, Nineveh and Salahadin — all Sunni areas — were not secure enough to hold a vote.

A senior U.S. officer in Baghdad warned yesterday that the violence could worsen dramatically.

One of the key issues General Luck will address is the training of Iraqi forces. They represent the key to the U.S. exit strategy, but their numbers and performance so far have disappointed some U.S. commanders. —
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THE HINDU

9 JAN 2005



Charles Graner

Prison abuse soldier goes on trial

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US ARMY Spc. Charles Graner, the accused ringleader of the Iraq prisoner abuse scandal that outraged the world, goes on trial on Friday ready to offer a defence that he was just following orders. Graner and Pvt. Lynndie England, with whom he fathered a child and who is also facing a court-martial, became the faces of the Abu Ghraib prison scandal after they appeared in photographs that showed degraded, naked prisoners.

Graner, 36, a reservist who had worked as a prison guard in the United States, faces 17-1/2 years in prison on charges that include conspiracy to mistreat detainees, dereliction of duty, maltreating detainees and assault. Prosecutors say they plan to introduce photographs, videos of abuses and testimony from about 10 people.

Reuters, Fort Hood

In Aceh, aid has an American face

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Jakarta, Jan. 7 (Reuters) For many of the homeless and hungry in Indonesia's tsunami-devastated Aceh province, when aid comes it comes with an American face, a plus for sometimes rocky US relations with the world's most populous Muslim nation.

But some are wary of the superpower's ultimate intentions toward a country they fear mixes a war against terror with a crusade against Islam, and analysts say Washington must tread carefully to avoid a backlash.

The US has promised \$350 million in aid to the countries affected by the December 26 tsunami, which hit Indonesia the hardest, killing more than 100,000 people and leaving over half-a-million homeless.

Others have pledged more, but Washington was the first to deliver in a big, high-profile way, quickly deploying navy ships and military aircraft to help. US helicopters have flown hundreds of sorties taking desperately needed food and medicine to isolated parts of remote Aceh.

For people on Aceh's hard-hit west coast it's as if "all there is is Chinooks (helicopters) and the US coming in to help, and there's going to be real and long-lasting gratitude there," the International Crisis Group's Sidney Jones, a long-time Indonesian expert, said today. "I am touched at how generous they are, helping us without any thoughts," said Sofyan Ahmad, a pedicab driver said.

US moves have included a trip to Aceh by secretary of state Colin Powell and President George W. Bush's brother Jeb, and lifting of a ban on spare part supplies for Indonesian air force C130s to improve Indonesia's ability to fly in aid.

Foreign ministry spokesman Marty Natalegawa said: "The very prompt and substantial US response... has not only further confirmed what we knew all along in terms of the robust and the very close relationship between the two countries, but has also further enhanced the relationship."

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'AID MAY CHANGE HOW
MUSLIMS VIEW US'

Powell, Jeb in Asia

ANN & AP

JAKARTA, Jan. 4. — US Secretary of State Colin Powell said today that outpouring of American aid and humanitarian help in the tsunami-devastated region may also help Muslims see the USA in a better light.

"What it does in the Muslim world, the rest of the world is giving an opportunity to see American generosity, American values in action," Mr Powell said after meeting with Hassan Wirayuda, his Indonesian counterpart. "It dries up those pools of dissatisfaction that give rise to terrorist activities," Mr Powell added.

The Powell entourage was staying at the Jakarta Marriott that was bombed in the fall of 2003 and has since been rebuilt.

Getting his first up-close look at heavy damage from last week's undersea earthquake and tsunami, Mr Powell visited Thailand's Phuket resort area, a popular tourist destination for European and American beach-goers.

Mr Powell and Florida Governor Mr Jeb Bush saw scores of photographs and posters posted outside the town hall seeking information on missing tourists.

Mr Powell's airplane flew slow and low on its final approach to the airport, giving the secretary a close view of flattened houses

Natwar to meet Secretary

NEW DELHI, Jan. 4. — Mr K Natwar Singh, the external affairs minister, will meet the US Secretary of State Mr Colin Powell, on the sidelines of the Special Asean Summit in Jakarta. The two officials are likely to discuss relief measures because of the tsunami. Mr Powell had spoken to Mr Singh on the phone to express condolences after he received the news of the death of Mr JN Dixit. — SNS

and ruined beaches. He toured an office where American forensic experts are helping Thai officials identify thousands of bodies that washed ashore and said afterward he will recommend expanding US forensic assistance.

Thai officials told Mr Powell what they most want is US help for a warning system in the Indian Ocean and China Sea and Mr Powell pledged American technical help.

"We'll do everything we can to contribute," he said.

Discussing US aid in general, Mr Powell said, "The USA has made a significant financial contribution, but we have done much more than that." With international government donations and pledges totalling some \$2 billion, Mr Powell said a main focus was on spending the money wisely.

5 JAN 2005

THE STATESMAN

US mulls lifetime terror suspect detentions

Reuters
Washington, January 2

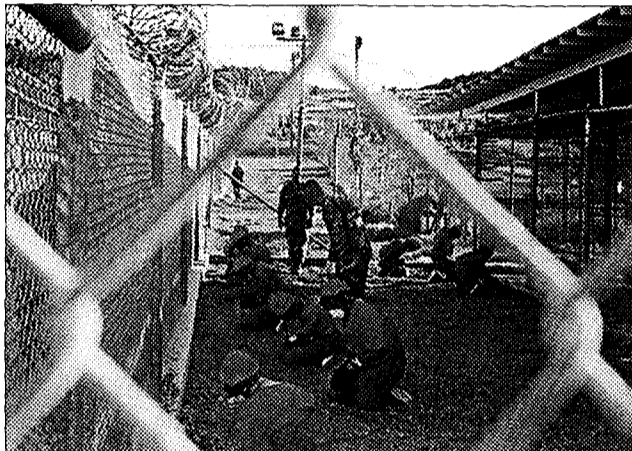
THE BUSH administration is preparing plans for possible lifetime detention of suspected terrorists, including hundreds whom the government does not have enough evidence to charge in courts, *The Washington Post* reported on Sunday.

Citing intelligence, defence and diplomatic officials, the newspaper said the Pentagon and the CIA had asked the White House to decide on a more permanent approach for those it would not set free or turn over to courts at home or abroad.

As part of a solution, the Defence Department, which holds 500 prisoners at Guantanamo Bay, plans to ask the US Congress for \$25 million to build a 200-bed prison to hold detainees who are unlikely to ever go through a military tribunal for lack of evidence, defence officials told the newspaper.

The new prison, dubbed Camp 6, would allow inmates more comfort and freedom than they have now, and would be designed for prisoners the government believes have no more intelligence to share, *The Post* said. "It would be modelled on a US prison and would allow socialising among inmates," the paper said.

"Since global war on terror is a long-term effort, it makes sense for us to be looking at solutions for long-term problems," Bryan Whitman, a Pentagon spokesman, was quoted as saying. *The Post* said the outcome of a review under way would also affect those expected to be captured in the course of future counterterrorism operations. One proposal would transfer large numbers of Afghan, Saudi and Yemeni detainees from the US military's Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, detention centre into new US-built prisons in their home countries, it said.



Terror detainees at Guantanamo Bay in Cuba.

Guantanamo Briton 'in handcuff torture'

A BRITISH detainee at Guantanamo Bay has told his lawyer he was tortured using the "strappado", a technique common in Latin American dictatorships in which a prisoner is left suspended from a bar with handcuffs until they cut deeply into his wrists.

The reason, the prisoner says, was that he was caught reciting the Koran at a time when talking was banned. He says he has also been repeatedly shaved against his will. In one such incident, a guard told him: "This is the part that really gets to you Muslims, isn't it?"

The strappado allegation was one among many made about treatment at both Guantanamo and the US base at Bagram in Afghanistan made to the British lawyer Clive Stafford Smith when he visited his clients Moazzam Begg and Richard Belmar

at the Cuban prison six weeks ago, having tried for the previous 14 months to obtain the necessary security clearance.

But it is clear the disturbing claim is only the tip of the iceberg. Under the rules the US military has imposed for defence lawyers who visit Guantanamo, Stafford Smith has not been allowed to keep his notes of meetings with prisoners, and will not be able to read them again until they have been examined and de-classified by a government censor. He cannot disclose in public anything the men have told him until it too has been de-classified, on pain of likely imprisonment in the US.

Stafford Smith has drawn up a 30-page report on the tortures which Begg and Belmar say they have endured, and sent it to Prime Minister Tony Blair.

GNS, London

3 JAN 2005

'Axis of evil' tops Bush II foreign policy list

Associated Press
Washington, January 2

THE THREE countries President George W. Bush called an "axis of evil" in his first term are at the top of his foreign policy to-do list in the second, along with a revitalised West Asia peace process and continued efforts to repair European alliances frayed by the US-led invasion of Iraq.

War and reconstruction in Iraq are likely to continue to command more attention than any other international issues, at least for the first couple of years of Bush's new term.

"The first priority has got to be getting Iraq right," said Max Boot, a conservative expert on national secu-

rity at the Council on Foreign Relations.

But in the short run, the Bush administration also must juggle a complicated response to the devastation from tsunamis across South Asia amid some international sniping that the rich US is not doing enough.

The massive relief effort — for which the United States increased its financial aid commitment on Friday to \$350 million — is drawing attention away from preparations for elections scheduled for January 30 in Iraq, but the distraction will probably be brief.

Bush pledged to give it plenty of attention, saying in his weekly radio address on Saturday that "we join the world in feeling enor-

mous sadness over a great human tragedy".

On Iraq, the administration will get a real and perceived boost in credibility if elections scheduled there for the end of this month come off well. Boot and others said. Another round of elections is planned for later in 2005. The alternative — protracted turmoil and violence that the US cannot control — would complicate US foreign policy far beyond Iraq. "The odds are in our favour, but defeat is not out of the question," Boot said. "I think it's 60-40 in our direction."

The announcement on Thursday that Iraq's largest Sunni Muslim political party will not participate in the election won't help. The insurgency is believed to draw

military objective; we have considerable trouble securing it," Biden said.

American patience with the war will soon wear thin, and doing the reconstruction job correctly could mean US troops stay in Iraq far longer than the public expects, he said. That leaves two options for Bush as he begins his second term, Biden said. "We muddle through for the next year; declare victory after the second election and leave, and then there would be chaos," Biden said. Or, "level with the American people and tell them we're going to be muddling through for the next four years, or longer".

Bush seemed to acknowledge that Iraq remains Job No. 1 during a year-end news conference.

"We have a vital interest in the success of a free Iraq. You see, free societies do not export terror," Bush said.

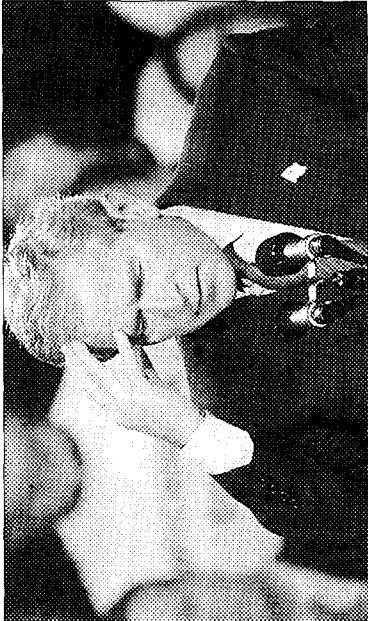
Iran and North Korea, the other two countries in Bush's famous axis, loom nearly as large as Iraq. The US suspects both countries are on their way to possessing nuclear weapons, or already have them. Both have repressive or authoritarian governments that could interfere with their neighbours or worse. US policy in all three nations is yoked to the continuing war on terrorism, since all three are potential training grounds or arsenals for terrorists.

Bush must decide how much to push Iran and North Korea diplomatically; how much to cooperate with

European efforts to contain the nuclear threats; and how much to listen to hawks in his own government who may press for a limited airstrike against Iranian nuclear facilities.

At the same time, Bush may play a central role in the next phase of peace negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians. For now, Britain is taking that lead while all sides await the outcome of January 9 elections to choose a successor to Yasser Arafat.

China will probably also be a major focus of US economic and diplomatic efforts during Bush's next four years, and not just because of its vast size and resources. China could help contain or confront North Korea.



NEW HEADACHE Bush will wage his second terror war.

most of its support from Sunnis, who provided much of Saddam Hussein's former Baath Party membership.

Delaware Sen. Joe Biden, the top Democrat on the Senate Foreign Relations

Committee, said he found the security situation in Iraq worse during a trip in December than on three previous visits since the invasion. "We basically have no trouble achieving any

2 JAN 2005

Will new US memo on torture protect foreign prisoners?

USA Today
Washington, January 1

A PRISONER doesn't have to undergo excruciating pain to be considered a victim of torture, the US Justice Department said. But it's not clear whether this revised, broader definition of torture will change the treatment of foreign detainees.

The White House says the new Justice Department memo defining torture doesn't reflect a change in policy because the administration has always abided by international laws that prohibit the mistreatment of detainees. And critics of the administration, while welcoming the memo, dated Thursday, say policies that seemed to condone abuse of prisoners in Iraq or Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, have already done their damage. "They've been down there for

three years and they've squeezed everything out of these people, despite saying that they were treating them humanely," Mary Cheh, a constitutional law professor at George Washington University, said of those detained in Cuba. The memo's biggest impact could be on next week's Senate confirmation hearings for chief White House counsel Alberto Gonzales, who was nominated by President Bush to replace John Ashcroft as attorney general. Gonzales and other administration lawyers wrote memos that said the President's wartime powers superseded anti-torture laws and treaties. Human rights advocates say those memos effectively condoned abuse and set the stage for the mistreatment of inmates at the Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq and at Guantanamo Bay.

The Justice Department in June

260 detainees freed

THE US military said it released 260 detainees on Saturday after a security review determined they no longer posed a threat. The review board of six Iraqi officials and three senior coalition officers made the decision of releasing the men. More than 9,000 detainees were freed in 2004. The review board set up by coalition forces and the interim Iraqi government began work in August following a torture scandal at the Abu Ghraib prison.

AP, Baghdad

specifically disavowed an August 2002 memo to Gonzales that said cruel, inhumane and degrading

acts may not be considered torture if they don't produce intense pain and suffering. That memo was replaced by the December 30 memo from Daniel Levin, acting chief of the Office of Legal Counsel. It opens by bluntly stating: "Torture is abhorrent both to American law and values and to international law."

The 17-page memo does not address two of the most controversial assertions in the first memo: that Bush, as commander-in-chief in wartime, had authority superseding anti-torture laws and that US personnel had legal defenses against criminal liability in such cases.

Levin said those issues need not be considered because they "would be inconsistent with the President's unequivocal directive that US personnel not engage in torture."

But the new document contradicts the previous version, saying to-

rture need not be limited to pain "equivalent in intensity to the pain accompanying serious physical injury, such as organ failure, impairment of bodily function, or even death."

Instead, the memo concludes that anti-torture laws passed by Congress equate torture with physical suffering "even if it does not involve severe physical pain" but still must be more than "mild and transient suffering." That can include mental suffering. The White House said on Friday that the US has operated under the spirit of the Geneva Conventions, which prohibit violence, torture and humiliating treatment.

"It has been US policy from the start to treat detainees humanely and in accordance with the Geneva Conventions or under the spirit of the conventions where they do not apply," said White House deputy press secretary Trent Duffy.



A file photo of Abu Ghraib prison in Baghdad that shot into the limelight following the torture of Iraqi prisoners.

USA denies relief rivalry

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

UNHQ, Jan. 1. — The USA has rejected suggestions that it was trying to sidetrack the UN in the relief efforts for the tsunami victims by creating a four-nation "core group" which includes India, Japan and Australia.

The group was created as there was need for a coordination mechanism and it includes countries which have assets, experience and capacity, US Secretary of State Gen. Colin Powell told reporters yesterday after a meeting with UN Secretary-General Mr Kofi Annan.

The Indians, he said, had already dispatched military units to Sri Lanka. He did not envisage any major expansion

of the group, saying it might be expanded "slightly". "But in due course we hope the Core Group will work itself out of business because we will have brought all the international organisations into play under the overall supervision and leadership of the UN."

Mr Annan also underlined "the need for us to cooperate and coordinate our efforts as effectively as possible" and asserted that the immediate need was now for logistical support, including aircraft, to get supplies in as quickly as possible.

Asked whether China would join the Core Group, Gen. Powell said Beijing is playing an important role and "I think they can do that without necessarily being a member of the

core group".

Asked why Britain is not part of the core group, Gen. Powell said the simple reason is that it comprises nations that are immediately in the region. So far as the USA is concerned, the American Secretary added, it has a "significant military and diplomatic presence" in the region. "I spoke to the British about it within a day or two and explained the rationale for it.

We wanted a tight group of resource providers who are in the region. I am confident the UK will be doing a lot, both in terms of financial support and other assets they will be providing. You don't have to be a member of the core group to make a significant and important contribution," Gen. Powell said.



Gen. Powell with Mr Annan at UNHQ on Friday. — AFP

DONATE, URGES BUSH

WASHINGTON, Jan. 1. — President Bush today urged Americans to contribute for the relief and rehabilitation of tsunami victims. "On this first day of a new year, we join the world in feeling enormous sadness over a great human tragedy. The carnage is of a scale that defies comprehension, with over 1,00,000 deaths reported. As the people of this devastated region struggle to recover, we offer our love and compassion, and our assurance that the USA will be there to help," Mr Bush said in his weekly radio address from Crawford (Texas). — PTI