

## Bush declares war

Full text of US President's speech announcing attack on Iraq

AFP, Washington

My fellow citizens. At this hour, American and coalition forces are in the early stages of military operations to disarm Iraq, to free its people and to defend the world from grave danger.

On my orders, coalition forces have begun striking selected targets of military importance to undermine Saddam Hussein's ability to wage war. These are opening stages of what will be a broad and concerted campaign.

More than 35 countries are giving crucial support from the use of naval and air bases to help with intelligence and logistics to deployment of combat units.

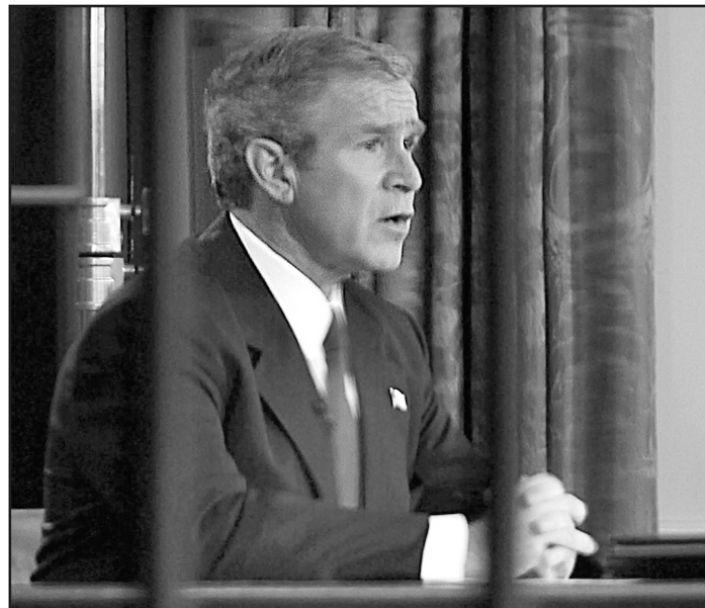
Every nation in this coalition has chosen to bear the duty and share the honour of serving in our common defence.

To all the men and women of the United States armed forces now in the Middle East, the peace of a troubled world and the hopes of an oppressed people now depend on you. That trust is well placed.

The enemies you confront will come to know your skill and bravery. The people you liberate will witness the honourable and decent spirit of the American military.

In this conflict America faces an enemy that has no regard for conventions of war or rules of morality.

Saddam Hussein has placed Iraqi troops and equipment in



US President George W. Bush addresses the nation from the Oval office of the White House late, 19 March 2003 in Washington, DC.

civilian areas, attempting to use innocent men, women and children as shields for his own military. A final atrocity against his people.

I want Americans and all the world to know that coalition forces will make every effort to spare innocent civilians from harm.

A campaign on the harsh terrain of the nation as large as California could be longer and more difficult

than some predict and helping Iraqis achieve a united, stable and free country will require our sustained commitment.

We come to Iraq with respect for its citizens, for their great civilisation and for the religious faiths they practice.

We have no ambition in Iraq except to remove a threat and restore control of that country to its

own people.

I know that the families of our military are praying that all those who serve will return safely and soon.

Millions of Americans are praying with you for the safety of your loved ones and for the protection of the innocent.

For your sacrifice you have the gratitude and respect of the American people and you can know that our forces will be coming home as soon as their work is done.

Our nation enters this conflict reluctantly, yet our purpose is sure. The people of the United States and our friends and allies will not live at the mercy of an outlaw regime that threatens the peace with weapons of mass murder.

We will meet that threat now with our army, air force, navy, coastguard and marines so that we do not have to meet it later with armies of firefighters and police and doctors on the streets of our cities.

Now that conflict has come, the only way to limit its duration is to apply decisive force and I assure you this will not be a campaign of half measures and we will accept no outcome but victory.

My fellow citizens, the dangers to our country and the world will be overcome. We will pass through this time of peril and carry on the work of peace. We will defend our freedom. We will bring freedom to others and we will prevail.

## Saddam vows to fight

English text of Iraqi President's televised speech

AP, Baghdad

"In 1424 of the Hijra (Muslim) calendar, the reckless criminal little Bush and his accomplices committed his crime, with which he had threatened Iraq and humanity.

He carried out his criminal act with those who co-operated with him - and has added with his accomplices to the series of shameless crimes against Iraq and humanity a beginning of additional crimes.

Oh Iraqis and brave men in our nation. For your sake, the sake of our glorious nation, the sake of the banners of jihad and its (national) religion, precious values, family and children.

I don't want to repeat what should be and what must be done to defend the dear nation and everything that is sacred but I will say:

Each one of us in the family of the faithful, patient, oppressed Iraq by its evil enemies must remember and not forget that these days will add to earning you the glory you deserve before God.

May the infidels, the enemies of God and humanity be shamed.

You will be victorious, Oh Iraqis, and with you the sons of your nation. By God's will you will be victorious and your enemies will be ashamed and dishonoured, God

willing.

Oh brave men, opposers of evil in the world. You have noticed how the reckless Bush made light of your positions and opinions against the war and your honest call for peace and committed his

terrible crime today.

I pledge to you, in the name of the Iraqi leadership and the Iraqi people that Iraq will carry out jihad with the heroic army in the Iraq of civilisation, history and belief; we will fight the invaders and drive them, God willing, to...lose their patience and lose their way....

They - who have carried on with their crimes and evil acts - will suffer the defeat that every jealous faithful and lover of humanity...wishes for them.

Iraq will be victorious, and with Iraq, our nation and humanity will be victorious and the evil will be hit to the extent that it will no longer be able to carry out crimes and will be hit by what the American-Zionist criminal alliance committed against nations and peoples, mainly our glorious Arab nation.

Allahu Akbar Allahu Akbar (God is great). Long live Iraq and Palestine. Long live our glorious nation and the lovers of peace, security and the right of people to live freely on the basis of justice. Long live jihad. long live Palestine."



Saddam Hussein pledges to carry out Jihad against American forces.

## Countdown to first attack

**0001 GMT:** Shortly after midnight, British Prime Minister, Tony Blair, is informed by the White House of George Bush's intention to begin attacking Baghdad.

**0234 GMT:** Air raid sirens, flashes of light and sounds of planes in skies over Baghdad.

**0247 GMT:** White House spokesman Ari Fleischer confirms: "The opening stages of the disarmament of the Iraqi regime have begun."

**0315 GMT:** US forces have launched a strike against "targets of military opportunity" in Iraq, President George Bush said in a national televised address. He described the action as the opening salvo in an operation to "disarm Iraq and to free its people."

**0500 GMT:** All-clear siren sounds in Baghdad.

**0535 GMT:** Iraqi state television broadcast an address it claimed was by Saddam Hussein. He told viewers: "Iraq will be victorious."

**0546 GMT:** Air raids blare in Mosul, the major city in northern Iraq, Al-Jazeera reported.

**0730 GMT (approximately):** A huge explosion is heard in Kuwait, an AFP correspondent reports. The Kuwaiti defense ministry later confirms that Iraq fired two missiles into northern Kuwait, which did not cause any damage.

**0830 GMT:** Blair convenes inner cabinet. Spanish Prime Minister Jose Maria Aznar convenes crisis cabinet meeting.



A Tomahawk Land Attack Missile (TLAM) leaves the deck of the guided missile cruiser USS Bunker Hill early Thursday towards military targets in Iraq.

## Iraq to file complaint with UN

AP, United Nations

Iraq's ambassador to the United Nations said Wednesday he planned to submit a letter to UN Secretary General Kofi Annan branding the onset of US-led military action against his nation "a violation of international law."

"It seems that the war of aggression against my country has started," Mohammed Al-Douri said outside the Iraqi mission.

Al-Douri said he would deliver the letter as early as Thursday. He added he has not been in contact with leaders in Baghdad.

Meanwhile, the most outspoken opponents of military action against Iraq - France, Russia and Germany - insisted the United States will be acting illegally if it attacks Iraq and overthrows Saddam Hussein.

Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov told the UN Security Council that no UN resolution authorised military action or "the violent overthrow of the leadership of a sovereign state."

There are also "no indisputable facts" to demonstrate that Iraq threatens the United States, he said. If there were, the Bush administration could exercise its right under the UN Charter to respond in self-defence.

The foreign ministers of Russia, France and Germany attended an open council meeting held only hours before the clock ran out on a Wednesday evening deadline set by President Bush for Saddam Hussein to leave Iraq or face war.

## Reporter's diary

BBC NEWS ONLINE

Baghdad, Ragh Omar, 0240GMT

There are some heavy explosions being heard in the city. Air raid sirens are being heard too. The sounds of war.

Baghdad, Ragh Omar, 0303GMT

It is full light in Baghdad, morning has broken with the sound of explosions. There is still power in the city, the street lights remain on. I can see a few muzzled flashes in the distance.

I can see no signs of explosions on the ground but we can certainly hear them. I can see one large plume of black smoke, I'm not sure what it is.

The city has been completely empty and quiet through the night and an attack at dawn wasn't expected.

Doha, Qatar, Paul Adams, 0307GMT

Sources are indicating an attack on a "location of opportunity" near Baghdad. They say that the intelligence that the Iraqi leadership are at this venue.

Washington DC, Justin Webb, 0317GMT

President Bush has confirmed that the US is at war with Iraq. He spoke live from the Oval Office. He said that American and other forces were in the early stages of military action.

But Mr Bush said he had a warning too, for those in America who might consider this war easy to win, it could, he said, be longer and more difficult than some predict.

Baghdad, Ragh Omar, 0343GMT

There have been a few more barrages of anti-aircraft fire. It is not in the centre of the city, but somewhere on the outskirts of Baghdad.

## Arab Americans fear backlash

AFP, New York

Arab Americans and the wider Muslim community in the United States fear a vicious backlash from the war with Iraq, especially if the body count on the US side begins to mount.

The victims of hate crimes after the September 11, 2001 terror attacks, many Arab Americans believe the conflict with Iraq will trigger a fresh round of assaults and fuel hatred and discrimination against their community.

So serious are the concerns that the Washington-based Council on American-Islamic Relations has started distributing "community safety kits" for American Muslims, Arab Americans and those perceived to be "Middle Eastern" who may face religious or ethnic profiling during the war with Iraq.

If a backlash does occur, the kit offers advice on reacting to anti-Muslim hate crimes, and lists the legal rights of employees,

airline passengers and students.

It also provides step-by-step guides to improving mosque safety, responding to bomb threats and dealing with suspect letters and packages.

"It is important that local Muslim communities take steps now to promote the safety and security of our nation and to defend against anti-Muslim hate during any war," said council chairman Omar Ahmad.

Many Arab Americans in New York said they would be keeping a low profile in the initial days of the war and a wary eye on how public opinion was swinging, with nerves already stretched by warnings of possible terrorist attacks.

"There are definitely a number of indications that the fear within the general public will rise, and the likelihood that that will translate into some kind of backlash against our community is pretty high," said Monica Tarazi of the Arab American Anti-Discrimination Committee.

While the domestic repercussions of September 11 were aggravated given the fact that the attacks took place in the United States, few Arab Americans feel more secure about the fallout from the invasion of Iraq half a world away.

The general feeling in the United States is that we are physically in a war situation here," Tarazi said. "Remember that New York alone is planning to spend five million dollars a week on extra security during the fighting."

The feeling of trepidation within the Muslim community is not restricted to major cities.

The Islamic Society of Central Florida has installed security cameras at its Orange County headquarters which is now being manned 24 hours a day.

"We are doing our best to ensure the safety of our children," said Areej Zufari, a spokeswoman for the society and a fourth grade schoolteacher.

## Northern Iraq spared for now

AFP, Chamchamal

Iraqi army troops defending the key northern city of Kirkuk were spared attack on the first night of war Thursday, but a local Kurdish rebel official said hopes for their peaceful surrender were complicated by the presence of death squads.

"In 1991 during the uprising lots of Iraqis surrendered very quickly. We are hoping for the same to happen now," Tariq Ali, the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) mayor of this frontline town, told AFP.

"But the problem is that if any of them try to run they will be shot in the back by death squads," he added, saying no defecting troops had yet made it across.

After a grim night of rain and icy winds - and no doubt hearing of the first barrage of missiles on Baghdad on the radio - Iraqi troops could be seen along a ridgeline overlooking this Kurdish rebel-controlled town.

At a distance of around 1,500 metres (a mile) away the troops could be seen, through binoculars, walking from dug-out to dug-out on an exposed ridge that provides no protection in the event of an air attack.

The ridge divides the PUK-held part of the Iraqi Kurdistan autonomous zone from the oil-rich city of Kirkuk, which is just 40 km from here.

"Most of the troops up there are conscripts: Arabs and Shiites from the south, so I actually feel quite sorry for them," said Ali, who like all the other men staying behind here was decked out in his baggy cotton peshmerga (Kurdish militia) gear and brandishing a weapon.

Almost all women and children have fled this town -- as well as others close to the front -- for the PUK's nearby administrative centre of Sulaymaniya or for villages close to the Iranian border.



A security guard (L) and United States Park Police officer man a roadblock on a road that leads to the south end of the Golden Gate bridge near San Francisco, March 19, 2003. New roadblocks and patrols around San Francisco's famous landmark are in response to an increase in the national terror alert to level orange.