

# US preparing to attack N Korea: Pyongyang Massive joint war games underway

**AFP, Seoul**

North Korea accused the United States Friday of preparing a pre-emptive strike on its nuclear facilities to coincide with the war on Iraq.

The official Korean Central News Agency said large-scale joint US-South Korean war games had brought the peninsula to the brink of nuclear war.

It said the war games "aimed to coincide with the US attack on Iraq" and their emphasis on air power demonstrated that the United States was preparing to launch a strike.

"This means that it (the US) is going to mount a pre-emptive attack on nuclear facilities in the DPRK (North Korea) and take it as an opportunity of escalating the

war," the official news agency said in a dispatch monitored here.

The dispatch said Washington had "hurled unusually huge combat forces equipped with sophisticated weapons" into the annual war games with South Korea, including the US aircraft carrier Carl Vinson.

"They involve hundreds of thousands of troops and various types of modern combat hardware enough to wage a war," it said.

After failing to persuade North Korea to scrap its nuclear weapons drive, Washington intended to settle the crisis by military means and the war games were conceived to fix the "zero hour" for the attack, KCNA said.

North Korea vowed to repulse any attack, with the official news agency vowing that the army and

people were "fully ready to wipe out the aggressors to the last man at a single stroke."

Meanwhile, thousands of American and South Korean troops backed by warships and planes launched a massive amphibious landing drill at a beachhead near in Pohang Friday as part of what North Korea denounces as preparations for nuclear war.

In a signal to North Korea that Washington will not drop its guard despite its preoccupation with the war on Iraq, US and South Korea troops are engaged in major war games this month.

Amphibious tanks roared ashore and sent camouflaged marines fanning across a smoke-filled beach as gunships hovered and fighter jets screamed overhead.

The joint landing drill at Hwajin Beach in Pohang, 350 kilometers (220 miles) south of Seoul, involves around 3,000 troops -- including 1,000 US Marines, Captain Son Kang-Ho from the South Korean Marine Corps said.

Visible out to sea were six navy ships, including the USS Juneau amphibious transport vessel, from whose decks tanks and armored landing vehicles took to sea. Further out, invisible from the shore, a US aircraft carrier battle group provided additional cover.

"The aircraft carrier USS Carl Vinson is somewhere off the coast," Lieutenant Commander Matt Brotherton from the US Navy said as he surveyed the landing drill, part of joint maneuvers which have sparked strong condemnation from North Korea.



Police Officers arrest an unidentified protester after he and others marched down the middle of a street in an act of civil disobedience in the Country Club Plaza in Kansas City, Missouri, on Thursday to protest the US-led war against Iraq.

# Israel unveils new missile tracking system

**AFP, Herzliya**

Israel revealed Thursday it had deployed a new system in the Tel Aviv area to calculate missile trajectories with unprecedented speed and accuracy, as the United States and its allies unleashed a war against Iraq.

If an Iraqi Scud missile slipped through Israel's anti-missile systems and struck the Tel Aviv area, the "Roman Temple" system could compute its point of impact in less than three minutes, the intelligence chief of the army's Home Front division, Lieutenant Colonel Iyal Sasson, told reporters here.

"As the rocket flies, it gives off heat and leaves a trail of gases behind it. This and the flare when it hits the ground can be detected by the system with unprecedented accuracy," Sasson said.

Scuds travel at more than 2,000 metres per second and the performance of the new system -- which can calculate several missile trajectories simultaneously -- marks a huge improvement since the 1991 Gulf War, he added.

During that conflict, 39 Iraqi Scud missiles armed with conventional warheads were fired at the Jewish state, killing two people after an older generation Patriot anti-missile system failed to intercept them all.

Israel's previous missile impact detection system meant rescue teams were sometimes slow to reach the injured. Local residents in bomb shelters also had to keep their gas masks on for hours before the all-clear was given.

The new system, which involves several surveillance units laid out along 70 kilometres (45 miles) along the coast, is notably capable of tracking the warhead of a missile, which is where chemical agents would be located.



A file picture showing Iraqi President Saddam Hussein (sitting) surrounded by his family in Baghdad on November 20, 1988: His first wife, Sajiba (sitting) and his daughters Hala (sitting), Rana (3rdL) and Ragh 2nd (center); Hussein's sons-in-law, General Hussein Kamel Hassan (far left), Rana's husband, and Saddam Kamel Hassan (2ndR), Raghad's husband; his sons, Uday, the elder (far right) and Qusayy (2ndL). General Hassan and his brother were shot dead on February 23, 1996 in Baghdad by relatives. Homes belonging to the family of the Iraqi President were targetted in missile strikes against Baghdad on Thursday, but no one was hurt, state run radio reported.

## 'Iraq war may create more Osamas'

**AFP, Srinagar**

Abdul Gaffar, 65, takes a long pull on his hubbly-bubbly pipe, exhales a cloud of smoke -- and then begins spewing venom at the United States for launching an attack on Iraq.

"What is Bush trying to achieve in the name of fighting terrorism?" asked Gaffar, who lives in a houseboat on Lake Dal at Srinagar, the summer capital of India's only Muslim majority state.

Scenic Kashmir has been ravaged by a 14-year Islamic insurgency that has left more than 37,500 people dead and rendered jobless people like Gaffar, who were dependent on tourism.

"The attack on Iraq is bound to create more people like Osama bin Laden," he said, his one ear tuned in to a radio broadcast tracking developments in the Gulf.

Bin Laden's al-Qaeda movement is accused of being behind the terrorist attacks in the United States on September 11, 2001.

## Iraqis in US watch war with worries

**AFP, Detroit**

With the beginning of hostilities in Iraq, a black cloud has settled on Saad Kudum, one of the tens of thousands of Iraqi immigrants and exiles living in this Midwestern US city.

Concern for his aging parents, four brothers and sisters and their children back in the Iraqi capital weighs heavily on his mind.

"I feel panicked... depressed... I didn't want to come to work today," said Kudum, a 49-year-old truck driver.

"I spoke to them briefly by telephone yesterday," he said. "They were all at my parents' home and they had stocked up on food and water, but they're very scared."

Kudum's relatives would have fled Baghdad had they not been prevented from leaving by the Iraqi military, he said. "They're hostages, shields, caught between Saddam Hussein and the Americans," he said.

"It's really a bad situation," he

## US troop eye peacekeeping role in Iraq

**AFP, Fort Hood**

Less than two days into the war in Iraq, US troops waiting to deploy through Turkey are already starting to think about the aftermath and their possible role in the stabilisation of the country.

While most are still champing at the bit to join their comrades on the battlefield, the soldiers of the 4th Infantry Division (4ID) insist they are equally ready to adopt a non-combat role after the shooting is over.

The division task force -- amounting to some 30,000 personnel armed with hundreds of Abrams tanks, Bradley Fighting Vehicles and Apache attack helicopters -- was due to invade Iraq from Turkey in the north.

But its plans have been snarled by Turkey's anti-war parliament, and division commanders now admit that by the time they get into northern Iraq they may find themselves on a complicated peace-keeping mission.

## Blair, Chirac in cool handshake

**AFP, Brussels**

British Prime Minister Tony Blair and French President Jacques Chirac shook hands Thursday in a cool encounter away from the cameras at an EU summit overshadowed by the war in Iraq, insiders said.

In their first encounter since the collapse of diplomatic efforts to resolve the crisis peacefully, the leaders met during a mid-session break at the summit in Brussels.

"I don't want to discuss personalities," said a British official, repeatedly refusing to comment on the meeting beyond saying: "The prime minister was in the presence of Chirac."

Filmed at the start of the meeting, British Foreign Secretary Jack Straw came over and shook hands with Chirac and French Foreign Minister Dominique de Villepin, although Blair was not seen in contact with the French leader.

## Turkey's Iraq dilemma

**BBC NEWS ONLINE, Ankara**

Turkey's agreement to allow US warplanes to overfly its airspace may look like the end of a long and often tortuous process of negotiation, demand, counter-demand and final grudging acceptance.

But it is in fact the beginning of a new and possibly far more dangerous phase.

Turkey gave the US the barest minimum of what it wanted.

Late last year the US stunned the Turkish Government with its military request.

Turkey had always known that the US wanted to use its airbases in any assault on Iraq.

US and UK planes currently fly hundreds of mission out of the south eastern airbase of Incirlik to enforce the no-fly zone over Iraq.

It wanted tens of thousands of troops to be stationed in Turkey, ready to create a northern front into Kurdish-controlled Iraq -- that would require a logistical set-up rivaling those of Qatar and Kuwait.

The government has been mindful of both the deep hostility of the population towards war with Iraq, and the potential benefits that might accrue to Turkey in the form of American largesse.

It stalled, stringing out negotiations, holding out for more money and more political sway over a post-Saddam Iraq.

Uppermost in the calculations of the political and military establishments was the final status of Kurdish-controlled northern Iraq.

There is no love lost between Turkey and the Kurds, who have controlled the region for 12 years.

Turkey is terrified that during or after the war the Kurdish groups who run the administration there might declare independence.

It will receive, if it is lucky, a fraction of the aid that it was once in line for.

And the great unknowable is northern Iraq, where Turkey has been warned not to go in.

The US says privately that it believes Turkey will refrain from entering the region and possibly starting a war with Kurdish forces.

But Turkey has given no such commitment, and views the entire area as part of its sphere of influence.

The US and Turkey may still be allies. But Turkey will not be dictated to.

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US and UK planes currently fly hundreds of mission out of the south eastern airbase of Incirlik to enforce the no-fly zone over Iraq.

But the US wanted a lot more than airbases.

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## Anti-terrorism specialist quits Bush's National Security Council

**AFP, Washington**

A member of President George W. Bush's National Security Council (NSC) responsible for anti-terrorism has resigned, the White House announced Thursday.

Rand Beers "informed the National Security Council that he would leave for personal reasons," White House spokesman Ari Fleischer said.

Asked if the resignation had anything to do with the war on Iraq, Fleischer said, "I see no evidence that would support that."

The NSC, headed by National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice, advises the president on national security and foreign policy.

Beers was the second person to quit the council's anti-terrorism unit in recent months. Richard Clarke, a specialist in combatting cyberterrorism, or use of the Internet by terrorists, left in January.

## Cuba detains 65 dissidents

**AP, Havana**

Fidel Castro's security agents cast a broader net to arrest some of the government's better known critics in an escalating crackdown that has pulled in at least 65 dissidents accused of working with US diplomats to undermine Cuba's socialist system.

With the world focused on the war on Iraq, Cuban authorities began looking at higher-profile opponents on Thursday evening, picking up Raul Rivero, the island's best known independent journalist.

"He is only a man who writes, he is not a politician," Rivero's wife, Blanca Reyes, said after agents carried big black plastic bags full of documents from their home and sped away with her husband in the back seat of a Russian-made Lada sedan. Rivero's 83-year-old mother, Hortensia Castaneda, wept quietly at her side in a white wooden rocker.

"He knew they would come for him in this wave of repression," said Reyes. "But until then he was informing the entire world what was happening here."

# Striking at Saddam

## Washington misses its target again

**THE GUARDIAN, London**

If US forces had succeeded in killing Saddam Hussein, the principal target of yesterday's hit-and-run raid on Baghdad, there would without doubt have been general rejoicing.

It seems likely that Iraq's dictator's death would have triggered the rapid collapse of his regime, notwithstanding the continuing presence of his feared sons, Uday and Qusayy. At such a point, Iraqi resistance to UN and US demands would be expected to end, obviating the need for further military hostilities.

Full-scale war of the kind that is in prospect would be avoided; many lives would be saved. It is also certain that most Arab and western leaders, whether opposed or supportive of US-British policy, would breathe a great sigh of relief at Saddam's demise. Depending on events, the failure of the US to get

its man on this occasion may thus come to be counted as one of the great might-have-beens of the second Gulf war. For all the above reasons, the US will surely try its luck again. And Saddam now knows, if he ever seriously doubted it before, that he is personally vulnerable.

Yet hypothetical scenarios apart, the hard fact of the matter, as we know it now, is that this first "surgical strike" of the US air campaign missed its mark. Nor as far as is known did the attack, using top-of-the-range missiles, guidance systems and hi-tech Stealth bombers, succeed in killing other "leadership targets".

Instead, according to the Iraqis at least, one civilian died and several more were injured. This could have been an intelligence failure; perhaps CIA director George Tenet's dramatic tip-off was a dud and Saddam was never where they thought he was.

Perhaps the Americans were too slow to react as in the case of Mullah Omar, the fugitive Taliban leader who was located by US forces in late 2001 but got away before a strike was authorised. Or perhaps there is a simpler and more familiar explanation: that the Pentagon's supposedly super-accurate smart bombs were just not smart enough.

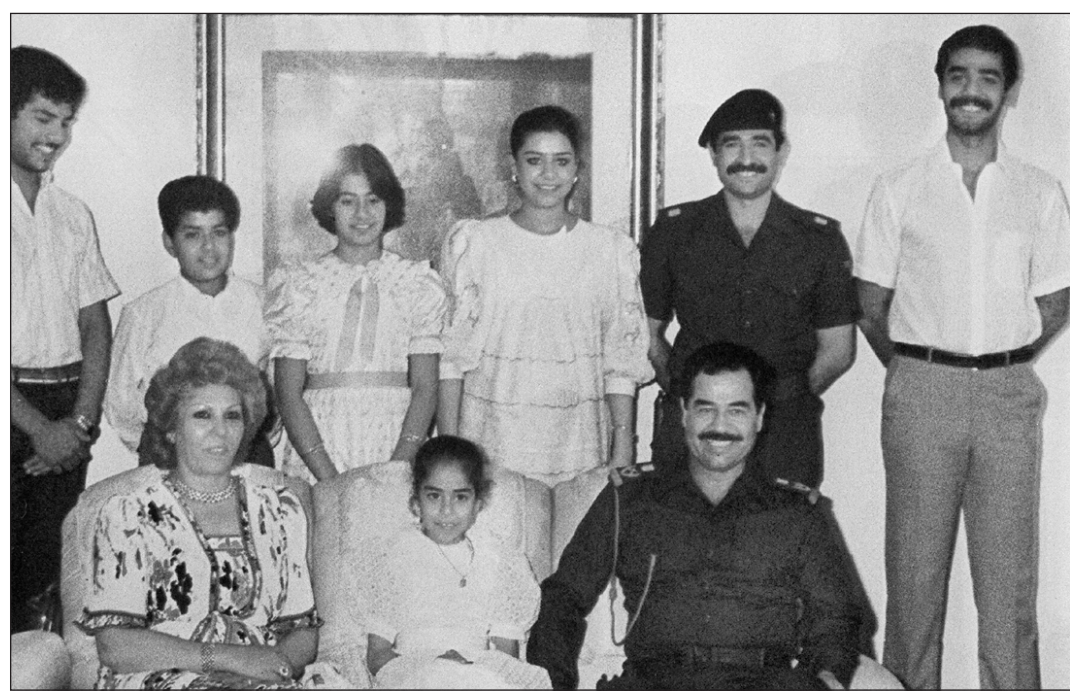
This episode has provided an early test of US-British definitions about who or what constitutes a legitimate and justifiable target. Enemy armed forces obviously qualify and Saddam, as commander-in-chief, may certainly be termed a combatant. But the Iraqis claim the targeted buildings were in civilian use, in a civilian area -- the sort of target that might be legally held to be out of bounds.

The attempt to assassinate or "decapitate" a head of state, which Saddam also is, meanwhile raises some much broader legal and

moral questions. US governments have not infrequently conducted such operations, against Libya's Colonel Muammar Gaddafi in 1986, for example, and Panama's former dictator, Manuel Noriega. Under a prior presidential directive, the assassination of foreign leaders was proscribed. But George Bush said he had waived that ban and his spokesman recently made clear that Saddam and his top aides were to be considered fair game.

Most people would be glad to see the back of Saddam and for the greater good, at this moment of extreme crisis, killing him might be considered justified. But it would be far preferable to try him for his crimes.

Who among Mr Bush's many bogeymen might be next? North Korea's Kim Jong-il, perhaps? The US must tread carefully -- for the legal and moral grounds for this war are already very shaky.



A file picture showing Iraqi President Saddam Hussein (sitting) surrounded by his family in Baghdad on November 20, 1988: His first wife, Sajiba (sitting) and his daughters Hala (sitting), Rana (3rdL) and Ragh 2nd (center); Hussein's sons-in-law, General Hussein Kamel Hassan (far left), Rana's husband, and Saddam Kamel Hassan (2ndR), Raghad's husband; his sons, Uday, the elder (far right) and Qusayy (2ndL).