

Baghdad faces fiercest bombardment

Qusay Saddam's palace rocked; telecommunication centre pounded; US, British soldiers killed in action, three Marines die in chopper crash

STAR DESK
 Anglo-American forces have intensified assaults on Basra, Najaf and Nasirriyah, important southern cities, and waged the deadliest air raid on Baghdad using B-1, B-2 and B-52 bombers simultaneously.

Some 1,800 missiles poured into the Iraqi capital, pulverising government buildings, including the Information Ministry and the telecommunication centre.

The city sky was filled with plumes of smoke and dust rising from the rubbles of damaged buildings.

Iraqi domestic television failed to come on air after a cruise missile hit the roof of the Information Ministry in the second night strike on the building in three days.

At daybreak, two blasts hit a presidential palace used by Saddam's son Qusay, who commands the elite Republican Guard. At least one missile slammed into presidential compound in central Baghdad just after midnight.

But casualties on the invaders' side kept piling and three US marines were killed when a helicopter crashed in southern Iraq. At least one US soldier was killed in a clash with Iraqi forces, armed with rocket propelled grenades south of the city of Hilla. A British Royal marine was



Smoke billows from an explosion in Iraqi President Saddam Hussein's guest palace bombed during a coalition raid yesterday. US forces blitzed the Iraqi capital in a marked intensification of the war that began on March 20.

Palestinian human bombs in Iraq

STAR DESK

A militant Palestinian group has declared that its first wave of volunteer suicide bombers has arrived in Iraq, as Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz vowed more suicide attacks yesterday.

Al-Quds Brigades, the military wing of Islamic Jihad said in a statement that it "brings to our people and nation the good news of the arrival of its first martyrdom to the heart of Baghdad."

The group's mission is "to fulfil the holy duty of defending Arab and Muslim land," by attacking coalition

troops, the statement said.

Iraq has declared that more than 4,000 foreign Arab volunteers have come forward to fight and were ready to die if necessary. A BBC correspondent saw an Egyptian volunteer in a Baghdad hotel, who came to carry out a suicide attack.

More suicide attacks will be launched on US-led forces seeking to topple the regime of President Saddam Hussein, Tariq Aziz told US television network ABC.

People who are being threatened by an invasion have the right to fight by

all means to defend themselves, he said in an interview.

"When you fight an invader by whatever means available to you, you are not a terrorist, you are a hero," he told ABC news. He described them as "freedom fighters against invaders, against colonists, against imperialists...and we are proud of them."

Army spokesman General Hazem al-Rawi told a news conference in Baghdad that suicide missions against US and British soldiers would be stepped up as the war

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Police take over Rehana's state-allocated house

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police yesterday took over a house the past Awami League government allocated to Sheikh Rehana, daughter of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

Police said they did so to oust illegal occupants. They also picked up eight employees who stayed at the house on charge of trespassing.

Rehana, also sister of former prime minister Sheikh Hasina, is now in the UK.

The AL government had allocated the house to her as the daughter of Bangabandhu and it was registered in her name on July 11, 2001. She bought

the house at a token price of Tk 1,001.

Dhanmondi police, assisted by a team of plainclothes cops, went to the house in the city's Dhanmondi area at about 4:00 pm to take its control.

Police said they took over the house that belonged to the housing ministry and arrested eight persons for occupying and illegally staying in the house 'ousting' security guards who were posted there by the home ministry.

AL sources said police arrested Akkas Ali Mia, Kamrul Islam, Tayab Ali, Jahangir Alam, Nurul Islam, Mohammad Rabiul, Shamsul Haq and Sridham from the house.

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'Iraq war will produce 100 bin Ladens'

REUTERS, Cairo

Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak said yesterday the US-led war on Iraq would produce "100 new bin Ladens," driving more Muslims to anti-Western militancy.

"When it is over, if it is over, this

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