



IRAQ INVASION

DAY
13

13
The Daily Star
DHAKA TUESDAY APRIL 1, 2003



PHOTO: AFP

A soldier from the Desert Rats walks past ruined buildings in Mushirij, south west of Basra, southern Iraq. The southern Iraqi city of Basra came heavy air raids early 30 March, a correspondent for the Qatar-based satellite television Al-Jazeera reported.

'Operational pause' denied by Franks

NEW YORK TIMES, Kuwait

For an American military on the offensive, there may be no more distasteful term than "operational pause." The military prides itself on seizing the initiative and applying relentless pressure to defeat its foe. So it was not surprising that Gen. Tommy R. Franks, the chief of the United States Central Command, insisted today that the United States military was pressing ahead with its campaign to overthrow Saddam Hussein. Reports from commanders in the field that they have been ordered to pause for a few days, General Franks insisted, are "simply not the case." The situation, in fact, does not appear to be that simple. The unanticipated resistance from guerrilla forces in the south and the limited size of the American force in the region has slowed the tempo of the war plan. Faced with threats in the rear, the need to guard supply lines, the impera-

tive to consolidate logistics and the prospect of urban warfare in Baghdad, the allied forces are finding themselves confronting a multitude of tasks. The American military no longer has the luxury of concentrating on the Baghdad fight. Most military experts agree that the allies would be in a stronger position to advance on Baghdad had the Bush administration sent more troops. In one sign today that troop transport to the area was being accelerated, a contingent of the Second Armored Cavalry was told to fly directly to the gulf region. It is not the case, though, that combat operations have ground to a halt. In fact, American land forces have begun a new phase of their campaign by resuming their attacks on the Republican Guard. These are limited attacks, but still a continuation of the offensive and a prelude for the decisive Baghdad battle to come. The goal is to force Iraqi troops out of their holes and revetments so they will be easier targets for the Air Force

and to generally soften up the Republican Guard units that are defending Baghdad. In recent days, for example, Army forces have attacked the Medina Division, the Republican Guard force guarding the southern approach to Baghdad. Apache helicopters from the 101st Airborne Division struck at Medina armor positions near the city of Karbala on Friday night. The Third Infantry Division, for its part, has advanced 10 more miles. The Marines have also joined the attack on the Republican Guards. The Marines' Third Air Wing has bombed the Baghdad Division, an infantry unit that is stationed southeast of the city, and the Al Nida Division. The Iraqis have responded to the attack by rushing more forces to the battlefields. As the Medina Division has been pounded from the air, Iraqi ground forces have been moving south to fill the gaps in the division's position.

Bush, Saddam turn to God for victory

AFP, Cairo

Calls for fasting and prayers in the United States and angry cries of jihad in Iraq are giving the US-led war aimed at toppling Saddam Hussein dangerous religious undertones, analysts say. "O Iraqis, fight as God ordered you to do," the Iraqi president said in an address to the nation on March 24, underscoring the growing place of Islam in the battle for survival of his secular Arab nationalist regime. "O Arabs, O believers across the world, O enemies of evil, God is on your side," he said. "Rely on God and the soldiers of the Merciful on our land will be granted victory." Saddam usually begins his speeches with verses from the Koran. His archnemesis, US President George W. Bush, a born-again Christian, regularly peppers his presidential speeches with religious language and almost always ends them with a solemn "God Bless America". And last week, the US Congress passed a resolution calling on Bush to order a nationwide day of prayer for the country in its latest hour of need.

Religion is also present on both sides of the battlefield. In Baghdad's sleepless nights of shelling, the voices of muezzins rise from the hundreds of mosques across the city, invoking God and offering comfort to beleaguered residents as the bombs fall around them. Iraq also pledged Sunday that thousands of Arab volunteers were ready to die in "martyr operations," or suicide attacks, following in the footsteps of a kamikaze Iraqi officer who killed four US soldiers in southern Iraq on Saturday. Journalists embedded with the coalition have reported that US soldiers in Iraq had been asked to pray for Bush that so that "God's peace be your (his) guide." The September 11, 2001 attacks reaffirmed the importance of religion within the Bush administration. When Bush termed the US campaign against terror a "crusade", he triggered outrage in the Muslim world, which associates the word with the wars waged by Christian Europe to capture Jerusalem in the Middle Ages.

Waves of bombers strike Baghdad again

AP, Baghdad

US warplanes, including a massive armada of long-range bombers, pounded leadership positions in Baghdad, and missiles ignited a fire that raged before dawn Monday at the Iraqi Information Ministry. The blaze, yards away from a shopping mall named for Saddam Hussein's birthday, was put out after about 30 minutes. The attacks targeted leadership and command and control centers in Baghdad and were carried out simultaneously by multiple B-1, B-2 and B-52 bombers, the US Central Command said. The command said it was the first time in history that the long-range strike aircraft targeted the same geographical area at the same time. Another series of massive explosions shook the Iraqi capital as dawn was breaking Monday, and the sound of aircraft was heard overhead. It was not immediately known what was hit. Recorded calls of "God is great"

from mosque minarets alerted the people of Baghdad to another night of bombings late Sunday, followed by a massive explosion and then the streaks of anti-aircraft gunners' tracers across the sky. In the past few nights, the mosque loudspeakers have been used instead of air-raid sirens - with the all-clear signalled by another minaret announcement: "God is great, they are gone." The strike on the Information Ministry shook the city around 2 a.m. Monday. Abu Dhabi television showed live footage of the blaze, which it said was in the ministry's press center. Central Command in Qatar said Tomahawk cruise missiles targeted the ministry in a strike "to reduce ... command and control capabilities." Firefighters sprayed the blaze near the "28 April Shopping Center," which is located across the street from the ministry and whose name commemorates the Iraqi leader's birthday. A Tomahawk missile hit the ministry building before dawn Saturday, gutting

one floor and destroying many of the satellite dishes on the roof. Foreign journalists have been working at the Palestine Hotel, where they had moved for fear of attacks on the ministry. Coalition bombardments have focused in recent days on positions of the Republican Guard - Saddam's best trained fighters - protecting the approaches to Baghdad, in an attempt to wear them down ahead of a US-led ground assault on the capital. In a "key strike" earlier Sunday, coalition aircraft bombed the barracks of the main training center of the Iraqi paramilitary forces in eastern Baghdad's Rustamiyah area, said the US Central Command. It said the forces targeted were in charge of security functions in eastern Baghdad. In addition, aircraft used satellite-guided munitions to target command and control facilities at the Abu Gharayb Presidential Palace, near Saddam International Airport, and two facilities at the Karada Intelligence Complex, a statement from Central Command said.



PHOTO: INTERNET

A British soldier guards a POW in the southern Iraqi town of Basra, 31 March 2003. Hundreds of British Royal Marines were meanwhile launching a major assault just outside Basra in the first all-out British assault by a full commando since the Falklands War in 1982.

US forces rounding up civilian suspects

Some detainees may be sent to Cuba

WASHINGTON POST, Marine Combat Headquarters

US forces have started rounding up Iraqi men in civilian clothes suspected of being involved with paramilitary squads that have been attacking them in southern Iraq and may ship some of them to the detention center at the US naval base at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, military officers said. Marines patrolling Nasiriyah and other areas of heavy fighting have already detained more than 300 men in civilian clothes, initiating roundups intended to cope with the danger of an enemy that opens fire and then melts back into the population. "You round them up -- that way they're not a threat," said a senior Marine officer. The roundups are part of a shift to unconventional warfare by US commanders in response to the hit-and-run attacks launched by the Saddam's Fedayeen and Baath Party militias on overstretched US supply lines. The Americans have decided to emulate the British, who have used commando raids to counter resistance in southeastern Iraq. While targeting some men in civilian

clothes, US officers are also trying to enlist Iraqis who are estranged from the government to help root out the militias in the towns along the highways leading to Baghdad. US helicopters have been dropping leaflets over Nasiriyah soliciting assistance, and the top Marine commander in Iraq said today that he might eventually distribute captured weapons to Iraqi civilians to help them rise against President Saddam Hussein. It is "incumbent upon us to eliminate the death squads keeping the people under their boot," said Lt. Gen. James T. Conway, who leads 85,000 Marines and British ground troops. To do that, he said, US forces need good intelligence on the enemy's headquarters and leadership "and then we hit them... overtly and covertly." The officers said such roundups will not be arbitrary but will focus on the pattern established in the past 11 days. Putting aside the rules of engagement they devised before the war, military lawyers are drafting new criteria intended to guide front-line troops on when to take into custody Iraqi men -- and possibly women -- who are working with the militias and the Fedayeen. The

Fedayeen is a militia group loyal to Hussein and created by his elder son, Uday. Suspects are being segregated from enemy prisoners of war, in part because they may have been tormentors of regular army soldiers now being held. The detainees will be treated like POWs, but without official status, until a hearing is held under Article 5 of the Geneva Conventions, officers said. Such hearings, to be held in Iraq, will determine whether the detainees are released, held as POWs or declared illegal combatants. If they are labeled POWs, they will be held until the end of the war and then released along with other prisoners. Military lawyers said they were trying to decide how to hold the hearings and said they wanted to conduct them as quickly as possible to return any innocents caught up in the roundups to their homes, but they acknowledged they were ill prepared for the venture. "We're still figuring this out," said the senior officer, "because we thought we'd have mass surrenders, not this crap."



PHOTO: INTERNET

An Iraqi woman with fear on her face holds her child tight when US Marines from the 2nd Battalion 8th Regiment came to search her home for weapons in Nasiriyah.