

## UK exploring possibility of new UN resolution

### US forces still take fire in Iraq as moves on to involve more states

AFP, Baghdad

Guerrilla attacks continued to cause casualties among US troops in Iraq, as Britain said it was exploring the possibility of a new UN Security Council resolution to set up a multinational force in the country.

British special representative in Iraq John Sawers told the Financial Times that preliminary negotiations on such a resolution could start within weeks.

A new United Nations resolution would enable the governments of Pakistan, India and Turkey among others to convince public opinion in their countries of the need to send troops to Iraq, he said.

Sawers, the top British official in the US-led occupation administration, added however that London and Washington were waiting to see what demands France and Russia would make as to the role the UN might play in Iraq.

"We are all conscious of tensions in the UN Security Council," he told the Financial Times.

"They have not gone away. But before we go down the road of seeking a new UN resolution we would want to be confident it was achievable in a way that would support the coalition's present efforts."

The United States and Britain, which invaded Iraq without UN approval in March, have sought, so far with little success, to mobilize the international community to share the military and financial burden of the occupation of

Iraq. A mixed unit comprising mainly troops from Poland and Spain, Washington's main supporters in the war in Iraq after Britain and Australia, is arriving in Iraq, but most other states are still hanging back.

Arab countries for their part, many of them strong opponents of the US occupation of Iraq, are to meet in Cairo Tuesday to discuss the possibility of contributing to the country's reconstruction after the fall of Saddam Hussein's regime.

But Egyptian Foreign Minister Ahmed Maher ruled out any dispatch of troops.

Meanwhile a US soldier and two Iraqi civilians were wounded in an attack near Baquba, 60 kilometres (37 miles) north of Baghdad, Lieutenant Colonel Bill MacDonald of the Fourth Infantry Division (4ID) said Monday.

"We had a logistical convoy that was attacked by an improvised explosive device (IED) on highway 2 near the town of Al-Husseini at 11 am (0700 GMT) Sunday," MacDonald said.

A fire broke out with attackers before 4ID's second brigade "detained 12 Iraqis suspected of carrying out the attack," said MacDonald, who is based out of Tikrit, Saddam's hometown.

The attack happened the same day as an Iraqi civilian was wounded by explosives detonated on the road to the Baghdad airport, the site of frequent attacks on US soldiers.



PHOTO: AFP

Indian firemen inspect debris left by an explosion in the city of Surat on Sunday as rescue work continues. At least 43 people were killed and 39 injured when a huge blast caused a three-story building to collapse in India's western state of Gujarat, a police spokesman said.

## Surat building blast toll goes up to 43

PTI, Surat

The toll in the building collapse, triggered by an LPG cylinder blast in the textile city, has mounted to 43 with recovery of three more bodies from the debris on Monday.

"We have recovered three more bodies this morning. The rescue and relief operation, which went on for the whole night, was still continuing at the site," fire brigade sources said.

The blast in Varachha area early on Sunday led to collapse of a three-storey residential building and two adjoining buildings.

Meanwhile, Gujarat Chief Minister Narendra Modi arrived here on Monday morning to visit the collapse site. Modi would also inquire about the condition of the injured in the three city hospitals, official sources said.

Police officials supervising the rescue operations said that so far 43 bodies had been pulled out of the rubble and said chances of extricating more "appeared negligible".

The injured include at least five children and two fire brigade personnel.



PHOTO: AFP

Pakistani victims of an explosion lay on hospital beds for treatments in Gilgit on Sunday. At least 52 people were killed and 70 injured when explosives used in roadworks caught fire and detonated in a northern Pakistan Gayal village, some 168 km south of Gilgit, flattening several homes.

## 'G8, NATO considering chopper force at LoC'

ANI, London

The Group of Eight (G-8) nations and the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) are seriously considering deploying an international helicopter force to check alleged infiltration on the Line of Control (LoC) dividing India and Pakistan, defence sources in Brussels were quoted as saying.

According to The News, British Foreign Secretary Jack Straw is behind this proposal known as the "Straw Formula". The paper claimed that European diplomats to have told New Delhi and Islamabad that a workable mechanism to monitor infiltration is essential in view of Europe's increasing economic and defence ties with these two countries.

The Straw Formula reportedly

insists that Europe should convince India that the proposed helicopter force would not affect New Delhi's position on Kashmir i.e. that the vexed issue be resolved bilaterally, a European diplomat, who requested anonymity, underlined.

Diplomats on either side of the Atlantic say Indian and Pakistan allegations and denials must be checked through an independent mechanism as ambiguity on this account was creating difficulties for Western countries wanting to condition their respective aid packages for developing countries.

Washington has already said that any aid from it will depend on a recipient country's response to the fight against terrorism.

"Pakistan has agreed to the so-called Straw Formula. Pakistani authorities have conveyed to the

Western capitals their considered opinion that an international helicopter-borne force to monitor infiltration along the LoC would bolster the peace process in South Asia," the diplomat said.

G-8, the group of most industrialized countries, the European Union and even the NATO are willing to provide the helicopters, other logistics and technical support for the proposed force without getting themselves involved in the Kashmir dispute.

The formula has also received the endorsement two physicists - Professor M. Martellini of the University of Insubria in Como, Italy and Dr. A.H. Nayyar of the Islamabad-based Quaid-e-Azam University, who is also the coordinator of the Pakistan Peace Coalition (PPC).

## US officials preparing for new terror attacks

REUTERS, Washington

With a new public threat from al-Qaeda, US law enforcement officials said on Sunday they were preparing for other possible attacks on America, adding warnings about ferries to those involving commercial airlines.

"The potential for us to be hit again is a very real potential," Attorney General John Ashcroft told "Fox News Sunday."

Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security Tom Ridge said on NBC's "Meet the Press" program: "I feel every day that we operate toward the notion that there will be one."

The officials spoke of an audio tape purportedly from top al-Qaeda official Ayman al-Zawahiri warning the United States on Sunday it would pay a high price if it harmed detainees at a US base in Cuba, saying the "real battle" had not yet begun.

Washington is holding more than 600 people from 42 nations at the Guantanamo naval base in Cuba.

Zawahiri, considered Osama bin Laden's right-hand man, vowed to avenge every killing and ruling passed against Muslims.

## Peacekeeping troops land in Liberia

AP, Monrovia

The first West African forces arrived in Liberia on Monday, launching an international mission to end 14 years of carnage and oversee departure of warlord-turned-president Charles Taylor.

Nigerian soldiers in green camouflage and flak vests leapt out of the first UN helicopter as it settled onto the tarmac at Liberia's main airport, outside the country's besieged capital.

Machine guns at the ready, they crouched, taking up defensive positions on the landing strip.

"We know everyone is expecting us, and we hope to live up to their expectations," said Col. Theophilus Tawiah of Ghana, the freshly assembled force's chief of staff.

In Monrovia, residents near the city's embattled port heard cheers and watched flares go up over the war-ravaged city - rebels, celebrating arrival of the West African troops.

Authorities said a total of 192 men and 33,000 pounds of equipment would deploy Monday. The men are the first wave of a promised 3,250-strong West African deployment, to be followed within months by a UN peacekeeping force.

Two of three US warships full of Marines arrived off the country's Atlantic Ocean coast, waiting to support the peacekeepers. It was unclear whether the US Marines will ever go ashore.

Allan Doss, UN Secretary General Kofi Annan's representative in Sierra Leone, saw off the first troops from neighboring Sierra Leone earlier Monday.

"I wish you God speed and well in this historic mission to Liberia," Doss said. "The people of Liberia have suffered a lot, for too long. They need your help."

In all, 675 Nigerian soldiers and 18 of their officers assembled on the airfield to take part in the first deployment.

West African leaders have promised the force to quell fighting in Liberia, where two months of rebel sieges on the capital have killed more than 1,000 civilians outright and all but cut off the refugee-crowded city of more than 1.3 million from food and water.

The Nigerians, the first arrivals, are leaving a UN mission in Sierra

Leone, where large-scale military intervention by Britain, neighboring Guinea and the United Nations helped end a vicious 10-year civil war.

Gen. Daniel Opende, commander of the UN force in Sierra Leone, spoke of "the very difficult task to try to bring Liberia back to normalcy."

"We shall follow what you have to do, and I am sure you will succeed," Opende said, drawing three cheers from the men.

Soon after the first two helicopters took off, troops loaded the first equipment - rumbling an armored personnel carrier up to another aircraft.

Separate flights also were planned at another Sierra Leone airfield for equipment.

On Sunday, the leader of the peacekeeping force for Liberia sought to temper high expectations among the country's suffering people, saying the first troops would only secure the airport on the capital's outskirts.

## Hamas asks militants to prepare for clash

REUTERS, Gaza

Palestinian militant group Hamas on Monday voiced impatience with what it called Israeli violations of the terms it set for a three-month ceasefire and called on all militant groups to be ready for confrontation with Israel.

"Our patience regarding the Zionists' breaches of the truce will not last long," the statement said. "Our maintaining the ceasefire does not mean that we will allow those terrorists and killers to commit attacks against our people."

Hamas and other leading militant groups spearheading the 34-month-old Palestinian uprising for statehood declared the truce, vital to a US-backed peace plan, on June 29.

The groups pinned the truce's success on Israel's release of all

6,000 Palestinian prisoners in its jails and a halt to the killing of militants.

Israel has said it will free some 440 prisoners later this week. The Palestinians say this is insufficient.

"We appeal to all the national and Islamic forces to prepare themselves for a confrontation of the arrogance of that criminal enemy that denied the right of freedom for our hero prisoners," said the Hamas statement.

The Hamas call followed a West Bank shooting attack on Jewish settlers just outside Jerusalem that wounded four people, and the killing of a Palestinian by Israeli soldiers near the West Bank city of Tulkarm.

The al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades claimed responsibility for the West Bank shooting.



PHOTO: AFP

A woman cries during a Russian Orthodox Church requiem mass at the ruins of the destroyed military hospital in Muzdok yesterday. Rescuers abandoned a search for survivors trapped beneath the rubble of a Russian military hospital on the edge of Chechnya on Sunday.

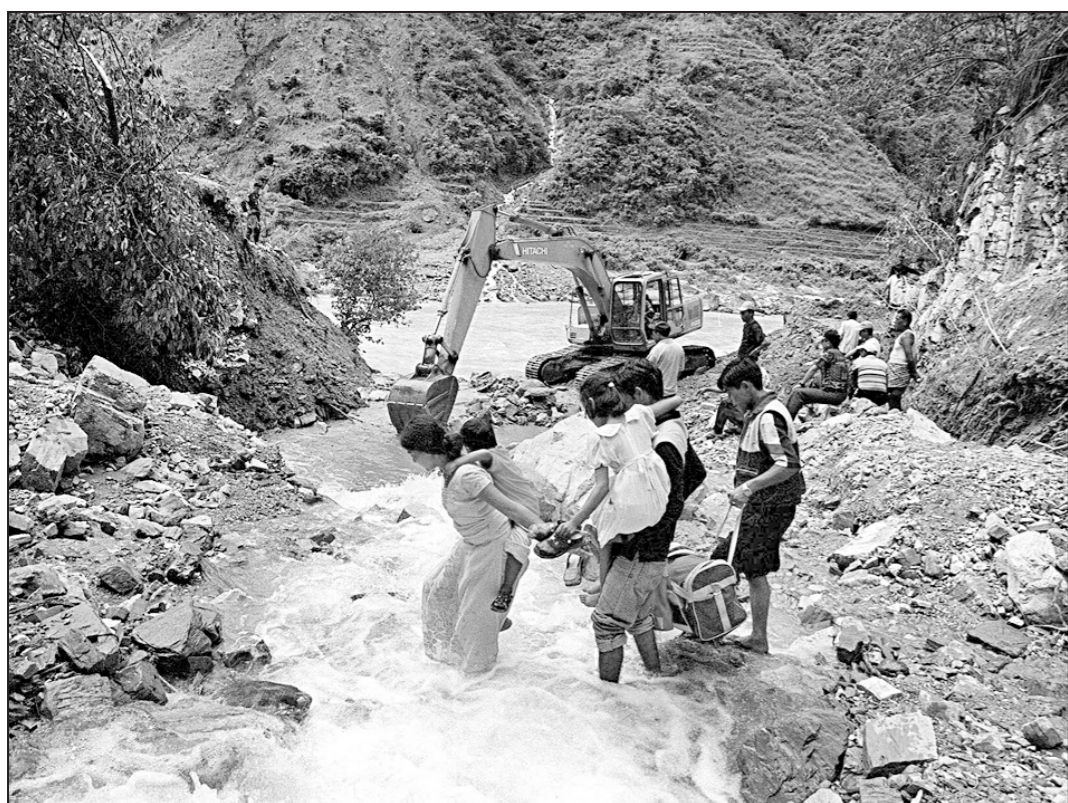


PHOTO: AFP

In this picture taken on Sunday a Nepalese woman carrying a child leads villagers as they walk through a stream and past workers using a mechanical digger attempting to clear debris caused by a landslide at Chandi Bhanjyang, some 122 km south west of Kathmandu. The Mugling-Chitwan Highway road link between Nepal and India has been badly affected by monsoon rains which have caused flooding and landslides. At least 58 people were killed in Nepal after massive landslides engulfed homes following heavy rains throughout the country this week.

## Vajpayee to quit if forced on Ayodhya

PTI, New Delhi

Under attack from Opposition, Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee yesterday told the Lok Sabha he would "quit" rather come under any "compulsion" on the Ayodhya issue, and assured the House that there was no change in the government's stand.

"There is no compulsion. The day I feel I am under compulsion, I will quit rajpat (politics) and go," Vajpayee said while rejecting Samajwadi Party leader Mulayam Singh Yadav's charge that he was under "compulsion" to make such statements on Ayodhya.

Replying to an impromptu debate on the notice of adjournment motion given by Opposition members, the Prime Minister said there was no change in the Government's stand and what he said at Ayodhya was nothing "objectionable".

"There has been no change in my stand. I only said that the last wish of Paramhansji will be fulfilled," Vajpayee said, emphasising "I never said where the Ram temple can be constructed."

"I have stated hundreds of times what I said at Ayodhya while paying homage to Paramhansji," the Prime Minister said, maintaining that there were two ways to resolve the dispute - either through a negotiated settlement or a court verdict acceptable to all.

AFP adds: Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee, under withering opposition attack in parliament, Monday stressed he wanted a bitter dispute between Hindus and Muslims over a holy site in northern India settled through the courts or by negotiation.

Opposition members sparked an uproar in the lower house when they accused Vajpayee of "inciting communal passions" by his comments at the funeral of a Hindu priest in which he vowed to ensure a temple was built on the site, in the town of Ayodhya.

Addressing mourners Friday at the funeral in Ayodhya of priest Ramchandra Paramhans - the main force behind a rightwing Hindu drive to build a temple at the site - Vajpayee said: "I shall fulfil his last wish."

## India to trim defence spending

THE STATESMAN/ ANN, New Delhi

Pruned by Rs 50,000 crores, the 10th Defence Five Year Plan, delayed by about two years, is currently projected to be about Rs 450,000 crores.

The Plan is yet to be finalised: initially, the armed forces projected a requirement of Rs 496,000 crores, but the finances were not available. Even Rs 4.5 lakh crores will be difficult to reach as the defence outlay in the first two years of the plan have been about Rs 65,000 crores each.

Against the armed forces' wishes, the Rs 16,000 crore long-term project for the building of houses for armed forces has also been included.