

Officials lay out plan to question Saddam

Saddam capture to boost US debt mission

REUTERS, Washington

Buoyed by the capture of Saddam Hussein, US special envoy James Baker leaves on Monday for a mission to discuss Iraq debt relief with European leaders who are signaling a new openness toward Washington.

The trusted friend of President Bush will meet heads of state of France, Germany, Italy, Russia and Britain, and maybe others, to seek relief of Iraq's \$120 billion in debt.

Paris is his first stop, where he also will meet the new Iraqi government's finance minister and central bank governor. On a later trip, he is expected to visit the Gulf and Asia.

Until the weekend news that the fugitive Iraqi dictator had been caught by US forces, Baker had appeared unlikely to be welcomed with much generosity.

War opponents France, Germany and Russia were outraged by the announcement last week that they would be barred from \$18.6 billion in US-funded rebuilding contracts for Iraq.

But all three countries lauded Hussein's capture on Sunday. France, the fiercest war critic, went so far as to suggest the event might be a catalyst for world powers to unite over Iraq.

AP, Washington

First, find out whether Saddam Hussein knows of any impending guerrilla attacks planned against US troops or Iraqis.

Then ask where Izzat Ibrahim al-Douri and other remaining senior regime officials and insurgent leaders are hiding. Get Saddam to paint a picture of the resistance if he knows much about it, which some US officials doubt.

Down the road, when his interrogators have perhaps established a rapport with him, or perhaps even broken his will to resist questions, try to answer the many unresolved questions about Iraq's efforts to develop chemical, biological and nuclear weapons and ties to terrorists.

US intelligence and military officials laid out these priorities Sunday for their interrogation of the ousted Iraqi president,

believed to be under way already.

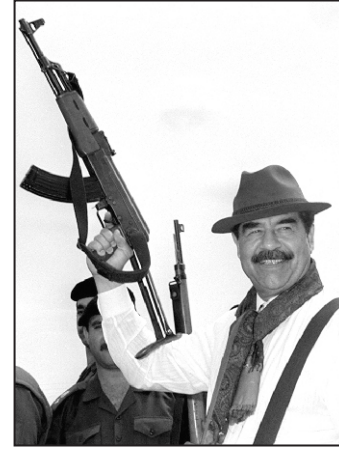
During the arrest of Saddam, US troops discovered "descriptive written material of significant value," one US commander in Iraq told The Associated Press on condition of anonymity. He declined to say whether the material related to the anti-coalition resistance.

Although Lt. Gen. Ricardo Sanchez, the top US military commander in Iraq, described Saddam as talkative and cooperative, other officials shied away from suggesting that he has provided any useful intelligence in the hours since his capture.

"He has not been cooperative in terms of talking or anything like that," Defence Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld told CBS' "60 Minutes."

Another official, speaking on condition of anonymity, described Saddam's demeanor as sullen, not overtly defiant but sarcastic.

The immediate hope of



American officials say that Saddam will have a wealth of knowledge on the guerrilla war being waged against the US-led occupation force and their Iraqi allies, officials said.



This FOX News Channel video grab shows the farmhouse where former Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein was captured. According to officials, US forces captured Saddam Saturday capping a massive eight-month manhunt by seizing him as he huddled in a camouflaged farmyard hole near his hometown of Tikrit.

Putting Saddam on trial Several options, but no certainties

AFP, Baghdad

As speculation mounted over what kind of justice the detained former Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein may face, options being bandied about ranged from a trial in his home country to an international tribunal like the one that former Yugoslav leader Slobodan Milosevic is facing.

The chairman of the US-installed interim governing council told AFP that Saddam would be tried by Iraqi judges in a special court set up to deal with war crimes cases, whose creation was announced just a few days ago.

"Saddam Hussein will be judged by Iraqi judges and the tribunal will work and be situated in Iraq, under the supervision of international experts," Abdel Aziz al-Hakim said after arriving in Paris late Sunday.

US President George W. Bush

vowed earlier that Saddam "will face the justice he denied to millions," without giving precise details of conditions or venue for a trial.

For his part Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld said Saddam's future would be determined in consultations "at a very high level" with US coalition partners after thorough legal analysis of the situation.

"Those are judgments that will be made by lawyers as we go along," Rumsfeld said on CBS' "60 Minutes" program.

In a US raid Saturday, 66-year-old Saddam was found in a hole under a farmhouse near the northern town of Tikrit. Some 750,000 dollars in cash was found with two AK-47 rifles and a pistol, according to officials.

Several US politicians called for Saddam to be put on trial, but differ in their opinion of how such a trial

should occur.

One of the would-be Democratic presidential candidates, Senator John Kerry, said a trial for Saddam could take place either in Iraq or before an international tribunal.

"We have to try Saddam Hussein and he must be held accountable in a way that has recognized world legitimacy. That could happen in Iraq, it could happen at the world court," said Kerry.

Republican Senator John McCain said he favored two trials, first one in Iraq led by an Iraqi government, then another outside Iraqi boundaries.

The Iraqi criminal tribunal would examine crimes committed under the 1968-2003 regime of Saddam Hussein, but likely would not begin work before a new Iraqi government takes over, sometime around July 2004.

Capture cheer fades into Iraqi ire at US

REUTERS, Baghdad

Joy at the capture of Saddam Hussein gave way to resentment toward Washington Monday as Iraqis confronted fresh the bloodshed, shortages and soaring prices of life under US occupation.

The morning after Iraq's US governor revealed the ousted strongman was a disheveled prisoner, Iraqis flooded the streets to snatch up newspapers emblazoned with photos of the man who ruled them by fear, now humbled and captive.

Many were ecstatic to see Saddam captured and hoped he would answer for his deeds but said they would not rush to thank America -- in their eyes the source of their problems since a US-led coalition toppled Saddam in April.

"I hope that we get the chance to try him our way, to let everyone who suffered make him taste what he had made us taste," said Ali Hussein, 29, a stationery shop owner who said he was still dizzy with joy.

"But whether he's in a hole or in jail, it does nothing for me today, it won't feed me or protect me or send my children to school," he said.

Even as news of Saddam's

capture sank in, car bombs ripped through two police stations in the capital, the latest in a series of attacks US forces blame on loyalists of Saddam and on foreign "terrorists" infiltrating Iraq.

President Bush warned that catching Saddam would not end attacks "by people who do not 'accept the rise of liberty in the heart of the Middle East,' implying a pledge of a better life many Iraqis said Bush was failing to keep.

"It's great that he's caught, but it wasn't him who screwed up the petrol and the electricity and everything else so badly, so now a canister of gas that was 250 dinars costs 4,000, if you can get one," said Ghazi, a 52-year-old dentist, from his car as he queued with hundreds of other drivers waiting for petrol.

"This is an oil country and it should be rich. It should not be Afghanistan."

Other drivers echoed the complaints of chronic fuel shortages in a country with the world's second-largest oil reserves, as well as of their treatment at the hands of troops who have killed civilians while hunting suspected Saddam partisans or pursuing criminals with Iraqi police.

Saddam capture gives Bush personal victory, political boost

AFP, Washington

The capture of Saddam Hussein is a personal victory for George W. Bush and another boost to his campaign to secure a new four-year term at the White House.

Bush once called the Iraqi dictator "the guy who tried to kill my dad" -- Saddam was accused of organising an assassination attempt on his father -- while insisting there was no element of personal revenge in the invasion of Iraq, which has since caused problems for the US leader.

Saddam's capture will put a new spring in the step of Bush, for whom Iraq remains the major obstacle to persuading the American people to give him a vote of confidence.

The "we got him" declaration by the US administrator in Iraq, Paul Bremer, highlighted the triumphant mood of the US government.

Even before the humiliating arrest in a bothole under a farmhouse in north-

ern Iraq, support for the war had been rising again in the United States.

Some 59 percent of respondents to a Gallup poll for USA Today/CNN released last week said the situation in Iraq was worth going to war over, up from 56 percent in November 16. Fifty-five percent said they approved of Bush's handling of his position, up from 50 percent in mid-November.

Ratings had improved since Bush's surprise visit to Baghdad last month to spend Thanksgiving with US troops.

The administration had accused the former dictator and his remaining loyalists of directing the insurgency that has taken a mounting toll on the 130,000 US troops in Iraq since Bush declared the end of major combat there on May 1.

About 200 US soldiers have been killed since then, more than in the invasion, and the image of Bush's triumphant May 1 speech on the USS Abraham Lincoln has been increasingly seized upon by opposition Democrats in their criticism of his Iraq policy.

Americans celebrate capture of 'big fish'

REUTERS, New York

The capture of Saddam Hussein that elated US troops in Iraq, was greeted on the streets of America on Sunday with a sense of relief that the end of the occupation might finally be in sight and that violent resistance would abate.

"We've spent a lot of time, a lot of money, and a lot of people have died for the cause. So to finally get the big fish, the big person, it's good for everybody," said Kevin Cullley in New York.

Americans began to learn of the success of "Operation Red Dawn" just before sunrise in the United States, as breathless television anchors, some still unshaven,

rushed to their studios to report on a major coup for the US military and President Bush.

As the surprise news sank in that the former Iraq leader who had been on the run for eight months was in US custody, Americans expressed joy and satisfaction, while hoping it would speed the return of troops.

"I think it'll help the situation and a lot of our people over there will stop getting killed and they can come home finally, probably," said Charles Felton in a snowy Times Square.

Guerrilla attacks have killed nearly 200 American soldiers since Bush declared major combat over on May 1.



Indian bookstall owner reads a newspaper whose frontpage reports the capture of former Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein at a newspaper and magazine stand on the streets in Bangalore yesterday. Though most Asian nations welcomed the capture of former Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein, expressing hope that it would stabilise the country and hasten its return to self-rule, the Indian government offered no immediate reaction.

European press says

Saddam capture brings chance for a new start

AFP, Paris

The capture of former Iraqi president Saddam Hussein is a godsend for the United States which must use the opportunity to hasten the handing over of power to the Iraqi people, European newspapers agreed yesterday.

Even left-wing opponents of the Bush administration such as France's Liberation newspaper said that the arrest of America's number-one wanted figure in Iraq could do much to reduce the levels of attacks that its forces have been subject to.

"The inglorious manner in which Saddam was picked up -- without the slightest opposition -- will perhaps finally destroy the myth of Saladin's heir with which he glorified himself and which was perpetuated by his eight months on the run," said Liberation, referring to the 12th-century Muslim warrior to whom the Iraqi leader liked to compare himself.

The conservative Le Figaro newspaper said the arrest "gives a

new authority to the Americans -- and this at a time when their policy is increasingly contested both in Iraq and in capitals around the world."

But will Washington seize the opportunity? it asked.

Greater scepticism about the effects Saddam's arrest will have on anti-American insurgency was expressed in the British Financial Times, which said there was nothing to show that the war of attrition against the occupation was an attempt to restore Saddam Hussein.

"The common thread of the insurgency -- leaving aside the contributions of Islamic Jihadis drawn to Iraq's target-rich environment -- is the defence of Sunni privileges," it said.

Writing in the British daily the Independent, veteran Middle East correspondent Robert Fisk -- a savage critic of US policy -- said the capture of the former leader would in fact encourage Iraqi resistance, because his remaining at liberty

had been the one thing stopping many from taking up arms.

"More and more Iraqis were saying before Saddam's capture that the one reason they would not join the resistance to US occupation was the fear that -- if the Americans withdrew -- Saddam would return to power," Fisk wrote.

"Now that fear has been taken away. So the nightmare is over -- and the nightmare is about to begin. For both the Iraqis and for us," he warned.

In Russia, the opposition Nevasimiya Gazeta said "the capture of the dictator should ease the discontent caused by the arrival of coffins and the struggle in the wings for Iraqi oil." The centrist Izvestia said the joy would "last maybe 10 days. Saddam's arrest will change nothing."

But in Germany there was greater optimism.

"The Americans have achieved a decisive success which will boost confidence in their rule," wrote Die Welt newspaper.

Students march and weep for Saddam

AFP, Tikrit

Some 300 students, some crying, demonstrated yesterday in Saddam Hussein's hometown of Tikrit to protest at the arrest by US forces of the ousted dictator.

Before being dispersed by Iraqi police and US troops, who struck and arrested several people, they shouted the usual Iraqi slogans, "With our blood, with our soul we will defend you Saddam Hussein."

"All Iraq sings the glory of Saddam Hussein", they chanted.

Some demonstrators wept and many carried old dinar notes bearing Saddam's face.

Najla Hussein, 21, studying education, said she turned out "to condemn the arrest of our president Saddam Hussein."

"We demand his immediate release," she added.

US forces found Saddam hiding down a hole outside Tikrit on Saturday night, after eight months on the run.

Meanwhile, the people of Tikrit, long the standard-bearers among Saddam Hussein loyalists, sat in stunned silence watching the astonishing pictures of the ex-president in US custody after eight months on the run.

In the coffee and tea shops along the main street, it took some time for reality to sink in, as the seated men drew on cigarettes in clouds of smoke.



An Iraqi university student holds a bill with the picture of Saddam Hussein during a rally in support of the captured leader at his home town of Tikrit, 180km north of Baghdad yesterday. Six hundred US soldiers nabbed the elusive Iraqi leader late Saturday after finding him hiding in a tiny hole dug under a small hut, just 15km southeast of his native town of Tikrit.