

Top aide turns Saddam over to US troops

AFP, Tikrit

The Iraqi man who gave up Saddam Hussein to US forces last weekend was his top aide through eight months on the lam, a senior US military intelligence officer told reporters.

"He was someone I would call his right arm," said Major Stan Murphy, the head of intelligence for the 4th Infantry Division's First Brigade in Saddam's hometown of Tikrit.

The major ruled out the possibility the informant, who is currently in detention, would receive any of the 25-million-dollar bounty on Saddam's head.

"He is a bad man and should rot in jail," he said.

The man, whose name the military will not reveal, was a long-time aide of Saddam and hailed from one of five major tribes in a 20-km stretch around Tikrit that the fallen dictator relied on to elude the Americans after Baghdad fell last April.

"He was in the five families. There were members of the five families that were in the security forces, the army" and the government, Murphy said.

Since April, Saddam's top lieutenant, along with four or five other Iraqis from the prominent Tikrit-area tribes, formed the inner circle that helped hide the fugitive dictator, implement his orders to the resistance for attacks, finance the insurgency and provide combatants with weaponry.

"He (Saddam) would give general guidance, hey I want to see more attacks, I want to see more of this. His enablers would then go out to their different tiers below them, give a little more specific guidance, maybe some money or weapons or something, and that tier would go out to the other tiers all the way down to the trigger puller," Murphy said.

There were four to nine tiers of the resistance, Murphy added.

But while the other enablers shared the burden of labour and their functions overlapped, the man who eventually informed on Saddam was the fugitive strongman's most trusted confidante.

"In my mind, he was that important... to get the general

guidance from Saddam and add specific details for everything," Murphy said.

The middle-aged man, whose name or job in the old regime Murphy refused to disclose, had started to serve Saddam in his late-teens or early twenties and had risen to become one of Saddam's most valued sidekicks.

He fit a stock profile of many of the men who served under Saddam. He was balding and heavily overweight, with an almost 50-inch waistline, and "loved women", Murphy said.

He also participated in the old regime's crimes against the Iraqi people, Murphy said, without disclosing the exact nature of his involvement in Saddam's abuses.

Indo-Pak border officials resume talks after 2-yr

AFP, Wagah

Pakistani and Indian officials resumed routine talks on border issues yesterday that had been suspended for two years because of tensions between the nuclear-capable rivals, officials said.

An eight-member delegation from India's Border Security Force crossed into Pakistani territory at the eastern Wagah border post for the talks, which had been held monthly before they were suspended.

The commander of the Pakistani post, Colonel Sher Zaman, presented his Indian counterpart Darbar Singh with a bouquet on his arrival.

"It is a very pleasant moment that both the sides have started (border) talks that remained suspended for two years," Singh told AFP.

The monthly talks are held to discuss and coordinate routine affairs like border crossings, boundary pillars, the movement of cattle and patrolling.



Pakistani Colonel Sher Zaman (CL) presents a bouquet of flowers to Indian Colonel Darbar Singh (CR) after Singh's arrival in Pakistan at the Wagah Border Post yesterday. Pakistani and Indian officials have resumed routine talks on border issues which had been suspended for two years because of tensions between the South Asian neighbours.



A TV grab taken from Arab satellite television Al-Jazeera shows the al-Qaeda network's alleged number two, Ayman al-Zawahiri in an audiotape broadcast Friday. Al-Zawahiri purportedly says that al-Qaeda is pursuing Americans everywhere.

'Libya had devices for uranium-enrichment, chemical weapons'

AFP, Washington

US and British officials visiting weapons production sites in Libya in recent months found uranium-enrichment devices and bombs for delivering chemical weapons, US officials said.

The visits came after Libyan officials contacted US and British officials in March, initiating nine months of secret talks that culminated Friday with Libya's pledge to renounce weapons of mass destruction, the sources said.

US and British officials saw chemical weapons and signs of a relatively advanced nuclear program in more than ten site visits in October and December, according to a senior White House official who briefed reporters on condition of anonymity.

A CIA report to Congress

released in November said that Libya had made its greatest strides with chemical weapons but had made little progress on its long-standing goal of acquiring or developing a nuclear weapon. The site visits contradicted the latter assessment, however.

"On the nuclear side, my understanding is that they did have a much further advanced program, including centrifuges," devices used to enrich uranium for use in nuclear weapons, the official said.

Building a centrifuge "is the long pole in the tent. Once you can do that, you can build a bomb," another administration official said, also speaking privately. "They told us that they had this program that was ultimately intended to produce a bomb."

Bhutan King leads troops to flush out Indian rebels

REUTERS, Guwahati

Bhutan's King Jigme Singye Wangchuk is leading his troops fighting to flush out Indian rebels holed up in the tiny Himalayan kingdom for the past 12 years, a Bhutanese official said yesterday.

The Buddhist kingdom launched its biggest-ever military offensive on Monday against around 3,000 guerrillas who have set up camps in its southern jungles and have been battling New Delhi's rule in India's remote northeast.

India has been pressing Bhutan for years to take action against the rebels who used to dart across the border for hit-and-run operations.

Bhutan, wedged between India and China, has rejected a cease-fire offer by the rebels and vowed to press on with its offensive in which more than 150 guerrillas have been killed.

About 500 rebels have surren-

dered to Bhutanese troops since the operation began.

"The king and his son are leading the troops in flushing Indian rebels out of Bhutanese soil," the government official, who did not want to be identified, told Reuters.

"Despite having led the troops, His Majesty is in good health and safe," he said, adding that the king was not directly involved in combat operations but was leading the troops.

As the operation entered its sixth day, the rebels fought back, killing a civilian and soldier, Indian police said.

A policeman said a group of heavily armed guerrillas with sophisticated weapons opened fire on a convoy of civilian vehicles, escorted by Bhutanese troops, about 40 km (25 miles) from the Indian border, killing two and wounding many others.

Rebel groups called a two-day general strike from Saturday in the

northeastern Indian state of Assam and parts of West Bengal to protest against the military offensive in Bhutan, but residents did not respond to the call.

PTI adds: A 48-hour 'general strike' called by insurgent outfits ULFA, NDFB and KLO to protest military operations against them in Bhutan began in Assam last morning amidst tight security partially affecting normal life in the state.

Though most of the educational institutions were closed in Guwahati and in other parts of the state, offices remained open. However, people had difficulty reaching their work places due to skeleton public transport service.

Long distance trains and air services operated but long distance buses plied with police escort.

Shops and markets remained closed in the first few hours of the bandh, which began at 5:00 am, but started opening as people came out of their houses for daily needs.

Millions of North Koreans may lose food aid: UN

REUTERS, Beijing

Nearly four million North Koreans will be deprived of UN food rations by February if foreign donors do not provide more aid to the communist state, the head of the UN World Food Programme said yesterday.

The comments by WFP Executive Director James Morris followed an emergency appeal last week for \$171 million worth of rations to feed 6.5 million North Koreans, mostly women and children, plagued by years of hunger compounded by shock price reforms.

With the timing of a second round of six-way negotiations to curtail North Korea's nuclear arms programme still uncertain, Chinese and US officials met in Beijing Friday to discuss the way forward.

The WFP says it needs the \$171 million to offset a drop in contributions, which in 2003 has already forced the WFP to cut off rations to several million North Koreans fed by the agency since the mid-1990s.

"We are about 60 percent resourced for this year," Morris told a news conference in Beijing. "And that means in January we'll probably stop feeding about three million people."

Cousin calls for Saddam's trial in int'l tribunal

AFP, Baghdad

Jamal Kamel Hassan al-Majid, a cousin of Saddam Hussein, has called for a fair trial for the captured Iraqi leader even though the former tyrant killed his two brothers along with nine members of his family.

"I wish that he be tried by an international tribunal. I don't want him to be tried by Iraqi judges in order to avoid the risk of any personal revenge," Jamal Kamel told AFP.

In 1996, Saddam ordered the execution of Jamal Kamel's brothers, General Hussein Kamel Hassan al-Majid and Colonel Saddam Kamel, who were married to Saddam's daughters, Raghda and Rana, respectively.

Nine other members of the family, including their father and sister, perished in the massacre after Saddam lured them back from exile in Jordan with a promise of an amnesty.

Jamal Kamel wants Saddam to pay for these crimes but he refuses to say whether he would like the former Iraqi president to face the death sentence, which many Iraqis are now demanding for the ousted leader.

Members of the US-backed

interim Iraqi Government Council insist that Saddam but be judged by an Iraqi tribunal inside Iraq.

"All the Governing Council members agree that Saddam must be tried in Iraq by Iraqi judges," Hamid al-Kifai, spokesman for the body appointed in July by the US occupation forces, told AFP Friday.

And Paul Bremer, the US civil administrator in Iraq, said on Friday that the deposed dictator "will be tried by the Iraqi courts when the Iraqi courts are ready."

Jamal Kamel does not care where Saddam is tried "as long as he is heard by an international tribunal. It could be in Iraq or outside the country."

"I want the tribunal that will judge Saddam to be hate-free," he said.

He also believes that Saddam, who was captured on December 13 near his hometown of Tikrit in northern Iraq, "surrendered to the Americans after contacting them through one of his personal bodyguards".

A senior US military intelligence officer, Major Stan Murphy, told reporters Friday in Tikrit that the Iraqi man who fingered Saddam was his top aide.

He described the man as Saddam's "right arm" who hailed

from one of five major tribes in a 20-kilometre (12-mile) stretch around Tikrit and said he is currently in detention. But he refused to name him.

Rife speculation that Saddam was betrayed by someone close to him does not hold well with Jamal Kamel.

"If he had been betrayed by one of his relatives, he would have fought to the last bullet," said Jamal Kamel, who said his life was spared from the wrath of Saddam thanks to the protection of powerful Sunni Muslim tribes in northern Iraq.

He believes Saddam gave himself up because he had no alternative.

"Saddam is over 65. He was tired and could be easily recognised by any Iraqi. He could not slip unnoticed in the population," he said.

Jamal Kamel also reports suggesting that Saddam was drugged.

"Unlike some people, I don't think he was drugged," he said.

Saddam's eldest daughter, Raghda, and his sister, Nawal Ibrahim al-Hasan, have said in separate interviews following his capture that he must have been drugged.

New infrared telescope lifts Universe's dusty veil

REUTERS, Washington

A new space telescope that looks at the cosmos with infrared detectors has lifted the dust veils from newborn stars and a bumpy comet, and revealed the detail in the spiral arms of a neighboring galaxy.

The Spitzer Space Telescope, named for the late astronomer Lyman Spitzer Jr., was launched from Cape Canaveral on Aug. 25. Its first images were released on Thursday by NASA.

Like the Hubble Space Telescope, Spitzer is part of NASA's Great Observatories program. Unlike Hubble, which takes pictures of the universe from high in Earth orbit, it makes its observations as it trails behind the Earth in orbit around the Sun.

One of the new telescope's first images shows a favorite of astronomers, the nearby galaxy Messier 81, located in the constellation Ursa Major (Great Bear), which includes the Big Dipper.

Messier 81 is about 12 million light-years from Earth -- a stone's throw in cosmic terms. A light-year is about 6 trillion miles, the distance light travels in a year.

Pakistan's top court rules

Muslim girls can marry on their own will

AFP, Islamabad

Pakistan's top court has ruled that adult Muslim women can marry whomever they like without the consent of their parents or guardians, reports said yesterday.

The Supreme Court declared Friday Muslim women no longer require the consent of their guardians to marry and can enter into a valid marriage of their own free will, the state-run Associated Press of Pakistan (APP) reported.

The ruling, which supports one made in 1981, overturned one in 1996 when Hafiz Abdul Waheed asked the Lahore High Court to declare the marriage of his daughter, Saima Waheed, invalid because she had married without his consent.

The court agreed that the marriage was invalid.

In 1997 Saima Waheed and her husband Arshad Ahmed took the matter to the Supreme Court, which overturned the lower court's

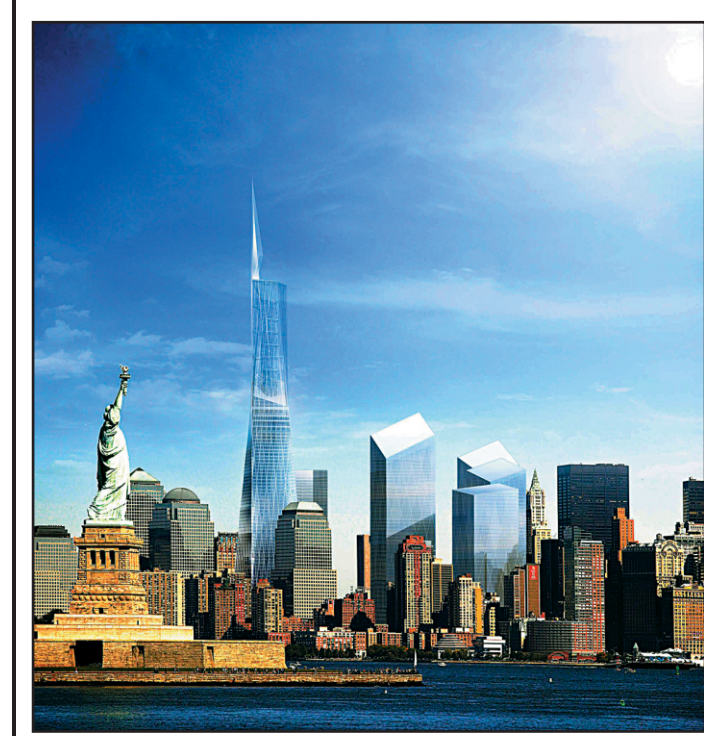
decision and declared the marriage legal, upholding a 1981 ruling by the Federal Shariat court.

The Federal Shariat Court, which was created in 1979 and deals with laws regarded as repugnant to Islam, had ruled that adult Muslim girls could marry without the permission of their parents or guardians.

Most marriages in Pakistan are arranged by the couple's parents but this is beginning to change as educated parents in the cities are taking into account the wishes of their children before deciding on whom they should marry.

However Pakistan is riddled with cases of people being killed by their relatives for allegedly shaming the family, including by marrying someone without consent, in what are called 'honour killings'.

More than 450 Pakistani women or girls were killed by relatives last year in honour killings, according to the Human Rights Commission.



This artist's rendition of the Freedom Tower (L back) shown with the Statue of Liberty (L front) in the foreground was released during a news conference unveiling the Freedom Towers Friday in New York. The Freedom Tower is to rise above the reconstructed World Trade Center site.

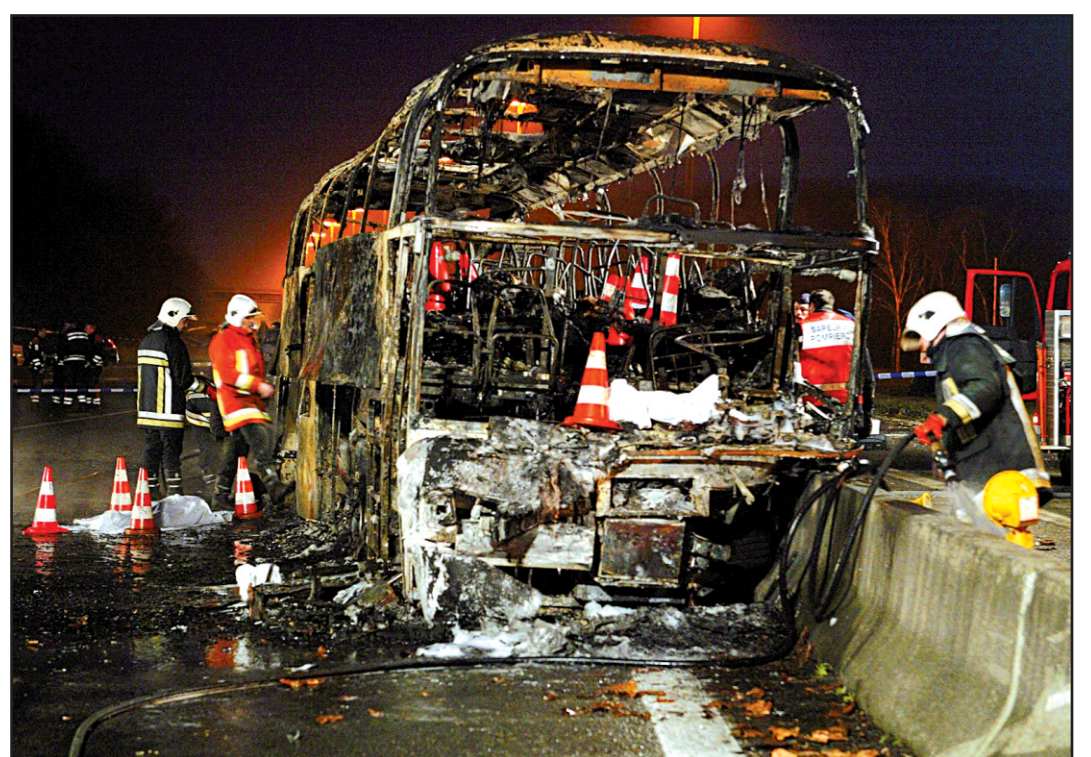
New tower design for WTC site unveiled

AP, New York

The signature skyscraper at the World Trade Center site will be a 1,776-foot glass tower that twists into the sky, topped by energy-generating windmills and a spire that evokes the Statue of Liberty, new plans revealed Friday.

Saying it will "dramatically reclaim" the Manhattan skyline on the plot where the twin towers once stood, Mayor Michael Bloomberg joined the architects and Gov. George E. Pataki in unveiling the plans for the Freedom Tower. Pataki said the building "will show the world that freedom will always triumph over terror."

The drawings and models show what will be the world's tallest skyscraper, supported by criss-crossing cables meant to resemble another nearby icon: the Brooklyn Bridge. The spire at the top suggests the torch-bearing arm of Lady Liberty lifted high in New York harbour.



The burnt out wreckage of a German coach stands by the Franco-Belgian border after the driver lost control and careered into buildings at the Hensies border crossing on the Belgian side of the frontier yesterday. Twelve passengers died and around forty others were injured when the coach hit border post buildings and then caught fire on the E19 motorway between Brussels-Paris.