

Maliki finally offers 'olive branch' to Iraq rebels

AFP, Baghdad

Iraq's hardline Shiite Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki on Sunday presented parliament with his long-awaited national reconciliation plan aimed at ending the violence plaguing the country.

"Reconciliation and national dialogue does not mean honouring and reaching out to the killers and criminals, no and a thousand nos--there is no reconciliation with those until they are punished for their crimes."

Maliki said the initiative, first floated on June 6, would be open only to those rebels who have realised the "futility" of opposing the political process that has produced a new constitution and an elected government.

"We know that there is a segment that has followed the devil's road and were embraced by the forces of darkness and the 'mukhabarat' will continue to commit crimes," Maliki said, referring to the feared intelligence services of the ousted regime of Saddam Hussein.

"To those who want to build and reconcile, we extend our hand with an olive branch to build our nation. To those who insist on aggression, terror and killing, we will confront them with firmness to protect our people."

The 24-point plan aims to quell the raging Shiite-Sunni sectarian violence and also rein in the Sunni-backed insurgency that has killed thousands of people across the country.

On Saturday Kurdish Lawmaker Mahmud Othman had revealed details of the plan, saying it would "offer amnesty to everyone except war criminals and those who have killed innocent Iraqis".

"The plan aims to open dialogue with all insurgent groups except Al-Qaeda and Saddamists, and to disarm militias," Othman told AFP.

He said the plan calls for a

"timetable for the build-up of armed forces to control the security situation so that the role of coalition forces will come to an end".

A report in the New York Times Sunday said that the top US commander in Iraq, General George Casey, foresees a major reduction in American forces there by the end of 2007, and the first cuts in September.

Othman said the reconciliation plan will offer compensation to the families of civilians killed by "coalition troops and those who have been wrongly detained", and will also focus on improving Iraqis' standard of living.

Maliki has already approved the release this month of about 2,500 prisoners held in US and Iraqi prisons, most of them Sunnis.

President Jalal Talabani, who announced his backing for Maliki's plan on Wednesday, had said an amnesty for those who had borne arms against the government will

be offered, provided they rejoin the political mainstream.

"National reconciliation will be open to everyone and this will be explicitly stated by the prime minister when he presents it," Talabani said.

Since taking office in April 2005, Talabani, a Kurd, has repeatedly called for an amnesty to be offered to Sunni insurgents.

But his calls have previously gone unheeded because of opposition from the US military and Shiite hardliners who dominate parliament.

Although some Sunnis have joined the political process, many have yet to reconcile themselves to losing power to the Shiite majority and continue to support the insurgency.

The head of the Arab League mission to Baghdad, Mokhtar Lamani, said last week that the biggest obstacle to reconciliation was a "severe lack of confidence"

among the feuding factions.

Many Sunnis believe they are the target of militias linked to Shiite ruling parties, while Shiites have a deep-seated suspicion towards any potential reconciliation partner after a wave of attacks that has hit the community hard since the destruction of a revered shrine in Samarra in February.

Ahead of Maliki's announcement, rebels killed at least eight people across the country.

Meanwhile Japan began withdrawing its military vehicles from Iraq Sunday as part of its overall pull-out of forces.

A convoy of more than a dozen Japanese military trucks and engineering equipment left the southern base of Samawa for Kuwait.

Last week Maliki announced that Japan will withdraw its 600 troops from Iraq next month by transferring the security of the southern Muthanna province to the fledgling Iraqi forces.



Wreckage of a house that was bombed in the restive city of Baquba yesterday, hours before the Iraqi prime minister unveiled a national peace plan.

More Saudis sent home from Guantanamo

AFP, Riyadh

Saudi Arabia said Sunday that 13 of its nationals who were held at the US detention camp in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, have returned home.

A 14th former detainee of Turkistan descent whose parents live in Saudi Arabia arrived with the group early Sunday, Interior Minister Prince Nayef bin Abdul Aziz said.

The Pentagon announced Saturday that 14 Saudi nationals had been sent home from Guantanamo, apparently counting the Turkistan-born former inmate.

The state SPA news agency quoted Nayef as expressing "ap-

preciation for the cooperation of the authorities concerned in the United States to facilitate the repatriation" of the group, who would be "subjected to the laws in force in the kingdom".

The Pentagon said one of the Saudis had been found by a special military tribunal to no longer be an enemy combatant, while the remaining 13 "were approved for transfer by an administrative review board decision".

The release of the group reduced the number of prisoners at the camp to "approximately 450", the Pentagon said.

It came after the US said two Saudis and one Yemeni committed suicide in the camp created after the September 11, 2001, terrorist

attacks to hold terror suspects captured by US troops in Afghanistan and other parts of the world.

The three were found in their cells on June 10 apparently after hanging themselves with cords fashioned from clothes and bedding, US officials said. Families of the three men disputed the account, accusing Washington of a cover-up.

Thirty-seven Saudis have now returned home from Guantanamo, leaving at least 90 Saudis still held in the notorious facility. The bodies of the two Saudis said to have committed suicide were also repatriated.

Approximately 310 Guantanamo detainees have now

been handed over to countries including Afghanistan, Albania, Australia, Bahrain, Belgium, Britain, Denmark, France, Kuwait, Morocco, Pakistan, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Spain, Sweden and Uganda, the Pentagon said.

About 120 detainees still at Guantanamo are eligible for transfer or release through a military-run review process.

"Departure of these remaining detainees approved for transfer or release is subject to ongoing discussions between the United States and other nations," the Defense Department said Saturday.

"The department expects that there will continue to be other transfers or releases of detainees." Continued detention of hundreds of foreign nationals without trial at the US naval base has prompted calls in Europe and elsewhere for the camp's closure.

Last month, British Attorney General Lord Goldsmith publicly called the detention center "unacceptable", adding that to many people it had become "a symbol... of injustice".

US President George W. Bush faced persistent calls for its closure during his visit to Europe this past week, but declined to give a specific commitment.

"I would like to end Guantanamo," he said on Wednesday in Vienna, after a summit with European Union leaders.

Abbas, Haniya hold pivotal meeting

AFP, Gaza

Palestinian Authority president Mahmud Abbas and prime minister Ismail Haniya of Hamas held a pivotal face-to-face meeting Saturday in a bid to halt a deadly power struggle.

Meanwhile, just hours after Abbas arrived in Gaza Friday, Israeli special forces seized two wanted Palestinians in what was the country's first raid into the Gaza Strip since its withdrawal last year.

An army spokesman said the two were militants in the Islamist Hamas movement who were plotting to attack Israel.

Hamas spokesman Sami Abu Zuhri said that the detainees, brothers Osama and Mustafa Abu Mu'amar, were sons of a Hamas activist but were not themselves members of the radical Islamist movement.

The incursion came as Abbas was pushing Hamas to accept an initiative drawn up by jailed faction leaders which calls for a Palestinian state on land occupied in 1967, an end to attacks inside Israel and a

Japan begins withdrawal from Iraq

AFP, Basra

Japan began withdrawing its forces from Iraq Sunday five days after deciding to end its first overseas military deployment since World War II in a country where hostilities are under way.

A convoy of more than a dozen military vehicles and engineering equipment left the Japanese base in the southern province of Muthanna for Kuwait, an AFP photographer reported from the Kuwaiti border.

Japanese military officials in Samawa confirmed that the withdrawal of its 600 troops from Iraq had begun with the dispatch of military trucks and other equipment to Kuwait.

The convoy of small military vehicles, bulldozers and other engineering equipment used in reconstruction work left the Samawa base at around 6:45 am (0245 GMT) and is now in Kuwait, a Japanese military official told the photographer.

However none of the 600 soldiers stationed in Samawa formed part of the convoy.

On June 20 Japan ordered its troops to leave Iraq, ending its first military mission since World War II to a country where fighting is under way.

Japan relies on British and Australian troops for protection in Iraq as its own troops are barred from using force.

The Japanese withdrawal is expected to be complete by late July.

Last week Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki announced that Iraqi forces will assume responsibility for security in Muthanna province -- the first such handover of a region from coalition troops to fledgling Iraqi forces.

Japan's military mission, which has helped reconstruct the relatively peaceful area around the city of Samawa since January 2004, is the first of its kind since Japan was forced by the United States to renounce war after World War II.

The Japanese troops suffered no casualties and did not fire their weapons.

First US troop cuts in Iraq in Sept: NYT

AFP, New York

The top US commander in Iraq foresees a major reduction in US forces there by the end of 2007, and the first cuts in September, The New York Times reported Sunday.

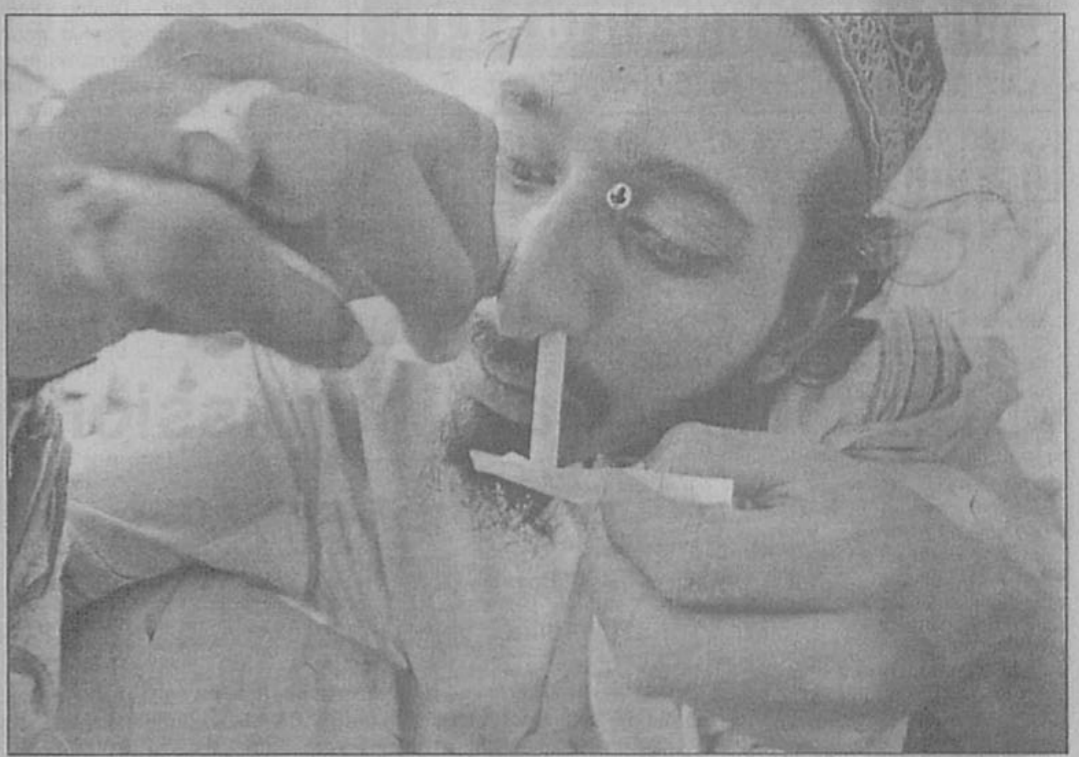
"According to a classified briefing at the Pentagon this week by the commander, General George W. Casey Jr., the number of American combat brigades in Iraq is projected to decrease to five or six from the current level of 14 by December 2007," the report said, citing unnamed US officials.

"Under the plan, the first reductions would involve two combat brigades that would rotate out of Iraq in September without being replaced. Combat brigades, which generally have about 3,500 troops, do not make up the bulk of the 127,000-member American force in Iraq," it noted.

The US officials underscored that "any withdrawals would depend on continued progress, including the development of competent Iraqi security forces, a reduction in Sunni Arab hostility toward the new Iraqi government and the assumption that the insurgency will not expand beyond Iraq's six central provinces," the report said.

Yet "even so, the projected troop withdrawals in 2007 are more significant than many experts had expected," it added.

In the past week, more than a dozen US troops have been killed around Iraq.



A drug addict sniffs heroin in Karachi on the eve of international anti-narcotics yesterday. Traffickers often use Pakistan as a transit point for drugs from Afghanistan, the world's biggest producer of opium, from which heroin is made.

UN confce to curb small arms trade opens today

AFP, United Nations

A major UN conference kicks off here today to assess international efforts to choke off the illegal global trade in small arms which kill an estimated 1,000 people a day.

Some 2,000 delegates from governments, international and regional bodies as well as civil society are to attend the two-week gathering to review an action program put in place by member states five years ago for tougher global small arms controls.

"The conference offers an opportunity for all countries to review their pledges to get rid of illegal trade in small arms and to develop a strategy for further implementation of the UN program of action agreed in 2001," said Sri Lanka's UN ambassador Prasad Kariyawasam, who will chair the conference.

On the opening day, a Million Faces petition, billed as the world's largest photo petition, will be presented to UN chief Kofi Annan to urge world leaders to stem the one-

billion-dollar annual global trade in small arms and light weapons.

Experts put the number of such weapons in circulation worldwide at 640 million.

A photo opportunity outside UN headquarters will feature a huge AK47, built out of prosthetic limbs to symbolize the human cost of the global arms trade, in front of the giant photos from the petition, which has been signed by people from more than 160 countries.

The faces on the petition will represent the million people who have been killed by small arms since 2003. The project is an initiative from the Control Arms Campaign, which brings together Amnesty International, Oxfam International and the International Action Network on Small Arms (IANSA), an alliance of some 600 non-governmental organizations.

But the conference has drawn the ire of the National Rifle Association (NRA), the lobby of US gun owners, which views it as a bid to take away Americans' guns and a first step toward a global treaty to

ban gun ownership by civilians.

"I have received over 100,000 letters from some US public, criticizing me personally," Kariyawasam told reporters Wednesday. "I think some members of the US public are totally misinformed and we invite them to participate in this conference."

"The program of action does not refer to legal possession of small arms by any entity. It is only about illegal possession and illegal trafficking," he added.

Wayne LaPierre, the NRA executive vice president, argued in The Economist weekly last month that the UN aims to take away Americans' guns because it is a club of governments, some of which want to "strip opposition forces of the means to challenge their authority."

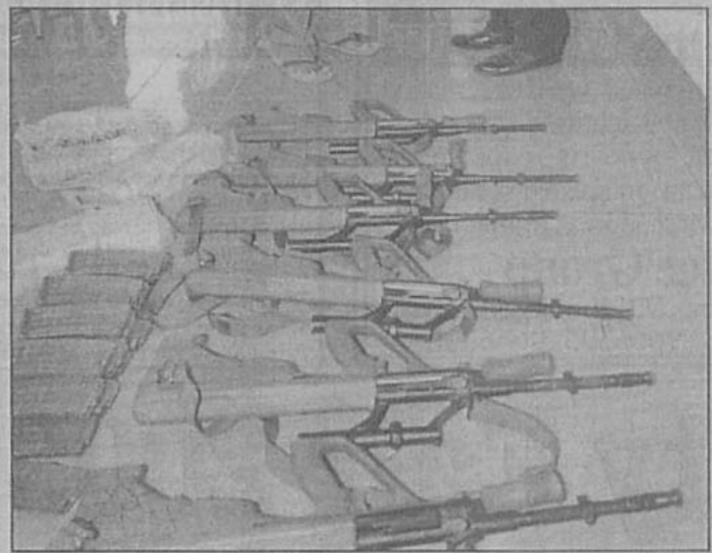
LaPierre, whose new book is titled "The Global War on Your Guns: Inside the UN Plan to Destroy the Bill of Rights," said individual gun ownership is the "ultimate protection against tyranny".

Non-governmental groups argue that their goal is to keep tyrants from becoming armed.

"The real news is that one million people from 160 countries around the world are... demanding that governments agree tough global standards for international arms transfers so that guns do not fall into the hands of human rights abusers, warlords and criminals," said Anthea Lawson, an IANSA spokeswoman.

Lawson said Britain was to propose at the conference global guidelines to prevent transfers of small arms that could be used for violations of human rights and humanitarian law or sales to countries under embargo.

The guidelines, if adopted, "will give a major boost" to negotiations in the General Assembly in October for a comprehensive treaty on arms transfers, she said.



ICDDR,B: Centre for Health and Population Research VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT. ICDDR,B: Centre for Health and Population Research invites applications from the suitable candidates for the position of Senior Scientific Officer for Clinical Microbiology Laboratory at Dhaka under the Laboratory Sciences Division. Appointment will be made on Fixed-term basis for 02 (two) years. Pay level: 478,360-19,680-714,310/- per annum inclusive of house rent and conveyance allowances with other admissible benefits. Other benefits/facilities: 14.8% retirement fund contribution by the Centre, Children allowance @Tk.1200/= up to two children, free medical facilities for dependent spouse and two children, free group life insurance, and subsidized transport, canteen, baby care facilities. Job Profile: The primary responsibilities of the post holder are to perform independently the technical tasks for the productivity of the clinical microbiology laboratory, quality assurance in identifying the microbial agents from various biological samples, determine their anti-microbial resistance and report the results as per standard operating procedure (SOP). The incumbent will also standardize instrument and assure maintenance. Keep her/himself updated on modern automated biotechnology in microbial system and evaluate new test(s) to adopt in the lab. S/he will organize, tabulate and analyze the data originated in the clinical microbiology laboratory for management and scientific reports/manuscripts, assist the supervisor in preparing annual budget, costing of tests, updating the laboratory technical procedure. S/he will also supervise the junior staff and participate in training the international and national training fellow(s). Requirements: MBBS/ Masters degree in Microbiology with post-graduate training from any reputed university/ institution. Minimum 04 (four) years work experience in the field of microbiology and/or biotechnology including molecular microbiological techniques. Length of experience may be relaxed up to 03 (three) years in case of candidates having M Phil in Microbiology or Post-graduate training in Biotechnology. Supervisory and management skill to run the laboratory independently and techniques of microbial isolation, identification and anti-microbial susceptibility testing procedure and interpret microbial data for physicians use and organize the data for scientific reports and manuscripts. Excellent skill in both Bangla and English is required. Applications with bio-data detailing experience and other particulars along with a copy of recent passport-size photograph and copies of certificates should reach to Advertiser, Box #A-146 C/O The Daily Star, 19 Karwan Bazar, Dhaka-1215 by July 06, 2006. Special information: ICDDR,B is an equal opportunity employer and particularly welcomes applications from women candidates. Any persuasion will disqualify the candidature. Only short listed candidates shall be invited for the interview. Please write the position applied for at the top of the envelope. Visit ICDDR,B website on: www.icddr.org

Trading Corporation of Bangladesh (TCB) IMPORT SECTION TCB Bhaban, Kawran Bazar, Dhaka-1215 Invitation for Tenders TRADING CORPORATION OF BANGLADESH (TCB) 1 Ministry/Division Ministry of Commerce 2 Agency Trading Corporation of Bangladesh (TCB) 3 Procuring Entity Name Trading Corporation of Bangladesh (TCB) 4 Procuring Entity Code Not used at present 5 Procuring Entity District Dhaka 6 Goods Goods 7 Invitation for File No. TCB/IMP-760/Purchase of Chhola(Gram)/2006 8 Invitation Ref No. 22-06-2006 9 Date 22-06-2006 KEY INFORMATION 9 Procurement Method Open Tendering Method (National) FUNDING INFORMATION 10 Budget and Source of Funds TCB's own fund PARTICULAR INFORMATION 11 Tender Package name Purchase of Chhola (Gram) 12 Tender Last Selling Date 13-07-2006 Date Time 13 Tender Closing Date and Time 16-07-2006 11:00 A.M. 14 Tender Opening Date and Time 16-07-2006 11:15 A.M. 15 Name & Address of the office(s) - Selling Tender Document (Principal) - Receiving Tender Document - Opening Tender Document Sonali Bank, Kawran Bazar Branch, TCB Bhaban, Dhaka, Trading Corporation of Bangladesh (TCB), Import Section, TCB Bhaban, 1 No. Kawran Bazar, Dhaka. Board Room of TCB, TCB Bhaban, 1# Kawran Bazar, Dhaka. No Pre-tender meeting will be held. 16 Place/Date/Time of Pre-tender meeting (Optional) INFORMATION FOR TENDERER 17 Eligibility of Tenderer All eligible tenderer from all countries except Israel. 18 Brief Description of Goods 100 M. Tons. Chhola (Gram) 19 Price of Tender Document (Tk) Tk. 1,000/= (One thousand) per set 20 Lot Identificati on of Lot Location Tender Security Amount (Tk) Completion Time in Weeks / Months 20 1 Chhola (Gram) TCB's Godown at 230 Tejaon I/A and/or 344/C Tejaon I/A, Dhaka. Tk. 43,000/= Within 10(Ten) days from the date of contract signing PROCURING ENTITY DETAILS 21 Name of Official Inviting Tender MD. AZHARUL FAIZ 22 Designation of Official Inviting Tender Senior Executive (Import), TCB 23 Address of Official Inviting Tender TCB Principal Office, Kawran Bazar, Dhaka. 24 Contact details of Official Inviting Tender Tel. No. 8120031 Fax No. 880-2-8113582 e-mail: tcb@bdonline.com 25 The procuring entity reserves the right to accept or reject all tenders Senior Executive(Import) Trading Corporation of Bangladesh (TCB) TCB Bhaban, 1 No. Kawran Bazar, Dhaka GD - 1648

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