

BRIEFLY

Sirens wail in Bahrain: Air raid sirens wailed in Bahrain Saturday when the Gulf island state within range of Iraqi missiles, staged its first public test of its readiness for war, reports Reuter.

Bahrainis in the northeastern town of Muharraq were the first to hear the high-pitched screech of the sirens, intended to warn them of Iraqi air raid or missile attack.

Close to the cause way leading from Muharraq to the capital Manama witnesses said the sound of sirens was faint and people carried their business watched by police.

S. Africa offers US base: South Africa would permit US forces involved in a Gulf war to use its air bases and harbours, but no request has been made, Foreign Affairs Minister Pik Botha says, reports AP.

Speaking to reporters late Friday after meeting with Herman Cohen in Pretoria, the assistant US secretary of state for African affairs, Botha said the United States could fully rely on South African support. He described such support as making air bases and harbours available to US forces.

South African officials have previously backed the US-led alliance against Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, but the government has not sent troops to join the multinational force preparing for possible war.

A United Nations deadline for Iraq to leave Kuwait or face possible military action expires Tuesday.

Kuwaiti envoy leaves Iraq: Iraq has allowed the former Kuwaiti envoy to leave Baghdad more than five months after his country was invaded by Iraqi troops and annexed, an Arab diplomat said in Baghdad Saturday, reports AP.

Ambassador Ibrahim Jassim al-Bahwa was allowed to leave for Jordan a few days ago after an appeal made by a country friendly to Iraq, said the diplomat, speaking on condition of anonymity.

Al-Bahwa was banned from travel after the Aug 2 invasion and was deprived of his diplomatic status.

His children were allowed to leave last September for school in Europe, and he was free to move about without any restrictions in Iraq.

Al-Bahwa is a career diplomat and served in the Kuwaiti Foreign Ministry before being named envoy to Iraq.

Last UK diplomat in Baghdad: The last British diplomat remaining in Baghdad left the embassy on Saturday, travelling overland to Amman, Jordan on his way home, a Foreign Office spokeswoman said in London, reports AP.

Chris Segar, the consul general, "is expected back in (Britain) within the next couple of days," the spokeswoman said, speaking on condition of anonymity.

His departure coincided with that of a chartered Iraqi Airways jetliner, calling itself the "Last Flight," that left Frankfurt ferrying the last six American Embassy officials and 36 other Western diplomats and private citizens.

The Foreign Office ordered its other diplomats home earlier this week. Ambassador Harold Walker and four other diplomats arrived in London via Amman on Friday.

Call for restraint in Gaza: A prominent Palestinian nationalist, Faisal Husseini, called in Jerusalem Saturday on Palestinians in Israeli-occupied territories to exercise restraint if war erupts in the Gulf, reports AFP.

An escalation in violence would provide Israel with a pretext to expel and to strike hard at Palestinians, said the head of Arab Studies Centre in Arab East Jerusalem.

Mr. Faisal told a press conference that the three-year-old Palestinian uprising in the West Bank and Gaza strip should be maintained at the current level so as to thwart what he called an Israeli plan for mass expulsions.

British computer found: Ministry of Defence officials announced in London on Friday the return of the army computer, believed to contain important state secrets on Britain's preparations for possible war in the Gulf which was stolen two weeks ago from the boot (trunk) of a senior officer's car, reports AFP.

The computer was returned to the Ministry on Monday by post in a plain paper package, a Ministry spokesman said.

The spokesman refused to reveal the contents of a note, sent by the thief, and contained in the same package as the missing computer.

The computer was stolen along with a number of important documents after use in a briefing session on the Gulf for Prime Minister John Major.

28 Colombian rebels die: At least 28 leftist guerrillas and two soldiers died in a three-day battle between rebels and government troops in southern Colombia, the army said in Bogota Saturday, reports AP.

Government forces supported by helicopter gunships continued to battle rebels belonging to the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, or FARC, near an army base located in the mountains 110 miles (175 kilometers) south of Bogota, according to an army statement.

Nine soldiers have been wounded and five have disappeared in the fighting, which began last Wednesday when the FARC attacked the military base.

The rebel death toll is the highest in a single battle since the FARC began a bloody offensive on New Year's Eve.

Political code in Nepal: A code of conduct has been formulated by the two-member political commission in Kathmandu aiming to resolve conflicts and clashes and guide relations between various political parties in Nepal, reports PIT.

The two-member commission of Mr. Daman Dhungana (Nepali Congress) and Mr. Chandra Prakash Mainali (United Nepal Communist Party - Marxist and Leninist) was constituted by the interim coalition government amidst reports of clashes between the two groups.

Under the code of conduct running into twelve points, no party should interfere or obstruct when any group is carrying out its campaign or organisational work in a democratic manner and in pursuit of its ideals and programmes.

Shah Nawaz dead: Sardar Shah Nawaz, Pakistan's UN Ambassador from 1982 to 1989, died of cancer in a New York hospital on Friday at the age of 74, reports Reuter.

The Pakistani UN mission in New York said his body will be flown to Pakistan on Sunday.

Shah Nawaz, who is survived by his wife, Begum Maliha Shah Nawaz, was a career diplomat.

He joined the Pakistani foreign service in 1950 and was Ambassador to Tehran from 1968 to 1972.

He was Foreign Secretary from 1977 to 1980 and secretary-general of the Foreign Ministry from 1980 to 1982.

Evacuation from Somalia: Italy, using two aircraft, finally evacuated its embassy in the capital of war-torn Somalia in a second attempt Saturday.

The planes have evacuated everyone who was at the Embassy. They are on the way here and we are rushing to the airport," said an official of the Italian Consulate in Mombasa, an Indian Ocean port town in Kenya.

"We don't know how many people are on board or who they are," the official said in Nairobi.

The Italian Foreign Ministry in Rome said Friday that 30 staff members, 20 other Italians and 40 people of other nationalities had taken shelter in the embassy.

Reports said some were injured and one, a Korean, might have been killed.

Georgian policemen killed: Two Georgian policemen were killed along with one of their attackers on Friday in Tskhinvali, south Ossetia, the scene of repeated clashes between Georgians and Ossetians over the last several days, Tass reported in Moscow on Saturday, reports AFP.

Four policemen were also injured by gunfire, along with an undetermined number of their assailants. In another incident, shots were fired at a building belonging to the Georgian police.

'You will pay a terrible price,' letter says Bush threatens to destroy Iraqi military installations

WASHINGTON, Jan 13: U.S. President George Bush threatened Iraqi President Saddam Hussein with the destruction of Iraq's military establishments in the letter rejected by Iraqi Foreign Minister Tariq Aziz rejected at this week's fruitless peace talks in Geneva, reports AP.

In the letter, the text of which was released Saturday by the White House, Mr. Bush also warned Mr. Hussein against using chemical or biological weapons or trying to destroy Kuwait's oil fields in the event of armed conflict.

"You and your country will pay a terrible price if you order unconscionable acts of this sort," he said. There can be no reward for aggression, nor will there be any negotiation, Mr. Bush said in the letter, which was handed to Mr. Aziz by Secretary of State James Baker.

"However, by its full compliance (with U.N. resolutions demanding Iraq's withdrawal from Kuwait), Iraq will regain the opportunity to rejoin the international community, he said.

Mr. Bush told Mr. Hussein more immediately, Iraq and the Iraqi military establishment will escape destruction if Iraq pulls out of Kuwait.

"But unless you withdraw from Kuwait completely and without condition, you will lose more than Kuwait. What is at issue here is not the future of Kuwait -- it will be free, its government will be restored -- but rather the future of Iraq. The choice is yours to make, he said.

Mr. Bush had described the letter as direct, and Mr. Aziz refused to accept it to take to Mr. Hussein, complaining it was rude.

Reuter adds: Here is the text of a letter from U.S. President George Bush to Iraqi President Saddam Hussein. The White House released the letter on Saturday. It was dated January 5.

U.S. Secretary of State James Baker requested during meetings in Geneva with Iraqi Foreign Minister Tariq Aziz that the letter be relayed to Saddam, but Aziz refused, saying the letter's language was too rude.

Bush wrote: Mr. President: We stand today at the brink of war between Iraq and the world. This is a war that began with your invasion of Kuwait. This is a war that can be ended

only by Iraq's full and unconditional compliance with UN Security Council Resolution 678.

I am writing you now, directly, because what is at stake demands that no opportunity be lost to avoid what would be a certain calamity for the people of Iraq. I am writing, as well, because it is said by some that you do not understand just how isolated Iraq is and what Iraq faces as a result. I am not in a position to judge whether this impression is correct. What I do, though, is try in this letter to reinforce what Secretary Baker told your Foreign Minister and eliminate

any uncertainty of ambiguity that might exist in your mind about where we stand and what we are prepared to do. The international community is united in its call for Iraq to leave all of Kuwait without condition and without further delay. This is not simply the policy of the United States, it is the position of the world community as expressed in no less than twelve Security Council resolutions.

We prefer a peaceful outcome. However, anything less than full compliance with UN Security Council Resolution 678 and its predecessors is unacceptable. There can be no reward for aggression. Nor will there be any negotiation. Principle cannot be compromised. However, by its full compliance, Iraq will gain the opportunity to rejoin the international community. More immediately, the Iraqi military establishment will escape destruction. But unless you withdraw from Kuwait completely and without condition, you will lose more than Kuwait. What is at issue here is not the future of Kuwait -- it will be free, its government will be restored -- but rather the future of Iraq. This choice is yours.

The United States will not be separated from its coalition partners. Twelve Security Council resolutions, 28 countries providing military units to enforce them, more than one hundred governments complying with sanctions -- all highlight the fact that it is not Iraq against the United States, but Iraq against the world. That most Arab and Muslim countries are arrayed against you as well should reinforce what I am saying. Iraq cannot and will not be able to hold on to Kuwait or exact a price for leaving.

AP adds from Brussels: If a war starts in the Gulf, few NATO countries will have soldiers fighting alongside their American allies. Despite U.S. requests, most European nations have shown little interest in sending ground forces to the region, even as a symbolic display of support.

They cite constitutional restrictions, coordination problems with American troops and limited military strength. Some observers are less kind. "The Europeans don't have much stomach for a war," said Jene Sharp, senior researcher at the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute in Sweden.

Foreign Minister Mark Eyskens of Belgium said: "Europe is an economic giant, A political dwarf and a military worm." Eyskens, discussing the imbalance of U.S. and European forces in the Gulf, said it was "not because the United States wants it that way, but because we are incapable."

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A cartoonist's view of aftermath of a possible Gulf war.



SOMEWHERE IN SAUDI ARABIA --- A camel in the Saudi desert takes no notice as an American Sheridan tank from the 82nd Airborne Tank Division, now on high alert, takes position. The 82nd is in Saudi Arabia as part of Operation Desert Shield likely to be pressed into service after the January 15 deadline --AFP photo

200 mines spotted in Gulf: heat sizzling

NICOSIA, Jan 13: Crews of Iranian oil tankers have spotted nearly 200 mines drifting in the Gulf over the past four days, the Iranian news agency IRNA said yesterday, reports Reuter.

In a report from the Gulf port of Bushra, it quoted military experts as saying the mines were of the floating type with high explosive power and threatened ships and oil rigs.

A report from Saudi Arabia adds: "The line in the sand" that U.S. President George Bush drew when he challenged Iraq militarily over its invasion of Kuwait cuts across one of the bleakest regions on earth.

In the summer, the heat is sizzling and during the winter the cold is bone-chilling. Part of the year, huge sandstorms sweep across the desert with the ferocity of a snow blizzard.

For an army, the terrain presents other challenges.

Lack of geographic landmarks makes it easy to get lost and the mostly flat ground offers few places for a soldier to hide.

Iraq invaded neighboring Kuwait on Aug. 2, and U.S. responded by sending 250,000 troops to Saudi Arabia at the invitation of King Fahd. The U.S. deployment, code-named Desert Shield, grew to 360,000 troops and was joined by 245,000 soldiers from 27 countries, working under a U.N. Security Council mandate to force Iraq out of Kuwait, if talks failed.

Iraq has 540,000 troops on its southern border and in Kuwait. The terrain seems to give neither side an advantage.

U.S. troops train for desert warfare at the National Training Center in California's Mojave Desert and in Texas, home of the 1st Cavalry Division and the 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment.

Forbes Magazine ranks Fahd as the world's second-richest man after the Sultan of Brunei, with a personal fortune of 18 billion dollars. He is reputed to have three wives and eight

sons, most educated in the United States. Another report from Nicosia says: As the threat of a shooting war in the Gulf intensifies, radio stations on both sides are stepping up psychological warfare seeking to sway Arab opinion in their favour.

Iraqi radio stations like "Hily Makkah Radio" each day urge Saudis to overthrow their "traitor and agent" king. The broadcasts tell listeners how to make bombs with which to wage a "jihad", or holy war against Americans and other nationalities arrayed against Iraqi President Saddam Hussein.

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Off the Record

Anderson had borrowed \$500 to get Nobel

PASADENA (California) Jan 13: Professor Carl David Anderson, who won the Nobel prize for physics in 1936 and had to borrow 500 dollars to go to Stockholm to collect his prize, died on Friday at age 85, a spokesman for the California Institute of Technology said, reports Reuter.

During World War II, Anderson was asked to direct the development of the atomic bomb, a job he turned down. The post eventually went to J. Robert Oppenheimer and Anderson worked on a solid propellant rocket project.

Anderson, who died in San Marino, California, after a short illness, discovered the positron, the first particles of antimatter shown to exist, the Institute spokesman said.

Anderson had to borrow 500 dollars from another Nobel prize winner for physics, Robert Millikan, to collect his prize.

Dogs really love him

NEW YORK, Jan 13: An elderly dog lover who died of natural causes in her New York home earlier this week was partly eaten by the 18 malnourished dogs she left behind, police said, reports Reuter.

The mutilated body of Anna Baics, who was in her 80s, was found in her home on Tuesday afternoon, police said.

She had been caten from the waist down by the 18 dogs roaming around her home, which authorities said was littered with canine feces, covered in cobwebs and devoid of all furniture.

Baics had died earlier in the week from natural causes, a spokeswoman said.

The dogs, mixed breeds found suffering from malnutrition and mange, were being cared for by animal welfare officials.

Not all letters innocent

DENVER, A man was jailed on 200 dollars' bail after throwing packets of sexually threatening letters at Olympic figure skater Katarina Witt during a performance, police said, reports AP.

Harry Veltman III, 46, was arrested Friday at McNichols Sports Arena. He was charged with harassment.

Detective John Wyckoff said Veltman told Witt in the typed letters "what he wanted to do to her." Some letters contained sexual threats, Wyckoff said.

Witt, 25, who is on a 26-city tour, finished the performance without incident after the bundles were thrown on the ice. The spotlight operator illuminated the packets so she wouldn't trip over them.

Witt won two Olympic gold medals in 1988 as a member of the East German team.

Judge fed up with Noriega

MIAMI, Jan 13: A Federal Judge on Friday set a trial date of June 24 for former Panamanian strongman Manuel Noriega, who has been in custody here for more than a year awaiting trial on cocaine conspiracy charges, reports Reuter.

"I just can't let this go on any longer," said Judge William Hoeveler, "who has delayed the start several times while pre-trial issues were debated.

One of the chief issues concerned millions of dollars of Noriega's assets, frozen in European bank accounts, which Noriega's defence team has demanded the government unblock in order to free their fees.

Hoeveler set January 25 for the defence team to decide whether they will continue representing Noriega, who surrendered to U.S. forces in Panama last January and sat quietly in the courtroom on Friday, dressed in a khaki military uniform, listening to the testimony.

This is FBI!

ROCHESTER (New York): A bank was robbed twice within four hours, the second time just a half-hour after FBI agents investigating the first robbery had left, reports AP.

Bank officials "were in a little bit of shock, but I think they feel the same as we do, that it was just a coincidence," said FBI agent Gene Harding.

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Iraqi arms worry surgeons

LONDON, Jan 13: Military secrecy about some of the weapons which may be used in a Gulf war could leave doctors unprepared to treat wounded troops, two British plastic surgeons warned Friday, reports AP.

A letter to the British Medical Journal, they called for more information about potential chemical, biological and nuclear weapons.

"With the rapidity of modern warfare and sophisticated evacuation and first aid, many patients will be returned (to Britain) in less time than it would have taken to reach a field dressing station during the battle of the Somme in 1915," wrote Professor Angus McGrouther of London

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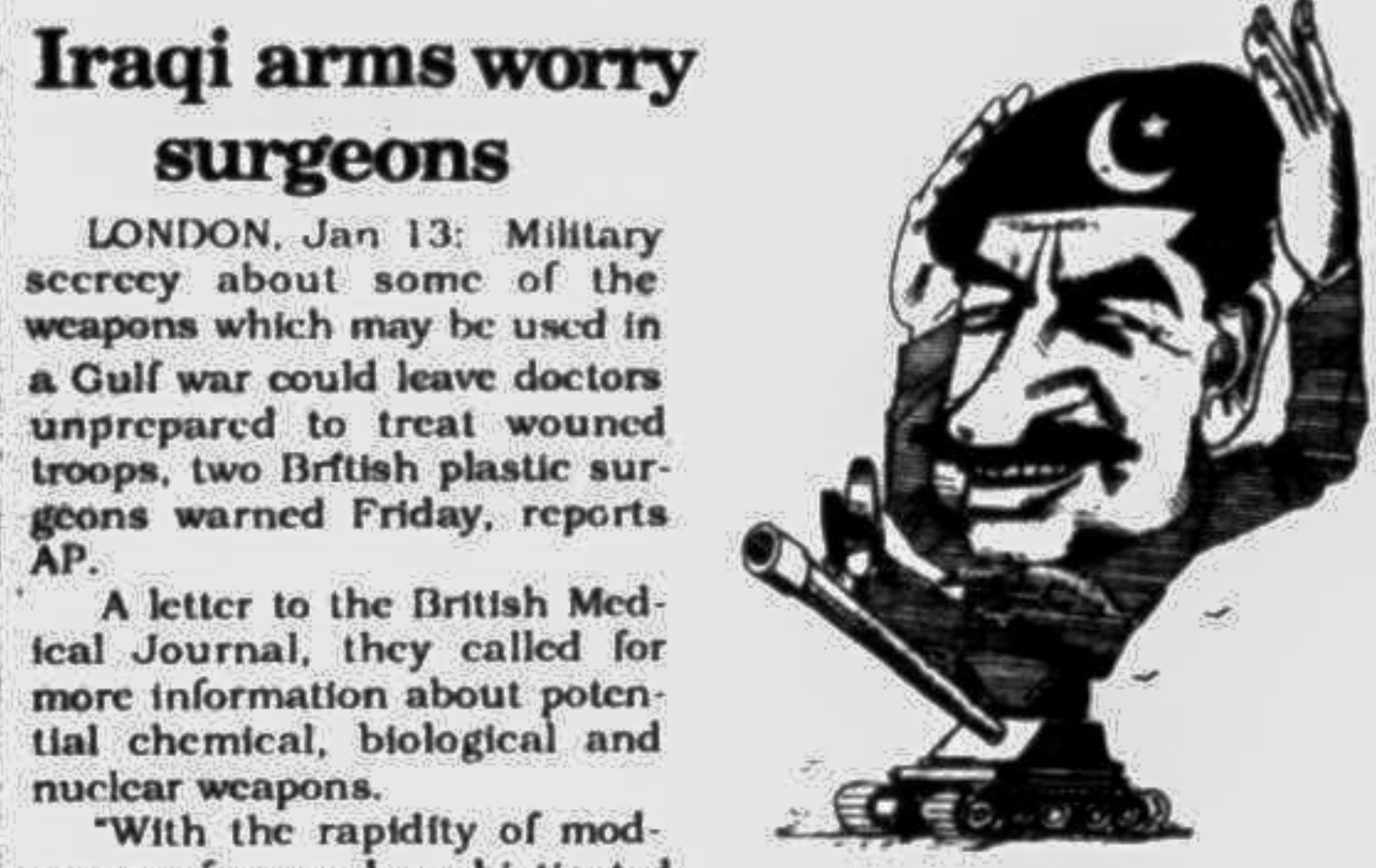
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Today in History

- Today is Monday, January 14, the 14th day of 1991. There are 351 days left in the year, reports UNB. Highlights in history on this date. 1784 - United States ratifies peace treaty with England, formally ending American War of Independence. 1809 - England and Spain form alliance against Napoleon Bonaparte. 1814 - Denmark regains lost territories, except Heligoland, in separate treaty with Britain. 1858 - Felice Orsini's plot to assassinate Napoleon III is uncovered. 1867 - Peru declares war on Spain. 1907 - Earthquake in Jamaica destroys Kingston and takes 1,000 lives. 1918 - France's former premier Joseph Caillaux is arrested for treason. 1942 - Forces under U.S. General Douglas MacArthur resist Japanese attacks on Bataan in Philippines in World War II. 1950 - Mohammed Said forms Iranian government; United States recalls all consular personnel from China. 1962 - At least 36 Algerians and Europeans are killed in disorders and terrorist attacks in Algeria's major cities. 1966 - Indonesia closes its mission at United Nations as it prepares to withdraw from the world organization. 1986 - Vinicio Cerezo is sworn in as Guatemala's first civilian president in 16 years. 1987 - Iran says its forces recaptured chain of strategic hills from Iraqis in new Gulf war assault northeast of Baghdad. 1988 - Ten Palestinians are detained in Jerusalem in apparent clampdown on Arab activists suspected of inciting resistance to Israeli rule. 1989 - Ronald Reagan makes a farewell address to the American people shortly before the end of his 8-year presidency. 1990 - Azerbaijan attacks on Armenians leave at least two dozen dead in Baku, Soviet Union. Today's birthdays Albert Schweitzer, French missionary-surgeon-musician (1875-1965); Faye Dunaway, U.S. actress (1914-). Thought for today Music is the universal language of mankind -- Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, U.S. poet (1807-1882).