

BRITFLY

Missile launched at Riyadh : The British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) quoted a senior Saudi source Saturday as saying an Iraqi Scud missile had been launched at Saudi Arabia, reports Reuter.

It was not known where or when the missile was launched, nor what had happened to it, but a television crew in the capital Riyadh was said to have filmed vapour trails that might have belonged to anti-missile weapons.

The BBC report quoted the Saudi source as saying all Iraqi long-range missiles capable of hitting population centres in Saudi Arabia had now been destroyed.

Shekhar for end to war : Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar called for an early end to the Gulf war Saturday and a peaceful discussion on all issues involved, reports AFP.

Mr. Shekhar warned the international community over the "tendency to escalate" the fighting in the Gulf, after expressing regrets that all efforts by India and other nations had failed to prevent an armed conflict.

Mr. Shekhar, in a nationwide television and radio broadcast, called all those concerned to "try to come to terms so that peace is restored in that area, and then think over all other problems in a more calm and cordial atmosphere".

"Even in this hour, we should make a determined bid to see that peace is restored. All other matters can be taken care of subsequently".

US staff flee to Cyprus : The entire staff of the U.S. Embassy in Beirut has fled to Cyprus because of fears the diplomats could be attacked by terrorists, a Lebanese Foreign Ministry source said Saturday, reports AP.

Ambassador Ryan Crocker and his staff "were helicoptered directly from the embassy compound to Cyprus. We have no information of how many American diplomats were involved in the evacuation", the source said.

He said the Foreign Ministry was not officially informed of the flight late Friday. Crocker began serving as ambassador to Lebanon in November.

"It seems the Americans have pulled out their diplomats to avoid attacks triggered by the war in the Gulf. The Americans consider Lebanon a weak security area," said the source, who spoke on condition of anonymity.

3 French kidnapped : Rebels launched an attack in northwestern Colombia Friday, kidnapping three French engineers who were working on an oil pipeline, and leaving behind a slain security guard, police spokesman said, reports AFP.

Guerillas detained some 100 pipeline construction workers, but later released them. The leftist attack on the Caribbean coast pipeline near Zaragoza, 500 kilometers (310 miles) northwest of Bogota, was attributed to a wing of the Simon Bolivar National Guerrilla Coordinator (CNGSB), police said.

They said guerillas affiliated with the Colombian Revolutionary Armed Forces (FARC) and the National Liberation Army (ELN) killed security chief Virgilio Gallo during the offensive, and set fire to several trucks as well as excavation machinery.

Peace linked to Palestine : The Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) representative in Tokyo said peace in the Middle East was not possible without settling the Palestinian issue, reports AFP.

"Iraq's invasion to Kuwait should be linked to the Palestine issue. Peace in the Middle East would not be achieved if the two issues are not resolved at the same time," said Baker Abdel Munem.

Washington has repeatedly rebuffed attempts by Iraqi President Saddam Hussein to link Iraq's occupation of Kuwait to Israel's occupation of the West Bank and Gaza strip.

Mr. Munem denounced the United States of starting the war "in defiance of global calls for peace" and called for global efforts to find a settlement.

4 killed in Pak blast : A powerful bomb ripped through a downtown cinema house in Rawalpindi city near Pakistan's capital Saturday, killing at least four and injuring 47, police said, reports AFP.

Police immediately cordoned off the Khurshid Cinema, located in usually crowded Raja Bazar, witnesses said. The cinema house was packed with Saturday night movie-goers.

Explosive experts were investigating and police officials said they had no immediate clues as to who had planted the bomb and why.

More than 30 of the injured were admitted to the city's main hospital and sources there said at least four of them were in critical condition. The remaining injured were taken to other city hospitals.

6 children die in Kabul : Rebels fired two rockets into the Afghan capital Kabul Saturday, killing six children and injuring five people, Kabul radio reported, reports Reuter.

All the casualties were caused by a surface-to-surface rocket hitting Tayamani neighborhood near the airport, according to the broadcast monitored in the Pakistani capital Islamabad.

The official radio blamed the attack on "extremists", the Soviet-backed government's term for western-supported rebels.

Kabul has been the frequent target of guerrilla rockets during 12 years of civil war. Saturday's attack was the first reported by the Afghan media since November 27, when three rockets killed a child and injured four people.

Palestinian woman killed : Israeli troops in the occupied West bank shot dead a young Palestinian woman Saturday while she was feeding her baby on a balcony during a military curfew, Arab sources in Jerusalem said, reports AFP.

Lubna Aziz Al-Kaddash, 24, was downed in a hail of bullets, fatally wounded in the face and chest, the sources said. There was no indication the baby had been hurt.

A military spokesman confirmed the killing and said the woman was breaking the curfew imposed in the occupied territories after "the start of the Gulf war on Thursday".

Her death brings to 774 the number of Palestinians killed by Israeli gunfire since the December 1987 outbreak of an anti-Israeli uprising in the West Bank and Gaza strip according to an unofficial toll based on Arab reports.

Gorbachev asks world body to persuade Iraq

MARDID, Jan 20: Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev is urging the international community to strive harder to persuade Iraq to leave Kuwait peacefully, reports Reuter.

In a letter to Spanish Prime Minister Phillip Gonzalez on Saturday Gorbachev stressed the need to intensify efforts by the international community to get Iraq to leave Kuwait, a Spanish government spokeswoman said she gave no details.

Gonzalez who discussed developments in the Gulf with his Foreign and Defence Ministers for three hours on Saturday, felt that despite the outbreak of hostilities the diplomatic drive for peace should not be abandoned, the spokeswoman said.

Spain's interior ministry cancelled all police leave and put security forces on



President George Bush, Yitzhak Shamir and Saddam Hussein : High stakes in the Gulf war.

US troops moving for hammer blows

With US troops in East Saudi Arabia, Jan 20: The U.S. army's rapid deployment force headed north on Saturday to prepare for a ground offensive against Iraq that like thousands of allied air sorties, could be launched mostly at night, reports Reuter.

The 2nd brigade of the 82nd Airborne Division, elements of which parachuted onto Panama a year ago, began ferrying its war machinery aboard C-130 Hercules transport planes and in convoys through the desert.

It includes Vulcan anti-aircraft artillery, 105 mm howitzers, shoulder-fired missiles and mortars.

"We are repositioning in an assembly area north along the border to conduct offensive operations if we're told," said Rokosz declined to elaborate

on the role the 82nd airborne would play in a ground war but suggested that the force would best complement a heavily armoured tank division.

The 82nd airborne based at Fort Bragg, North Carolina arrived in Saudi Arabia just a week after Iraq invaded Kuwait last August and morale was high as they prepared for their move.

"We'll show him who the paper tigers are," said special-ist George Jackson, 23, of Dallas, Texas, a gunner on optically-guided Tom missiles.

Missile right down Saddam's throat

"I'm going to show Iraqi President Saddam Hussein a missile right down his throat. I just want to go home and see

142 planes downed : Iraq 10 fighters lost: U S

NICOSIA, Jan 20: Iraq said early Sunday it had downed a total of 142 allied planes during three days of massive air raids by US lead forces, reports Reuter.

Baghdad radio also reported "dozens" of Iraqi civilians killed or wounded in air raids.

"They (the United States and its allies) failed to achieve their goal despite massive air raids on Baghdad," the radio said. "The air raids caused dozens of Iraqi civilians killed or wounded."

It said the Americans and their allies had been giving "false" accounts on losses of planes and pilots. The figure of 142 planes shot down was an increase of 41 from earlier Iraqi reports.

four allied planes—two British, one Italian and one Kuwaiti—have also been lost in the first few days of the war.

The US aircraft lost also include two navy A-6E attack jets, each with a two-man crew; a single-seat navy F/A-18 fighter-bomber; an air force F-15E with two crewmen and an air force F-4G with two crewmen.

Nine of the 11 American crewmen from those planes are still missing despite searches. But the Pentagon said the two crewmen from the F-4-G had been rescued and were in good condition.

US to use new modern arms in ground attack

With British Forces in Saudi Arabia, Jan 20: A new weapon which can tear up an area the size of 12 football pitches may help allied forces win the ground offensive against Iraqi troops dug in on the Kuwait border, military experts say, reports Reuter.

Dubbed "the deadly dozen," the Multi Launch Rocket System (MLRS) has never been used in combat but is the most destructive weapon in the armories of American and British troops, who will probably be the first to engage Iraqis on the ground.

NATO to protect Turkey

AFP from Brussels adds: The North Atlantic Treaty Organisation "will protect Turkey" in the event of an attack on it by Iraq, NATO Secretary General Manfred Woerner said Saturday.

In an interview with the German television station Mr. Woerner stressed that NATO would "act only to protect its member nations, and will not go beyond this."

Americans want Saddam to give up Kuwait, not power

WASHINGTON, Jan 20: Most Americans want Iraqi President Saddam Hussein not only to give up Kuwait, but to give up power, according to polls released Saturday, reports AP.

Sixty-five per cent of those polled by ABC news said the anti-Iraq coalition's objective should be to topple Mr. Hussein, who has refused to withdraw its troops from Kuwait.

A Cable News Network (CNN) -- Gallup poll said 66 per cent of those questioned think the Iraqi leader should be removed from power, compared to 30 per cent who said he should just withdraw from Kuwait.

The CNN-Gallup poll also said 86 per cent approved of US President George Bush's handling of the Gulf crisis, and the ABC poll said 83 per cent supported the war-up front since the Gulf war broke out early Thursday.



SOMEWHERE IN SAUDI ARABIA- A British armoured personnel carrier heading out of its battalion area as units are being re-deployed towards the border with Kuwait on January 19. The allied troops are expected to launch massive strike on Iraqi positions in Kuwait within next few days. — AFP/UNB photo

Off the Record

Saddam, Bush doing well in Manila zoo

MANILA: Saddam and Bush are doing well in a Manila government zoo after bouts of diarrhoea and influenza, Philippine officials said, Sunday, reports Reuter.

The two baby gibbons named after Iraqi President Saddam Hussein and U.S. President George Bush, have been getting shots of antibiotics at the zoo since government agents confiscated them from a local store on January 11.

Officials suspect the sickly pair were smuggled into the country from the island of Borneo or Indonesia.

Zoo Director Marcelino Dalnacio said local environmentalists had expressed concern at the condition of Saddam and Bush, who belong to one of the world's rare and endangered species.

They're not exhibits

SAUDI ARABIA: The first 12 Iraqi prisoners of the Gulf war -- barefoot, unshaven and subdued -- quietly accepted U.S. field rations medical care and water on Saturday on their first full day in captivity, reports Reuter.

They were captured on Friday in a US raid on nine Kuwaiti oil platforms in the Gulf used by Iraqi troops to fire on allied aircraft.

The prisoners sat in the sand, barefoot and unshaven, spooning up food the brown plastic packets of field rations. One American soldier bent to bandage a prisoner's foot.

They are as well as can be expected for combat troops, one marine officer said of the group, dressed in navy sweaters and olive drab fatigues.

US troops treated them gently, an NCO put arm around one prisoner's shoulder at one point and a photographer was forbidden from filming their faces.

They are not exhibits in a zoo, the Americans explained. "Thumbcrews and racks are a thing of the past, said the marine Security Officers supervising the operation. You can break any body and get them to say whatever you want to hear. But you get a better response if you treat them humanly. We learned that in Vietnam.

After eating the prisoners were to be asked their names and ranks and given a medical check up.

Delivery of baby with gas mask

TEL AVIV: A woman in the Tel Aviv region, who went into labour on hearing air raid sirens warning of a possible Iraqi missile attack, later gave birth to a healthy child while still wearing her gas mask, hospital sources said here, reports AFP.

Both mother and baby were said to be doing fine. When her baby was born, the woman was able to take off her gas mask to greet it, the sources said.

Since the Gulf war began early on Thursday, Iraqi missiles have injured a total of 47 people here, although there have been no deaths.

Residents have been told to don their gas masks in case the missiles carry chemical warheads, but so far all the attacks have been with conventionally-armed weapons.

Heroic epics

NICOSIA: Iraqi President Saddam Hussein on Friday ordered the Iraqi people to help the local media report "The heroic epics" of his Armed Forces in the war against the US-led coalition, reports Reuter.

A statement by a military spokesman said Saddam has ordered that to acquaint Iraq, Arab, and world public opinion with the details of the heroic epics of our great people and the heroic valiant Armed Forces.....

"And in order to document what is necessary from the military and humanitarian situations..... it has been decided to call on everyone to cooperate with the media men to achieve these objectives."

"This includes photographing the enemy's equipment that is seized and destroyed," said the statement, carried by the Iraqi news agency INA and monitored by the British Broadcasting Corporation.

10 Iraqi missile launchers bombed

PARIS, Jan 20: Warplanes from the anti-Iraqi coalition had bombed 10 out of 40 Iraqi mobile Scud-B missiles launchers on Thursday and early Friday, as well as most of the Iraqi fixed missile sites and storage facilities, according to a senior French military official, reports AFP.

Thirty of the mobile sites (thus remained untouched when air raids resumed Friday afternoon.

Before the outbreak of the Gulf war, Iraq possessed some 800 Soviet-built Scud-B missiles based at 50 fixed launch sites and on 40 mobile launchers, the official said. He added that an estimated one quarter of them were upgraded Al Hussein and Al Abbas versions of the original Soviet product.

The mobile launchers are extremely difficult to localise for satellites and reconnaissance planes because they are capable of travelling at 70 kilometers (45 miles) an hour on roadways, and can move to their launching site, release their missiles and relocate to shelters before they are hit by opposition counter strikes.

Forty of the 50 fixed sites were operational several days before the coalition offensive, and 30 additional sites were under construction but were not finished when hostilities began, the official said.

The Scud-B with a maximum range of 280 kilometers (175 miles) is accurate to within 400 meters (440 yards).

The modified Al Hussein has a range of 600 kilometers (370 miles) and is accurate to within only 2,000 meters (2,200 yards), according to reliable western sources, while the Al Abbas can travel 900 kilometers (560 miles) and is accurate to within 3,000 meters (3,300 yards).

Today in History

Today is Monday, Jan. 21, the 21th day of 1991. There are 344 days left in the year, reports UNB.

Highlights in history on this date:

- 1606 -- England's parliament imposes severe penalties against Roman Catholics.
- 1732 -- Russia gives up claims to certain Persian territories by Treaty of Riascha.
- 1793 -- France's King Louis XVI is beheaded.
- 1954 -- First atomic submarine, U.S.S. Nautilus, is launched in United States.
- 1968 -- Britain draws up plans to withdraw its troops from Far East and Persian Gulf.
- 1970 -- France's sale of Mirage jet planes to Libya is announced; Iraq fails attempt to overthrow its government and promptly executes 12 men.
- 1974 -- United States rejects South Vietnam's request for naval support in fighting with China for Paracel Islands.
- 1986 -- Auto packed with explosives blows up near office of President Amin Gemayal's Phalange Party in East Beirut, Lebanon, killing 22 people and wounding 102.

Today's birth days

- John Fitch, U.S. naval engineer (1743-1798); Leo Delibes, French composer (1836-1891); Telly Savalas, U.S. actor (1924-); Benny Hill, English comedian (1925-); Placido Domingo, Spanish tenor (1941-); Ceena Davis, U.S. actress (1967-).

Thought for today

Let us be happy and live within our means, even if we have to borrow the money to do it with -- Artemus Ward, U.S. revolutionary commander (1727-1800).