

BRRIEFLY

Iraqis reinforce positions: Iraqi troops who pulled back from the Kuwait-Saudi border at the start of the war are reinforcing their fortifications as US and British forces mass to the south for a possible ground offensive, reports AFP.

Red alert in Turkey: Strens sounded a red alert Tuesday at Adana, near a US air base at Incirlik in southern Turkey but was followed by an all-clear 35 minutes later, officials in Ankara said, reports AFP.

Iraq's museum damaged: Iraq said US pilots damaged the Iraqi national museum during an air raid on Baghdad Tuesday, Baghdad radio said, reports Reuters from Moscow.

Israel to buy 6 Patriots: Israel, which just received several US-supplied Patriot missiles at Iraqi Scud missiles on Tuesday, resisted strong US pressure last year to buy the anti-missile defenses, reports AP.

Sikhs kill 8 in Punjab: Suspected Sikh separatists gunned down eight civilians in Punjab as security forces shot dead one Sikh militant in the troubled north Indian state, the Press Trust of India (PTI) in New Delhi said Tuesday, reports AFP.

US navy sinks 2 Iraqi ships: US navy planes have attacked four Iraqi vessels in the Gulf and appeared to sink two of them, a US military spokesman in Riyadh said on Tuesday, reports Reuters.

Allied bid to capture Saddam not ruled out: WASHINGTON, Jan 23: The White House said yesterday it could not rule out an attempt by allied forces to capture Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein to face charges of mistreating prisoners of war (POWs), reports Reuters.

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Asked if that could entail the capture and arrest of Saddam on war crimes charges, Fitzwater said: "No decisions have been made on how that might occur... But in some fashion we do intend to hold him accountable. We have to wait and see how things unfold. Certainly nothing's been ruled out."

Fitzwater said the objectives of the U.S. led coalition remained the same: driving Iraqi forces from Kuwait, restoring Kuwait's ousted government, and bringing stability to the Gulf.

He said stability was generally taken to mean destroying Saddam's vast military arsenal.

"We are not targeting Saddam Hussein and not changing our policy," Fitzwater said. "We can't tell what's going to happen at the end of the war."

But asked if stability of the region might depend on Saddam being ousted from power, Fitzwater said that when the war was over the allies "will take a look at the other security needs and see what needs to be dealt with."

The White House spokesman said former Assistant Secretary of State Richard Armitage was to return from a special mission to Jordan.

He said Armitage was dispatched to Jordan on Sunday to hear King Hussein's views on the Gulf war and discuss a growing problem of refugees flooding into Jordan from Iraq.

He said Armitage had carried no particular offer to Jordan from the United States, U.S. Jordanian ties have been strained over King Hussein's allegiance to Iraq over its August 2 invasion of Kuwait.

Nawaz Sharif holds talks with Rafsanjani

NICOSIA, Jan 23: Iranian President Hashemi Rafsanjani met on Tuesday with Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, who flew in earlier to discuss the Gulf War, reports AP.

Tehran television, monitored in Nicosia, said both leaders expressed concern over the situation.

Sharif arrived earlier in the day on the first leg of a four-nation Middle East swing. He was due to leave Tehran for Ankara Wednesday and also plans to visit Egypt and Syria.

Sharif is under pressure from daily demonstrations in Pakistan against the war in the Gulf.

Bush not functioning as C-in-C
Generals assigned to conduct war

WASHINGTON, Jan 23: President George Bush, though Commander in Chief of the US Armed Forces, is leaving the conduct of the war against Iraq in the hands of his commanders in the field, reports AFP.



Mr. Bush doesn't say let's see Iraq has 36 Scud missiles and we've gotten 13 of them and tell the Generals why don't you try this or that to eliminate them all.

Iraqi weapons supplied by Moscow
90 pc allied strikes miss targets

Moscow, Jan 23: The independent Soviet news agency Interfax quoted an unidentified member of the Soviet General Staff yesterday as saying 90 per cent of all allied air strikes against Iraq had missed their targets, reports Reuters.

Interfax quoted the officer as saying most Iraqi air bases and aircraft had not been hit in the massive bombardment and about 30 anti-aircraft systems remained intact. If said 11 anti-aircraft units had been knocked out.

Whether his assessment was shared by the General Staff. Most Iraqi weapons systems were supplied by the Soviet Union and there has been some alarm here at reports of allied military success in defeating them.

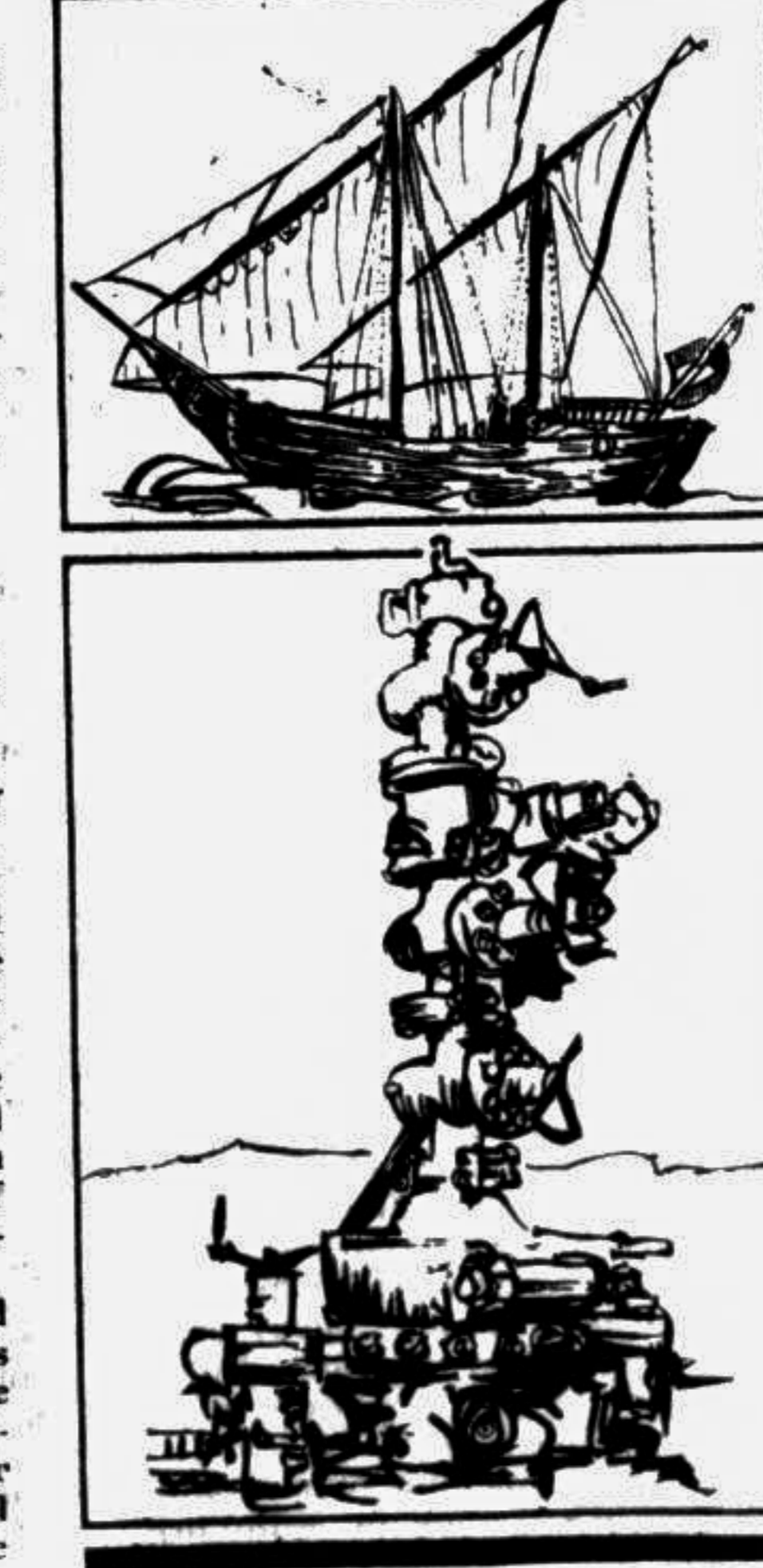
Destruction makes liberation urgent: Kuwait
Kuwait could burn for a year if Iraq really fires oil wells

The destruction of the installations places greater responsibility on the international community to overthrow the Iraq regime, liberate Kuwait, and preserve the states of the region from the dangers of this regime, Kuwait Information Minister Badr Jassem al-Yacoub said.

The scientists claimed that firefighting teams are already in the Gulf planning how best to tackle what would prove a project of a scale and ferocity without precedent.

Basil Butler, managing director of British Petroleum with responsibility for health, safety and the environment, said that discussions were already taking place over ways of dealing with such a crisis.

The making of Kuwait



- Kuwait was once famous for its sailing ships. Some reached Bombay and Zanzibar. Its harbour is best in Gulf
1756-72 Sheikh Sabah al-Owel founds ruling dynasty
1899 Protection treaty with Britain. Kuwait becomes important as terminus of Baghdad railway
1901 British foil Turkish attempt to occupy Kuwait
1914 Britain recognises Sheikh as independent ruler
1915 Surrender of Mesopotamia to British in World War One makes Basra effective terminus, reduces Kuwait's importance
1938 Oil discovered, but wells plugged during World War Two
1945 Oil exploitation starts transforming economy

Map of Kuwait and surrounding regions with historical events: 1961 June: Treaty of 1899 terminated. Full sovereignty agreed. Kuwait admitted to Arab League. President Kassem declares Kuwait part of Iraq. Kuwait calls in British troops August: Troops pull out
1990 Aug 2: Iraq invades

Off the Record

Fight AIDS, not Arabs
NEW YORK: AIDS protesters on Tuesday disrupted the opening minutes of a major US television news programme chanting "Fight AIDS, not Arabs" and forcing the programme briefly off the air, reports Reuters.

Beware of TV news on war
SAVANNAH (Georgia): Watching too much war news on television is unhealthy and some viewers can actually become addicted to news, a US psychologist warns, reports AFP.

It's a hell of a place to fight war
IN NORTHERN SAUDI ARABIA: In the dawn chill, when the breeze is rich in scents and too gentle to carry sand, the desert can be thrilling, even beautiful. But it is a hell of a place to fight a war, reports AP.

Chinese student on trial: Chinese student leader Wang Dan went on trial in Beijing Wednesday on charges of counter-revolutionary propaganda and incitement, the Beijing intermediate people's court said, reports AP.

Perez appeals for Iraqi pullout
NAM may launch move to prevent war

BEGRAD, Jan 23: The Non-Aligned group of Nations may launch a diplomatic initiative to try and prevent the Gulf war from spreading and to restore peace to the region, Indian Foreign Minister Vidya Charan Shukla told a news conference here Tuesday, reports AFP.

Mr. Shukla, speaking here after talks with his Yugoslav opposite number Budimir Loncar said the Non-Aligned Movement intended to launch a collective effort to define the ways in which a solution to the Gulf crisis could be found.

But Butler disputes that fires in the oilwells would throw up as much smoke and dust as Dr Cox claims. "In terms of dust loading, you only have to be in Kuwait in normal circumstances to see the amount of dust around. Natural events are far more significant than what might occur in Kuwait's oilwells."

Organisers of the symposium, including Frank Barnaby, the nuclear physicist and weapons expert, announced the formation of an emergency task force. It aims to be an international group of independent scientists, bringing to bear the best scientific brains to tackle the problem.

The goal is to put together a document for politicians before the 15 January deadline after which the UN Security Council has agreed to the use of force to make Iraq leave Kuwait.

American military sources said, the US command knew about it in advance, but they did not know how far in advance. The US command has refused official comment.

A Saudi official quoted anonymously by the Saudi Press Agency said the withdrawal was planned well in advance of hostilities and designed to protect the Saudi troops from Iraqi artillery and rocket fire during the air phase of the war.

A US Marine officer in the area said the Saudis pulled back just before allied forces, including Saudi pilots, began a bombing campaign against Iraqi positions in Iraq and southern Kuwait, including some within 50 miles (80 kilometers) of the Saudi-Kuwait border.

Bid to seek Saddam's exit: 7 shot dead

LONDON, Jan 23: A London newspaper on Wednesday quoted an Iraqi opposition leader as saying seven men were shot dead in Baghdad last week when they tried to broadcast a TV message urging the overthrow of President Saddam Hussein, reports AP.

The respected liberal newspaper The Guardian quoted Abdul Aziz al-Hakim as saying Iraqi security forces killed the seven as they tried to occupy the main television station in the Iraqi capital.

The paper identified Abdul Aziz al-Hakim as a Shi'ite Muslim and senior opposition leader who was one of two Saddam opponents who met with British Foreign Office officials in London on Monday.

The paper quoted him as saying two of the men killed were senior members of Iraq's ruling Baath Party. He did not reveal their names.