

Gulf crisis

Massive US attack on Kuwaiti positions

1.5 lakh Republican Guards entrenched in southern Iraq

A US airbase in Gulf, January 30: Iraq's elite Republican Guards, prime target of allied bombing, are so deeply entrenched in southern Iraq that only a ground campaign will show if they have been smashed, a US air commander said on Tuesday, reports Reuters.

The cream of Iraq's Armed Forces the 150,000-man Republican Guard led the invasion of Kuwait last August 2, according to western military experts.

The formidable force and its estimated 500 Soviet-designed T-72 tanks deployed in an area just north west of

Kuwait have been the target of a crushing allied bombardment for the past 10 days.

But Colonel Manfred Rietsch commander of a marine aircraft group said it was hard to assess the impact of the continuous air raids.

German-born fighter pilot told reporter, they are very well dug in, we are hurting them but it is hard quantity how much we are hurting them.

"They're waiting. They've hidden their tanks. When we'll be able to destroy them in large numbers is when they bring them out and move

them," he added.

Rietsch said some tanks had been destroyed "but not a large quantity yet" and stressed that "a ground campaign will be the only way to find out the real impact of the air strikes."

US administration officials believe that crushing the republican guard would have a devastating effect on the morale of the rest of Iraq's one-million strong Armed Forces.

Rietsch agreed the constant bombing probably had a demoralising effect on the troops which US Defence Secretary Dick Cheney has described as

"The heart of the regime" of Iraqi President Saddam Hussein. "I don't know what it will have done to them to have bombs rain on them 24 hours a day," Rietsch said.

But he said all Allied forces could do was to demoralise them "take away some of their supplies and reduce their numbers somewhat."

According to him, the guards still had surface-to-air missiles and much of their armour.

But he dismissed them as a real threat as long as they remained dug in. "They're potential force but not really a military force until they're employed—and to be employed they have to come out of hiding," he said.

AFP adds: US marines launched the largest combined arms attack of the war Tuesday, pounding Iraqi bunkers and observation posts inside Kuwait with artillery, mortar, low missile and automatic cannon fire.

The lighting raid was staged by a task force of marine light armoured vehicles and artillery firing from as close as 1,000 meters from the border.

A complex of bunkers and outposts were destroyed in the 4.00 a.m. attack by the battalion-sized task force. U.S. marine corps officers said. A marine battalion is generally 800 men.

There was no return fire, US officers said, and they had no estimate of Iraqi casualties.

The task force from the 1st marine division, deployed in the north-eastern Saudi desert near the border with Kuwait, fired more than 300 rounds of artillery, mortar, two wire-guided missile and automatic cannon fire during the 15-minute barrage.

Task force commander Lieutenant Colonel Cliff Myers said the attack, the fifth by the 1st marine division, no Iraqi positions since the war began January 17, "went exactly as planned."

"Iraqi President Saddam Hussein must be wondering what in the world those people are doing," he said.



Washington ignores move Fresh Soviet peace offer to end war

WASHINGTON, Jan 30: Soviet Foreign Minister Alexander Bessmertnykh said on Tuesday that Moscow had offered new ideas for a peaceful settlement in the Gulf to Secretary of State James Baker, reports Reuters.

"We have some ideas that have already been shared with the Secretary," Bessmertnykh said as he posed for photographers at the start of a meeting with Baker. He did not elaborate.

Gorbachev's spokesman, Vitaly Ignatenko, said earlier in Moscow that the Kremlin was discussing a series of ideas for an end to the Gulf war with western countries, including the United States. But he declined to give details.

State Department spokeswoman Margaret Tutwiler said on Tuesday she knew nothing of any peace initiative.

Bessmertnykh held talks on Saturday and Monday with Baker, but Tutwiler said no new Soviet initiative was presented.

There were reports Gorbachev may have sent a letter to President George Bush on this subject, but Tutwiler said she was unaware of any such letter being carried by Bessmertnykh.

Soviet support has been crucial to the U.S.-led effort to oust Iraq from Kuwait. But recently, Soviet leaders have begun to warn the United States against inflicting too much damage on Iraq with aerial bombings.

U.S. officials have said in recent days they believe Moscow's efforts at diplomacy—both before and after the war started—are aimed more at improving its standing in the Arab world once fighting ends and does not signal a serious rift in the U.S. Soviet alliance.

Another reports adds: The U.S. State Department said on Tuesday it knew nothing of any peace initiative by Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev to end the Gulf war.

Iraqi attacks on Saudi outposts confusing

NICOSIA (Cyprus), Jan 30: For the first time since war broke out, Iraq claims its ground troops took the offensive with "lightning" raid on allied posts in Saudi Arabia. It said the attacks were "the tip of the iceberg," reports AP.

U.S. military officials, however, gave radically different accounts of confrontations along the front. It was not clear if these were the same incidents cited by the Iraqis.

An Iraqi military communique issued late Tuesday and reported by Iraqi radio said two columns of Iraqi troops participated in its raids, one of them advancing 20 miles (12 kilometers) into Saudi territory.

The communique reported a third encounter in which an Iraqi border patrol stationed in occupied Kuwait stormed an observation post across the Saudi frontier and killed all those manning it.

Iraq also said one allied prisoner was killed and an unspecified number of others were wounded in U.S.-led air raids on Baghdad. Iraq has said it placed captured airmen at potential targets, a reprisal of

its earlier "human shields" tactic.

Iraq's news agency quoted Iraqi radio as saying the pilot killed Monday was an American, but this could not be confirmed.

Later, Iraqi radio quoted a military official as insisting that Iraqi missiles were striking their designated targets in Israel and Saudi Arabia and were not being intercepted by the U.S. made Patriot counter-missile.

"The missile they are trying to intercept is not a Scud," the official said, referring to the Soviet-made surface-to-surface missile. "Ours is the al-Husayn missile, a missile born in the steadfast land of Iraq."

Western military analysts have said the al-Husayn is an Iraqi adaptation of the Scud, altered to give it longer range.

U.S., Saudi and Israeli officials have said the vast majority of Iraqi missiles have been intercepted by Patriot missile-killing rockets in the two weeks since war broke out Jan 17.

The military communique did not specify the nationality of those attacked in the reported Iraqi raids Monday

night. "Large numbers of the bastards were killed and quantities of their ammunition and weapons, all operational, were seized," it said.

The communique said the U.S.-led allies should know "that the truth is decided on the battlefield and not by empty talk, and that this operation is the tip of the iceberg."

The U.S. accounts of Tuesday's battles differed dramatically.

In one encounter, a U.S. officer said, an Iraqi officer was killed during a botched ambush of three Saudi border guards. In another incident, U.S. officers said allied warplanes blasted an Iraqi military convoy that was spotted across the open Iraqi desert Monday night.

Allied officials said warplanes destroyed 24 tanks, armored personnel carriers and supply vehicles. It was the largest destruction of enemy armored units in the war confirmed by the allies.

In reporting that a prisoner of war had died, the Iraqi News Agency said an allied air raid on Baghdad "hit one of the departments of the Ministry of Industry.

Allies cross UN Council margin: Soviet experts

MOSCOW, Jan 30: The US-led coalition failed to blitz Iraq and matters look uncertain in all respects—diplomatic, political and military. The warfare has crossed the margin specified by the UN Security Council resolution, which demanded Saddam's pullout from Kuwait, reports IAN.

American planes are bombing not only military but vital economic objects, and large-scale operations in Iraq are planned. The warfare has to stop before it becomes protracted, and the belligerents to go back to the negotiating table.

These were the conclusions of the conference on the Gulf hostilities held by Novosti on January 23 to involve experts from the Institute of US and Canadian Studies, the Institute of Oriental Studies (both under the USSR Academy of Sciences), the USSR Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Institute of Military History under the USSR Ministry of Defence, and the Lenin Military-Political Academy.

Vitali Naumkin, Vice-Director, Institute of Oriental Studies, pointed out the huge re-

sources which the belligerents are wasting and which could otherwise be spent on development. He regretted Iraq's stiff position which allowed the United States, under the legal cover of the UN Security Council Resolution 678 of November 29, 1990 to pursue its own interests. America is destroying the Arab industrial potential, he said in anxiety.

RIYADH, Jan 30: Howling to pressure from angry Americans and their elected officials back home, the US embassy said Tuesday it has decided to offer gas masks to US citizens in Saudi Arabia, reports AP.

It said, the masks, obtained from US military stocks, would be handed out as long as supply lasted. But in announcing the move, US diplomats made clear they still did not favor the move.

The experts specified the threat of the conflict spreading. They did not rule out the interference of third countries, mainly Mid Eastern Arab ones, at later stages of the hostilities.

Military zeal may make the belligerents forget their goal, the Iraqi pullout from Kuwait. The coalition's air raids left Iraq with solid part of its military potential, the region's second-largest after Israel. Now it is clear that the war will take time, what matters most is to leave Saddam and his nation with a choice to go on with the war or seek peace, said Yuri Tegin, senior researcher, Institute of Military History.

Soviet Foreign Minister Alexander Bessmertnykh, who is in Washington, had talks on Saturday and Monday with Secretary of State James Baker, but State Department spokeswoman Margaret Tutwiler said no new Soviet initiative was presented.

There were reports Gorbachev may have sent a letter to President George Bush on this subject, but Tutwiler said she was unaware of any such letter being carried by Bessmertnykh.

Another reports adds: The U.S. State Department said on Tuesday it knew nothing of any peace initiative by Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev to end the Gulf war.

But US and Soviet officials held out hope of peace. A joint statement from Secretary of State James A. Baker III and Soviet Foreign Minister Alexander A. Bessmertnykh in Washington indicated a ceasefire would be possible if Iraq took "concrete steps" to withdraw from Kuwait.

Americans in S. Arabia offered masks

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Captured Allied pilot killed in air raid

UNDATED, Jan 30: One of Iraq's "human shields" — captured allied pilots — was killed in a Baghdad air raid, the Iraqis said Tuesday. Other Desert Storm fliers struck anew across Iraq, and reported stopping an Iraqi armored convoy dead in its desert tracks, reports AP.

Feature Environment

UNEP Comes up with Early Warning System

THE UN Environment Programme (UNEP) says it is now ready to provide a reliable early warning system on the health of the planet, using a mammoth computer database it has been compiling for the past five years. The idea is to use data on the state of the environment gathered from all over the world. This will enable it to alert governments and scientists to environmental threats and their most likely causes and cures.

Michael Gwynne of UNEP is optimistic about the potential of the database system. But he is also wary, because the information it holds could become crucial in resolving some of today's most contentious political issues.

For example, the database produced a graphic representation of the acidity of rain falling in Western Europe. These types of data could prove important in establishing liability if nations are ever called upon to compensate each other for the environmental hazards that they cause.

Gwynne predicts severe political problems in dealing with

the trends that this powerful database is uncovering. "Supposing a government had invested a huge amount of money in an attempt to ward off some environmental disaster and we had got the forecast wrong," he says.

"For example, we now suspect that some regions of the planet are more sensitive to drought than others. If this is true, then we should have much more education going on in these more sensitive areas."

The problem comes in deciding how long to wait before he feels certain enough to alert governments and their agencies.

Ole Hebin, who manages the database, says he feels a huge responsibility because he has to decide which data to put before politicians, and how to present results. "We have to be extremely careful not to raise a political storm where we don't have the data to back it up," he says.

UNEP has been running a global barometer of the state of the world's environment for some years under the Global Environment Monitoring

Susan Watts

System (GEMS). The programme collates a huge variety of environmental statistics, including information from satellites and monitoring agencies on the ground. It tracks pollutants as they travel through the air and sea, and keeps an eye on shifting patterns of land cover, and the state of the atmosphere, the climate and endangered species.

Over the past few years, UNEP has been plugging the data that GEMS collates into its new database, known as GRID (the Global Resource Information Database). This database is capable of storing 60 to 70 gigabytes of information — the equivalent of 60,000 novels. It sits at the heart of a network which currently has three regional centres — in Bangkok, Geneva and Nairobi. The system is fed information via existing communications networks. The plan is that eventually all countries will be able to file environmental data into the database.

At a conference in Geneva last week on the Environment and Information Technology, Gwynne, who is director of GEMS, said that he is now confident that the data from GRID, together with the analytical skills of scientists, can provide environmental forecasts which are reliable enough for politicians to take action on the basis of them.

Each piece of data in GRID is classified according to its geographical reference, enabling the system's operators to provide a simple graphical representation of many hundreds of pieces of data, using regional maps of the world. These maps could show, for example, the extent of the rainforest being burnt in Brazil and the pattern of roads and towns under construction in the area.

The system is based on a relatively new form of computer technology known as a geographical information system. In its crudest form this allows GRID's operators to create many series of maps, layered on top of each other.

This correlates information so that specialists can quickly spot anomalies that would otherwise take many hours of painstaking research to uncover.

Gwynne claims that no other organisation in the world has facilities to rival the GRID system in its capacity to provide a global alarm system. He intends to call a meeting of top scientists in July to help persuade the scientific community of GRID's credibility, and to enlist its help in analysing the data that has been compiled on GRID. He also wants politicians to help define the circumstances under which UNEP should warn governments of potential problems.

GRID has already helped to tackle important environmental and conservation problems. In 1987 was used to review the quota system for limiting ivory exports from Africa, and to set these at sustainable levels. The project revealed unexpectedly that often the protected zones did not coincide with the areas where the elephants were living.

A BALMY WINTER DOES NOT PROVE THE RULE

AFTER the warmest February this century in Europe, the greatest rainfall since recording started and the worst gale force winds ever, inland as well as coastal, who could be blamed for regarding last winter's weather as an omen of an impending climatic catastrophe. However, climatologists warn about too "clear evidence," because this is not possible in atmospheric physics.

Meteorologists only analyze the present state of the atmosphere, and are only willing to make forecasts over a period of ten days at the most. Inaccuracies can be continually corrected. Climatologists, however, think and calculate in terms of centuries and millennia, and they are continually subjected to pressure to produce evidence. This is because cause and effect, if known at all, are very far apart.

Things are made even more difficult by the unreliability of the basic information. The irregular distribution of ground meteorological stations around the globe, the occasionally highly inaccurate measurements provided by meteorological satellites and the limited atmospheric data supplied by balloon radio sondes force the climatologists to use mathematical finesses to interpolate missing values from those actually measured to fill in the gaps in their measuring network.

The models used up to now result in the "classical hypothesis" that air temperatures will rise by an average of 1.5 to 4.5 degrees Celsius throughout the world; the rise in the temperature would not be the same everywhere. The fear is that this will increase the water vapor content of the air, which in turn will effect cloud formation. Evaporation and condensation will result in more noticeable differences in temperature and atmospheric pressure: more storms would be the consequence.

However, research carried out at the Institute for Meteorology of the Free University of Berlin as another conclusion, which contradicts

the temperature trends discussed until now: A drastic deviation in temperature has been detected over Northern Europe, Northern Siberia, Canada and most of the Arctic, with the exception of Alaska, during the last 20 to 30 years.

However, the trend here is contrary to the other. For many years now, temperatures in these regions have been too cold, whereas the temperatures charts show excessively high temperatures on average over Central Europe, for example. Berlin meteorologist Christian Freyer states clearly "There is no global rise in temperature; we can detect no such rise in the mean temperature, those

unclear what capacity the seas have as reservoir for the "greenhouse gas" carbon dioxide.

Heimann reports that the computers are, for the first time, being fed with data, which, as far as possible, will take the physical interactions of ocean and atmosphere into consideration at source. Initial results regarding future climatic development differ substantially from those offered by the "classical theory".

The Hamburg climatologist believes that a possible world-wide climatic catastrophe, as calculated here, would apparently also include regions for which the

ZAMBIA LAUNCHES UPHILL BATTLE AGAINST POLLUTION

Zambia has joined the environmental protection bandwagon by passing legislation to set up an environmental watchdog to oversee the country's efforts to reverse the damaging effects of pollution.

But many in this east-African nation fear the government's action could be too little too late in a country that has long been heavily polluted by industry.

A decade ago the head of the country's largest research institution, the National Council for Scientific Research (NCSR) Zambians they could be plunged into an ecological disaster if urgent measures were not taken.

Now scientists at the NCSR are predicting that industrial effluent in the Kafue River and its tributaries, one of the country's main waterways, will kill all aquatic life in some areas unless action is taken.

In Kafue township, 44 kilometers south of Lusaka, the Nitrogen Chemical of Zambia (NCZ) fertilizer plant, Kafue Textiles of Zambia (KITZ) and the Canadian-owned Bata shoe company tannery, all regularly discharge their effluent in to the Kafue River.

The head of the NCSR's environment department has sharply criticised government enforcement agencies for inertia. "They should have ensured that industrial effluent was amply treated before being disposed of," said Chris Mwasiile. He points the finger of blame at large multinational companies who seem to consider themselves above the law. "The law is very dormant with regard to the disposal of industrial effluent," said Mwasiile.

Studies by NCSR have indicated livestock deaths were caused by the intake of polluted water and grazing on grass with high concentrations of cobalt and copper. And Mwasiile laments that people still eat fish from the Kafue River. Some of the fish, so sick their fins have fallen off, have been contaminated with toxic chromium of the type used at the Bata tannery and later discharged into the river.

"In the end we may be eating a hot potato because chromium is a very dangerous chemical poison with high degree of toxic contents," said Mwasiile.

In Ndola, the headquarters

of the copperbelt province, there is a great deal of concern about the quality of drinking water tested according to World Health Organisation standards. According to the Tropical Disease Research Center, water samples drawn from a number of residential townships were heavily contaminated with harmful bacteria and contained live leaches.

Of even greater concern, the acting district executive secretary of the Ndola district, Dan Longwe, admitted the council had run out of chlorine and has not had any water treatment chemicals since last year. The Ndola urban area alone has a population of half a million.

Urban dwellers, who make up about 50 percent of the country's 8.2 million population, generally drink water of very poor quality because councils fail to employ qualified chemists to test water supplies.

Such practises as the dumping of pesticides in rivers "are future bombs that could explode and destroy life," said James Kasonde, a scientific officer with NCSR. Kasonde said the problem has been com-

pounded by the exodus of qualified personnel for greener pastures.

In Lusaka, the Iolanda water works is located on the Kafue River just ten kilometers below Kafue Industrial Estate. In Kitwe, the water treatment works is located 1000 meters downstream from Bulangillo dump at the confluence of Mindolo stream, which itself receives untreated industrial sewage and effluent from industrial areas.

"In Kafue, Kalulushi, Kitwe, Luanshya and Mufulira raw sewage can be seen flowing in storm drains and streams traversing these areas," said Mwasiile.

The scientists report that concentrations of copper, suspended solids and nitrate are ten times their natural levels. And high concentrations of chloride, sulphate nitrate, phosphate and other ions are also evident.

The managements of Nitrogen Chemicals of Zambia, Bata and Kafue Textiles have formed a committee to deal with the pollution problem. The three companies have pledged to buy water treatment equipment for district

councils.

And the government's ministry of water, land and resources has embarked on a four-year water supply and sanitation scheme worth \$3 million.

But water pollution is not the only problem. A human price is being paid for air pollution in the copperbelt where Kasonde says the pollution has led to lung infection. Politicians have expressed concern about the unchecked discharge of sulphur, lead and zinc dioxide in to the atmosphere by such industries as Zambia Consolidated Copper Mines.

But all are hopeful that Zambia's new environmental protection legislation will lead to better management of the environment. The Commonwealth Engineers Institute's Central African region warmly welcomed the new legislation.

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regions which are too cold cancel out those that are too hot. He sees the abnormal role over the Arctic as the cause of the recent devastating storms. Off the east coast of Canada cold air collides with warm subtropical air from the Bermuda. Huge air vortices form and move on a direct path to Europe, possibly developing into hurricanes on the way.

The Max Planck Institute for Meteorology in Hamburg confirms these observations, which completely contradict the forecast based on the model calculations. Physicist Martin Heimann names the reasons for this faulty diagnosis: "What we need is a real ocean."

If the water of the oceans could be better integrated in the model calculations, and if we could assess this enormous heat reservoir and supplier of water vapor, which the oceans represent, then forecasts could probably be more reliable and credible. It is also

Hurricanes raged across Europe, streams turned into furious floods and wintery Germany experienced balmy June temperatures. Still climatologists are warning: No hasty conclusions regarding climate trends. by Martin Boeckh

computer forecasts a considerable cooling. The Arctic would be among these regions. However, Heimann hastened to add that other, equally climate-determining factors have not even been touched on in these calculations.

These include aerosols, i.e. dirt particles such as dust, soot or other small particles which are formed from wastes gases containing hydrocarbons. They are transported to the most remote parts of the earth and could also be responsible for the extraordinarily cold conditions in the Arctic, because they filter the sun's rays. An effect of this kind has frequently been detected after volcanic eruptions, when great drops in temperature have resulted. For the time being, the scientists can do no more than warn and leave the politicians to act on their warnings. Tragically, conclusive evidence of a change in climate might well be produced when corrective measures will already be too late. — Martin Boeckh (GIS)