

International

BRIEFLY

Saddam scorns Bush's call : Iraq, which has portrayed the Gulf war as an Islamic duty, on Sunday poured scorn on President George Bush's call on Americans to pray for Allied troops in the Gulf, saying it mocked God, reports Reuter.

Iran may boycott Haj : A Tehran newspaper said on Sunday Iran and other Muslim countries may boycott Haj in protest at the presence of the US-led forces in Saudi Arabia, reports Reuter from Nicosia.

Iraq may use chemical: British Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd warned Sunday that Iraq could be tempted to use chemical weapons because its other military options were being ruled out, reports AFP.

Iran urged to support Iraq : The Islamic Resistance Movement Hamas urged Iran Monday to support Iraq in the Gulf war and backed calls for Jihad (holy war) against the US-led coalition, Reuter from Nicosia says.

1 lakh AIDS victims in US: The death toll from AIDS in the United States has topped 100,000, with nearly a third dying just last year, and is escalating, Federal health officials in Atlanta said Thursday, reports AP.

ICRC visits 328 Iraqi POWs : The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) said on Sunday it had visited 328 Iraqi prisoners of war to date, reports Reuter.

US citizens to leave Jordan : The US State departments had urged all US citizens to leave Jordan as soon as possible, reports AP.

4 killed in US copter crash : A US Marine Corps helicopter crashed Sunday in eastern Saudi Arabia, killing all four crew members, US military authorities announced, reports AP.

Blast rocks Yemeni embassy : Egypt's Middle East News Agency (MENA) in Nicosia said there was an explosion on Sunday night at the Italian embassy in Yemen, but there were no casualties, reports Reuter.

S. Arabian aid to Pakistan : Saudi Arabia is to send urgent aid to Pakistan to alleviate suffering caused by Friday's earthquake, an official in King Fahd's office in Riyadh said Sunday, reports AFP.

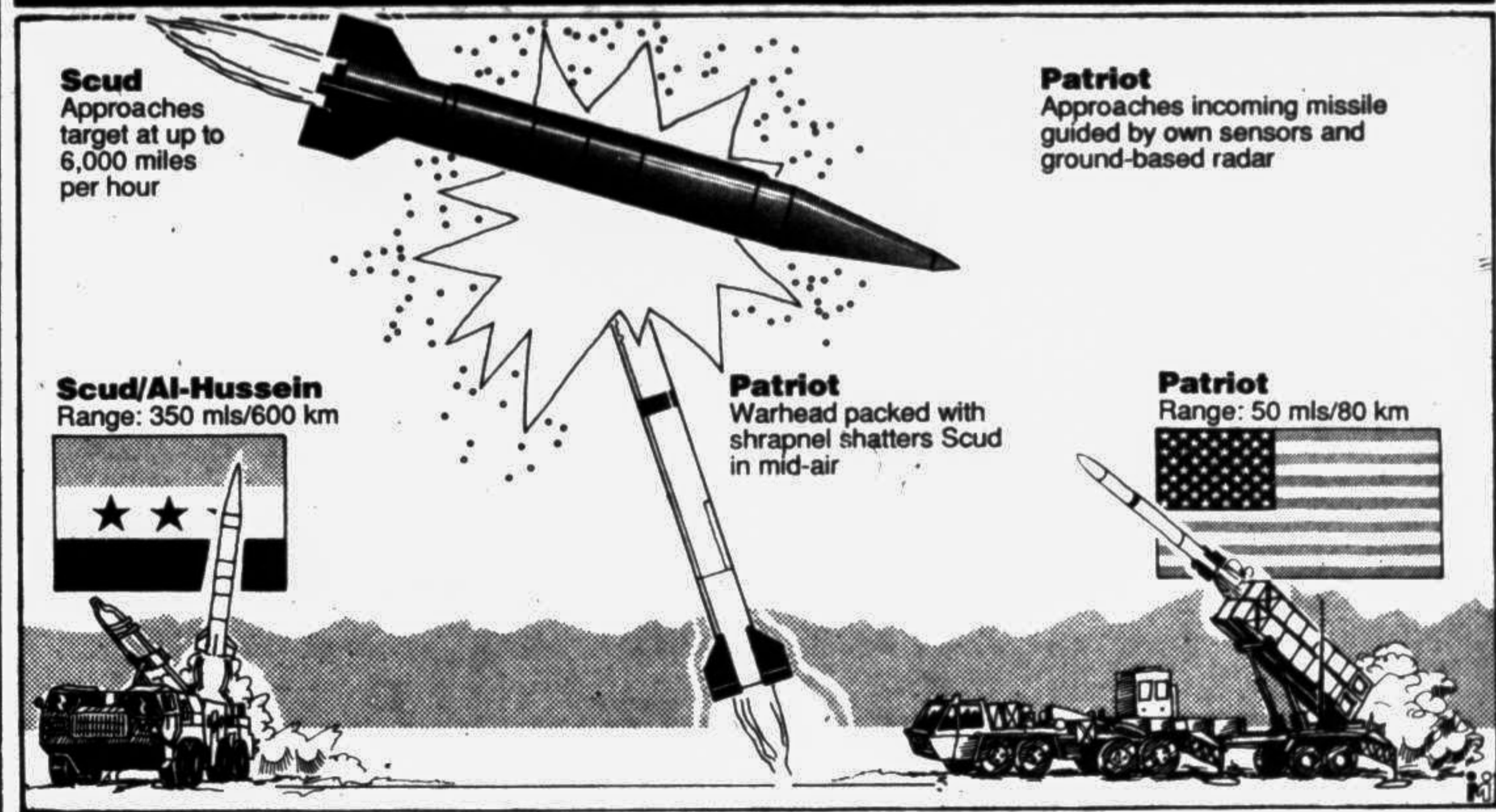
Salvadorean peace talk ends : MEXICO CITY, Feb 4: UN mediated peace talks between leftist Salvadorean rebels and the Government ended on Sunday and a rebel source said a deadlock of many months had been broken, reports Reuter.

Saddam still a formidable enemy, says US official

WASHINGTON, Feb 4 : Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein remains a formidable enemy despite heavy Allied bombing, US officials said on Sunday, as the military reported more aircraft losses and confirmed the deaths of seven Marines by Allied fire, reports Reuter.

There is political pressure for a land assault starting to come from information abroad that says that Saddam Hussein is winning here by the fact that he's able to withstand all this pounding, Aspin said.

The missile war



US firm to keep casualties low

WASHINGTON, Feb 4 : The first bloody hours of ground combat in the Gulf War killed 11 Marines, bringing home the cost of war with crushing reality, but day after day, thousands of warplanes drop their bombs on Iraq, with a relative few airmen missing or taken prisoner, reports AP.

that if there is large-scale use, both sides could sustain great damage, Mikhalik said. "I think that Iraq's missile potential is not exhausted and they will have the necessary number of missiles to carry on military action."

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A U.S. Marine truck carries troops near the Kuwaiti border in S. Arabia - AFP photo

Soviet intelligence helps Allies reduce casualties

WASHINGTON, Feb 4 : The Soviet Union has handed over valuable intelligence information that may have helped the allies hold down expected casualties in the air war with Iraq, a US military source said Saturday, reports AP.

including 14 Americans, ten Britons, two Italians and one Kuwaiti. Mark Kramer, a specialist on Soviet military affairs at Harvard University, said in a phone interview that Defense Secretary Dick Cheney asked the Soviets to give him information about Soviet weapons when he visited Moscow last fall.

Off the Record

Chickens to die so that men may live

A. U. S. BASE (Saudi Arabia) : The second line of defense against chemical attack for many allied troops on the Gulf war front is a feathered one, reports Reuter. Chickens are dotted around areas that might be attacked by Iraqi forces with poison gas.

Hotel belies grim Cambodian situation

PHNOM PENH : The newly-weds, beaming with happiness, pose for the photographer in front of the modern hotel - just about the only thing in Phnom Penh that at a better future might await war-torn and impoverished Cambodia, reports Reuter.

No nightclub room sealed against gas

TEL AVIV : The sign on the door of the "Desert" night club reads: "Enter at your own risk, no room sealed against gas."

A Sikkimese touch in State Dept

NEW YORK : The 22-year-old daughter of the last King of Sikkim is to marry a US State Department official, the New York Times reported Sunday, says AFP.

7 marines killed by Allied missiles

RIYADH, Feb 4: Seven US marines died when their armoured vehicle was hit by a missile fired by their own side near the Saudi border with Kuwait, a US military spokesman said Sunday, reports Reuter.

Morocove, Kramer said the Soviets could turn over information about Iraq without exposing military secrets because Moscow would have modified its equipment before selling it. Moscow last September, Vladimir Kryuchkov, the head of the KGB, the Soviet intelligence agency, told the Associated Press in an interview that Moscow would be willing to help the CIA with military intelligence on Iraq.