

International

Bush orders experts to set timing

US preparing for land, sea assault

BRIEFLY

Canadian aid for war victims : Canada will give 1.3 billion dollars (1.1 billion US) to the victims of the war in the Gulf, a Canadian government official said here Tuesday. Reports AFP.

Monique Landry, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs and International Development, said the International Committee of the Red Cross would be given the majority of the aid for medical equipment and medicines for refugees.

Some 230,000 dollars (195,500 dollars US) will be given to medical aid for Palestine, an organization that works in the occupied territories.

More Iraqi planes in Iran: At least 10 more Iraqi planes have fled safety to Iran, bringing the total to around 110, a US military spokesman said today, reports Reuters from Riyadh.

At least 10 perhaps 10 plus have gone into Iran in the past 24 hours. It is safe to say they were mainly fighters, although some transports were involved, Major General Robert Johnston told the regular evening military briefing.

A British military spokesman said earlier two Iraqi 11-76 four-engined transport jets had flown to Iran on Monday evening.

Iran has said it would hold any planes of the belligerents in the Gulf conflict landing in its territory until the end of the war.

General Johnston said he believed the overall figure of 110 Iraqi planes in Iran was "pretty close number".

Blasts rock bank offices : Powerful bomb blasts rocked offices of US-based Citibank and destroyed the car of a French State employee today in the latest guerrilla attacks in Athens in support of Iraq in the Gulf war, police said. Reuters reports from Athens.

A time-bomb at the Citibank branch office in the northern suburb of Ilalandri devastated the front of the building and shattered windows in houses two blocks away, police said.

Another time-bomb, placed nearby under the car of a French State employee, destroyed the vehicle. The car belonged to a French diplomat or to a professor at the French Institute School in Athens, police said.

Iraq asked to cut embassy staff : Turkey, allowing US planes to bomb Iraq from its territory, has asked Baghdad to reduce its embassy staff by one third, a government source said on Tuesday. Reuters reports.

"We suggested to the Iraqis on Monday that they cut their embassy and consular staff by a third", the source said.

"We mentioned a few specific names of those we would like to leave", the source added, but did not elaborate. He said about 76 Iraqis were working at the Ankara Embassy and Istanbul Consulate, but not all had diplomatic status.

Turkey withdrew 20 of its embassy staff, including the ambassador, from Baghdad just before the US-dominated multinational force in the Gulf attacked Iraq on January 17.

Bush's nephew in army reserves : A 21-year-old nephew of President George Bush has enlisted as medic in the Army Reserves in hope of serving in the Gulf War. But training will keep him stateside for at least 4-12 months, AP reports.

Jonathan J. Bush Jr., a junior at Wesleyan University in Middletown, Connecticut, said he signed up Jan. 26 with the 819th Army Station Hospital unit out of West Hartford, after getting permission to take the semester off.

"I just felt that if even one more soldier died because there is one less medic over there, I would not feel good about myself," Bush said Tuesday in a telephone interview from New York City, where he is working at his father's investment firm.

The President sent him a note saying he "supports my decision and is proud of me," said Bush, a trained emergency medical technician.

Pan Am will cut 4,000 jobs : Pan Am Corp. said Tuesday it would cut 4,000 jobs and reduce service to Europe because of the sharp decline in air travel due to the Gulf war, reports AP.

The struggling airline said it was not eliminating any European destinations but reducing the frequency of flights, combining destinations and using smaller airplanes.

"The precipitous decline in demand for trans-Atlantic travel requires painful action," Pan Am Chairman Thomas G. Plaskett said in a statement.

"We cannot absorb revenue loss without taking severe steps to lower our costs commensurate with the reduced revenue," he said.

Pan Am said the total personnel cuts includes employee transfers and reductions related to Pan Am's sale of its London routes to United Airlines, a deal scheduled for completion later this month.

10 held in Israel for spying : Israeli security forces have arrested 10 Israeli Arabs on charges of spying for Iraq, police said Tuesday. It was the second case of Israeli detainees on spy charges since the war began, AP reports from Jerusalem.

The Arabs, from the northern Israeli town of Acre and three villages in the Galilee were arrested over the last two weeks, and more arrests are expected, police said in a statement.

The members of the spy ring are suspected of being recruited by an activist from the Palestine Liberation Organization's mainstream Fatah group, a former Israeli Arab linked with Iraqi intelligence now living in Iraq and Egypt," the statement said.

Hurd to visit Gulf region : British Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd is to visit the Gulf region including Egypt next weekend to review "the evolution of the situation in the Gulf with a number of officials," the foreign office said in London Tuesday, reports AFP.

He is to leave London on Friday and return Sunday, a spokesman said. For security reasons, Mr Hurd's exact itinerary would not be given, he said.

Iranian reporters to cover war : Two dozen Iranian reporters and photographers will soon join the small group of foreign correspondents covering the Gulf war from Iraq, the Iranian news agency IRNA said on Tuesday. Reuters reports from Nicosia.

They would be the first Iranian correspondents to officially report from Iraq in more than a decade, since before the outbreak of the eight-year Iran-Iraq war in 1980. The Iraqi embassy in Tehran has agreed to issue visas for the news teams from IRNA, state radio and television and several Iranian newspapers, the agency said. They will travel via Khosravi border point, the main route for Gulf war refugees and Iraqi visitors since allied air raids on Iraq began on January 17.

Germany for ME peace confce : A German official said in Cairo yesterday his country supports holding a Mideast peace conference when the Gulf war ends, to solve the regional issues with emphasis on the Palestinian cause, reports Xinhua.

In a statement to the Middle East News Agency on German Foreign Minister's forthcoming visit to Egypt, German Ambassador to Cairo Helms Felder said both countries hold identical views on a number of regional and international issues, mainly the Gulf crisis, the Palestinian cause and the North-South dialogue.

The Ambassador affirmed Germany's stance toward the Gulf crisis which calls for the withdrawal of the Iraqi troops from Kuwait and the reinstatement of the Kuwaiti legitimate government in accordance with the UN Security Council resolutions.

Troops kill 17 Tamils: Sri Lankan troops killed 17 Tamil separatist guerrillas and lost two of their own men in a three-day operation in the east of the island, military sources in Colombo said Wednesday, reports Reuters.

The sources said the killings occurred at tropical in Battaralooa district after government forces ended a cease-fire with the rebels last Friday.

The government had accused the guerrillas of using the cease-fire to strengthen their forces for fresh attacks.

NICOSIA, Feb 6: US President George Bush ordered his top military experts to the Gulf to assess the timing and need for a land war against Iraq troops after three weeks of aerial bombardment, reports Reuters.

In the oil-polluted waterway lapping the main battlezones, British mine sweepers were being sent closer to occupied Kuwait.

Senior military sources in London said the craft were to clear the way for a possible amphibious landing and that Allied forces were making final preparations for a land sea assault.

Saddam Hussein will not set the timing over what comes next. We will do that, Bush told a news conference on Tuesday as he announced that Defence Secretary Dick Cheney and General Colin Powell Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff would visit Saudi Arabia this week.

"And I will have to make that decision if we go to ground forces and I will go it on serious consideration of recommendations," Bush added.

He rebuffed an offer by Iran to mediate in the war, saying there was nothing to negotiate as the Iraqi President refused to withdraw his armies from Kuwait. Iraq said it was still waiting a response from Baghdad for ideas it had sent on ending hostilities.

Bush said the Gulf visit of Cheney and Powell did not mean a decision on a ground offensive was near but added he was "somewhat sceptical



of aerial attacks alone - the main strategy of the US led forces since war started on January 17 would drive Iraqi troops from Kuwait.

Iraq which has called the US led Allies cowards for avoiding a ground battle said it would destroy their armies when battle was joined.

The Iraqi army is waiting for the major land battle that will lead to the destruction of the armies of Bush and his Allies and agents, the Iraqi Defence Ministry newspaper, Al-Qadisiya, said.

Some soldiers in that army are waiting less than willingly, according to the Brussels based international confederation of free trade unions.

It said Wednesday that Iraq had forcibly drafted migrant workers into its armed forces and executed some who refused. Some of them resisting

pounds (18 tonnes) of bombs, he said.

The senior military sources in London said bombing was beginning to take its toll of Baghdad's Elite Republican Guard. One of the guard's three heavy armoured divisions was said to have lost up to 150 of its 250 to 300 tanks.

Air attacks we expected to be stepped up against frontline units entrenched in southern Kuwait, the sources said.

But one senior source said, we are dealing with a very tough customer who is very determined.

Iraqi combat engineers had erected river crossings to replace bridges hit by bombs.

Baghdad showed no sign of bending to the bombing, saying it had launched a destructive strike on Dhahran, the major military base in eastern Saudi Arabia on Tuesday would continue to strike so that the invaders and their slaves will only reap sorrow in life and God's tortures in the other life.

There were no reports from Dhahran of any missile attack. The echo of explosion over Iraq was paralleled by verbal blasts from Baghdad against its foes, accusing them of targeting civilians.

The Barbarian evil does continued their shelling of residential areas last night, this morning air sorties... to tally 391, "Baghdad radio said quoting a military communique late on Tuesday night.

Experts discuss ways to combat damage from oil slick

GENEVA, Feb 6 : Marine, health, petroleum and environmental experts discussed ways to combat damage from a huge oil slick drifting southward in the Gulf at a two-day meeting that opened on Tuesday, reports Reuters.

Some 25 people attended the closed-door talks in Geneva, including officials from specialised agencies of the United Nations as well as advisers and observers and at least one representative of the oil industry, participants said.

The chairman was Peter Schroder, a senior Dutch official from the Nairobi headquarters of the UN Environment Programme (UNEP), which convened the meeting to assess "the environmental consequences of the Gulf war."

US-led Allied forces in the Gulf conflict have accused Iraq of deliberately causing the slick - the world's worst but Baghdad has blamed it on Allied bombings.

A UNEP statement said the aim of meeting, attended by representatives of organisations including the World Health Organisation and the Food and Agricultural Organisation, was to bring together representatives of UN agencies likely to be involved in dealing with the consequences of the slick.

Major's call to lift sanctions against S Africa

LONDON, Feb 6 : Prime Minister John Major said Tuesday the international community must consider lifting sanctions against South Africa now that the country plans to repeal remaining apartheid laws, reports AP.

"President (F.W.) de Klerk (of South Africa) has taken a truly massive move forward and I think it is now for the international community to respond," Major told the House of Commons.

"I have already discussed this with the Commonwealth secretary-general (Chief Emeke Anyaoku) and with US President (George) Bush, and the foreign secretary raised it with European Community foreign ministers yesterday."

Major said he also spoken to Bob Hawke, the Australian prime minister, who helped spearhead Commonwealth sanctions, including a ban on sporting events.

"He and I both very strongly agree that the time has come to begin lifting the Commonwealth measures, in particular the sports sanctions, particularly where the sports are integrated in South Africa," said Major.

Iraq threatens massive ground offensive

NICOSIA, Feb 6 : Iraq told its Gulf war enemies Tuesday it will destroy their armies in a land battle that will be remembered for hundreds of years to come, reports Reuters.

The Iraqi army... is waiting for the major land battle that will lead to the destruction of the armies of (President George) Bush and his allies and agents, the Defence Ministry's Al-Qadisiya newspaper said.

"History will talk about this battle for centuries to come," Iraq has in recent days repeatedly dared the Allies to fight its estimated 500,000 men in and around Kuwait in a ground battle. The Allies say they will do so only when they are ready.

Al-Qadisiya said the battle Iraq sought would free the entire world from what it called the shackles of US domination and hegemony.

State radio Baghdad said Allied planes attacked residential and commercial areas 373 times on Monday and that four aircraft were shot down. A later broadcast put the number

of raids at 273 and there was no explanation available on the discrepancy.

The Allies have been launching non-stop air and missile attacks against Iraq since the Gulf war broke out on January 17. Iraq charges that the onslaught is targeting residential areas, killing civilians.

The Allies dismiss the charge as a gross exaggeration and say they have been careful to minimise civilian casualties.

But the radio, monitored in Cyprus, said the air raids were hitting "peaceful civilian women and children, commercial businesses and homes".

"Let George Bush and the other scoundrels taking part in this aggression learn that our reckoning with them will be harsh and our vengeance crushing", the radio said.

"We will punish them by severing the necks of the scoundrels whom they have thronged in Najd and Hejaz (Saudi Arabia) in order not to

give an unjust aggressor an opportunity to return or flee," it said.

The Iranian news agency reported from the southern city of Ahwaz that Iraqi border cities were hit so hard by air and missile attacks during the night that windows in the Iranian cities of Khorramshahr and Abadan vibrated.

The agency received in Cyprus, said Iraqi anti-aircraft defence units were silent during the attacks.

Tehran radio said in a separate report that residents in Iranian border areas heard four explosions overnight from the border Iraqi towns of Urbatyah and Badrah east of Baghdad.

"Iraq is now more determined to achieve its goals," Al-Qadisiya said.

"Iraq fully realises that the only chance for it to survive and rise is through the complete destruction of all the pillars and concentrations of aggression."

Several dozen Iraqis desert?

RIYADH, Feb 6: Iraqi military officers have stepped up their efforts to prevent troops from deserting and from crossing into Saudi Arabia, US military officers said Tuesday, reports AFP.

"We know that the Iraqis are going to greater lengths to try to prevent their front-line soldiers from taking the most expedient means of existing from the war," one US officer said.

"There are more and more indications of that," he said. "Frankly if I were he I'd do the same thing. He was losing his troops pretty quickly there for a while."

A hoped-for flood of desertions among Iraqi ranks has not happened, however, and the US officers said the latest line-crossing was two days ago, when two Iraqi soldiers deserted.

US officers said the Iraqi

military was restricting the activities of "individuals or small groups near the border to prevent desertions."

One US officer said that according to reports from the several dozen Iraqis who have deserted, non-commissioned officers "have been given orders to watch their soldiers very closely."

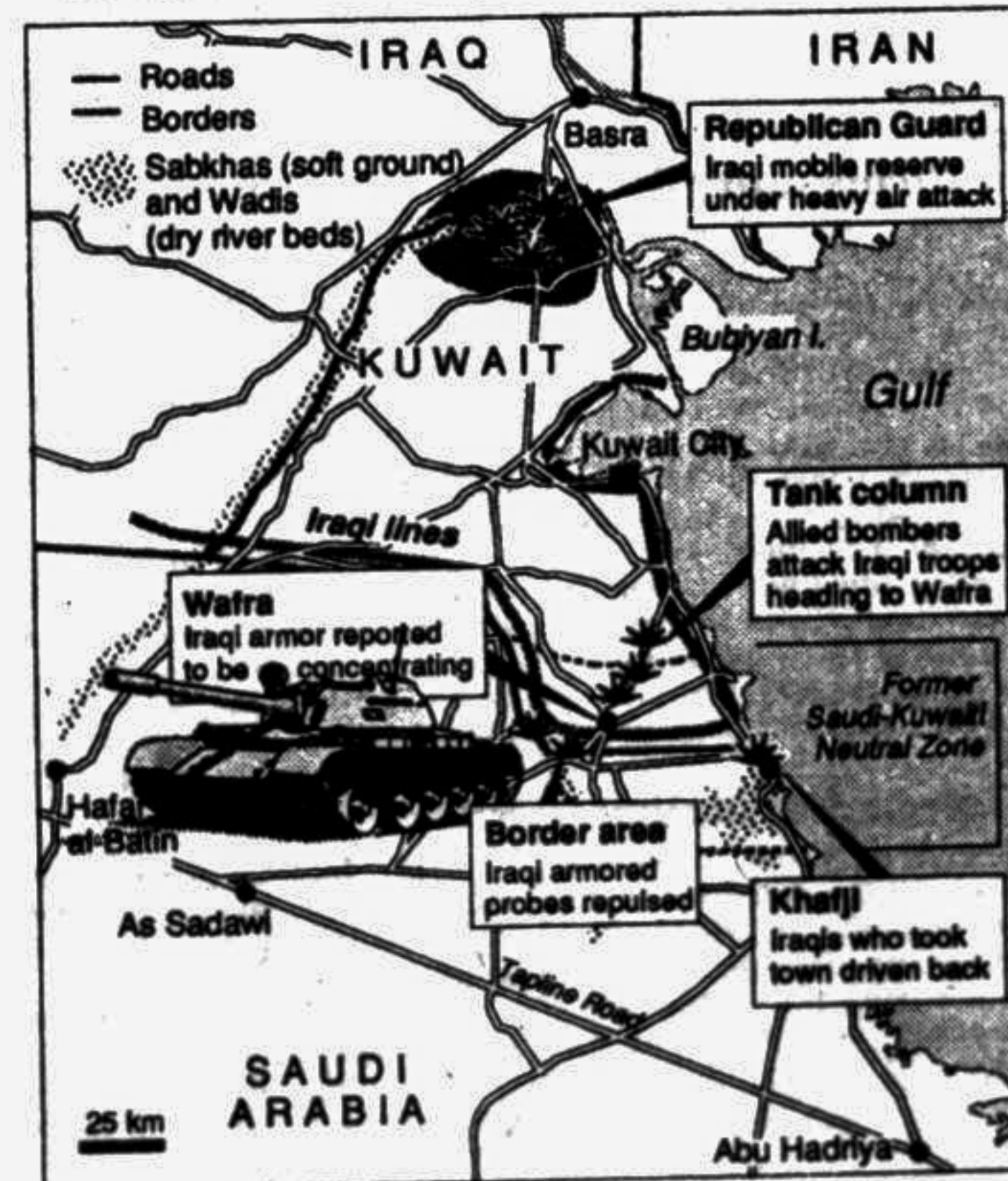
"I think these things will go in cycles," he said. "Right now it's down a bit."

Sweden to treat casualties of Gulf war

STOCKHOLM, Feb 6 : A Swedish field hospital to treat casualties of the Gulf war will be operational in Saudi Arabia within a week, the Defence Ministry said on Tuesday, reports Reuters.

Spokesman Bertil Ternert said the 200 bed hospital, staffed by 350 medical volunteers and 175 auxiliary staff was intended for the wounded of all nationalities.

The inflatable tent structure, its equipment and staff are being sent from Sweden in several plane loads, staff who have already arrived in Saudi Arabia say things are working very smoothly Ternert said. The hospital will be self-supporting apart from food water and power.



Off the Record

Bush sleeping well
WASHINGTON: US President George Bush said Tuesday he may shed tears for combat casualties and their families but doesn't lose any sleep over the Gulf War, reports AP.
"My own feeling is, I know what I've got to do, I've got very good people helping me do it. I really don't lose sleep," Bush said.
He was asked at a news conference about his wife Barbara's claim that he hadn't been sleeping well since the war began.
"Look, my wife - normally I stiek by everything she says, but I'm sleeping very well," Bush said.
"I can't tell you I don't shed a tear for families and for those that might be lost in combat. We've had very few losses and yet I've got to tell you I feel each one."

Mrs Bush told a group of reporters recently that phone calls from advisers were mainly to blame for keeping the president awake. She said peace drums across the street were not a factor and Bush agreed.
"The drums could only be heard from one side of the White House," he said.
In any event, the drums that pound all day have been silenced at night for the past several days. Police have used a local noise nuisance ordinance to quiet the drums after dark.

Bush, a World War II pilot who was shot down in the Pacific in 1944, was asked if he felt a personal kinship with captured allied pilots.
"Yes, I feel very strongly about it," Bush said. But he said his feelings had less to do with "the fact that 50 years ago I was flying airplanes" than with "the fact that they are courageous Americans."

"And I had a chance to any say that to some of the spouses," Bush said, referring to his visit on Friday to Seymour Johnson Air Force Base in North Carolina, where he met privately with the families of four airmen shot down over Iraq.

"You see these prisoners paraded, and it just turns my stomach. It just says something about the brutality of this person (Saddam Hussein). And that's what really motivates me," Bush said.

They're hungry
WASHINGTON: Captured Iraqi troops are hungry and seem happy to be out of the Gulf War while allied forces are ready to go if a ground offensive begins, a senior Defence Department official said on Tuesday, reports Reuters.
But Army Lieutenant-General Tom Kelly said the Iraqi army was still a capable force and was not showing any signs of giving up despite massive allied bombardment by planes, artillery, missiles and ships.

"There were compelling indications that morale was low from the prisoners that have been taken - they're not very well clothed, they're not very well-fed, Kelly said at a Pentagon news briefing.

So I think what we see coming across the border are some tired and hungry soldiers who are not necessary very unhappy to be taken, he said.
Kelly said many of the over 400 Iraqis taken prisoner last week after the battle at Khafji, Saudi Arabia, were carrying leaflets dropped by the United States urging them to surrender. Over 800 Iraqis have been taken prisoner since the war began on January 17 and some have defected.

"With a force that large in the field, [an estimated 540,000 Iraqi troops] and the tanks that they have and the armoured vehicles and the artillery that they have, we've got to give them credit for being able to conduct combat operations."
"And I think the whole purpose of our strategy is to continue to pound that force, to attrite it to the point where either they'll decide to give up or they'll be weak enough for us to reasonably go in and get them, he said.

Kelly said that with over 500,000 US soldiers, sailors, marines and airmen in the Gulf area, the US deployment was virtually complete.

"I would say that the US forces in theatre are skilled, tough, and ready to go, he said. "I don't have the same depth of knowledge about the coalition forces that I do about the US forces, but I have no reason to believe that they're not in position and ready to go, too."

A mistake indeed
LONDON: Almost one third of pregnancies in Britain each year are a mistake, according to a survey published on Wednesday, reports Reuters.

The survey found that of those women who became pregnant accidentally, nearly 40 per cent did not use any contraception, some 30 per cent were on the pill, but failed to use it properly, and 16 per cent said their partners had used a condom.

The Gallup survey was commissioned by a women's magazine.

Submarines to say good-bye
VLADIVOSTOK: More than 40 per cent of the Soviet nuclear-powered submarines which had served more than 20 years will soon be written off en masse, reports IAN.

In connection with this, the newspaper Voskhod which comes out in Vanino, a settlement in Primorye territory, wrote that the Pacific fleet command intended to turn Postovaya Bay near Vanino a specialized dock to dismantle and utilize the scrapped nuclear submarines, providing its report with a rather sharp commentary regarding navy-men.

The local public has launched acts of protest, demanding a ban on the unloading from the boats of atomic reactors and that they, in general, be removed from the Bay. According to expert opinion, the apprehension of the public is not altogether unfounded, for the reactors on the boats are reliable at all stages of operation, with the exception of one - unsealing before unloading the nuclear fuel waste. There has been rather sad experience in this field. When an explosion went off at one of the territory during a similar operation in August 1985

The Pacific Fleet Command has expressed disagreement with the opinion of the Voskhod newspaper and even demanded that proceedings be instituted against the authors of the article. However, the Vanino district procurator did not find any reason for doing that.

3 killed in police firing in Nepal
KATHMANDU, Feb 6: Nepalese police opened fire on landless peasant protesters, killing three and wounding 24 in a town southeast of here, state Television reported Tuesday, reports AFP.

Fifteen policemen and a district officer were also injured in the clashes Monday between police and landless peasants in the village of Sunwal, 360 kilometers (225 miles) southeast of the capital, NTV television reported.

NTV said a group of landless peasants headed by the Nepal Landless Welfare Organisation blocked road traffic in Nawalparasi District in protest and hurled stones at police when they were called upon to disperse.

Faced with this uncontrolled situation, police fired teargas at the mob and then opened fire with live ammunition to disperse the crowd. Two protesters died instantly and one peasant died later in hospital. A police source said four of the 24 injured were in critical condition and were being treated at the Tansen Missionary Hospital.

Floods render 50,000 homeless in Iran
TEHRAN, Feb 6: About 160 villages were damaged and 10,000 families affected by the worst flood for the past 500 years in south eastern Iran, but so far there is no report of casualties, reports Xinhua.

The devastating flood, caused by the swelling Saturday of the Hirmand river for the first time in 500 years destroyed large expanses of farmland near the Afghanistan border and left 50,000 people homeless according to Iran's News Agency IRNA.