

International

Baghdad blowing up 140 Kuwaiti oil wells US dropping napalms behind Iraqi lines

US soldier killed in clash with Iraqi patrol

RIYADH, Feb 23: One US soldier was killed and five were wounded by artillery during a clash with an Iraqi border patrol on Friday, the US military said, reports Reuter. Brigadier General Richard Neal said the engagement was one of three clashes between US and Iraqi forces on Friday. In the same incident, 100 Iraqi soldiers surrendered to an F-18 D observation plane which swooped on their position near Saudi Arabia's northern border, he said. "An F-18 D which helps us see the battlefield came down without shooting or dropping anything," he said.

Indo-Pak talk on Kashmir put off

ISLAMABAD, Feb 23: Talks on Kashmir between senior Indian and Pakistani officials planned for later this month have been put off until at least the end of March, Pakistani Foreign Ministry sources said on Friday, reports Reuter.

DAHRAN, (Saudi Arabia) Feb 23: The United States is now dropping napalm bombs — one of the most controversial weapons of the Vietnam war — behind Iraqi lines, a military spokesman said on Friday. According to television journalists who saw the bombs being loaded on Marine Corps airplanes, slogans like "For Mom" and "Say Cheese" had been drawn on some of the bombs. A Marine Corps spokesman told Reuter that the napalm was only being used to destroy petroleum filled trenches set up by the Iraqis to stop allied ground forces from invading. He denied that it was being used against Iraqi troops.

Military spokesmen at Allied headquarters in Riyadh last week said that napalm would not be used in the Gulf war because of controversies attached to its use in Vietnam. They made the comment after being questioned about the use of two other deadly weapons of Vietnam: huge Daisy chopper mine clearing bombs and fuel air explosives, an incendiary bomb. Napalm also a weapon in World War II and the Korean War, is a highly inflammable petroleum jelly used in bombs and flame-throwers. It was used to clear jungle in Vietnam. One the starkest images of that war was a photograph of a naked young girl, screaming in agony as she ran down a road after her clothes had been burned off by napalm. Dozens of napalm bombs were given fuses and loaded onto to marine planes at an air base in eastern Saudi Arabia on Friday. One pilot said they had been used in bombing raids for about a week. Another, asked if he was dropping the bombs said, "All I can say is that we are carrying out the campaign we were ordered to." Asked if using napalm would mean that the intensity of the war had been increased, the aviator, said, "No not at all. This is an ongoing process to beat him (Saddam Hussein) down as much as we can."

dad 24 hours to start pulling about half a million troops out of the occupied emirate US and Allied military spokesman said thick black smoke was drifting over southern Kuwait from 145 oil wells. "It looks like the start of a scorched earth policy... the orchestrated and systematic destruction of the oil production capability of Kuwait, US Marine Brigadier — General Richard Neal told a briefing in the Saudi capital. The thick smoke had some effect on an Allied air campaign designed to destroy Iraq's military machine before either the Iraqis withdraw or the Allies launch a group offensive to drive them out by force. In Washington, US President George Bush accused President Saddam Hussein of carrying out a scorched earth policy and issued his ultimatum for a start to Iraq's withdrawal by noon New York time (1700 GMT) on Saturday. Allied planes flew more than 1,000 sorties against targets in Kuwait, the highest for any day in the 37-day-long air war, and a further 100 against the elite Republican Guard in southern Iraq, Neal said. One US marine was killed and five wounded by indirect artillery fire in the last of three engagements with Iraqi troops the border, he added. The marines destroyed 18 tanks and 15 other vehicles, including armoured personnel carriers. A US F-16D reconnaissance plane persuaded 100 soldiers to surrender. Iraqi ground troops were firing. An F-18 came down, without shooting or dropping anything, and they all stood up and were taken prisoner. It looked like they were looking for an excuse," the General said.

US, Saudi and British spokesmen all denied an Iraqi report that the Allies launched a ground war at 9.15 A.M. (0615 GMT) on Friday, saying what had happened so far was nothing compared to what would come. A military communiqué read on Baghdad Radio based its interpretation on the intensity of an Allied artillery barrage and the type of probing attacks they were making. But Neal said all that the Allies were doing was "Aggressive and active patrolling, reconnaissance and counter reconnaissance." "The artillery is just the tip of the iceberg. We have a vast array in our military inventory or if and when a land campaign is executed," he said.

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Iraq says US deadline disgraceful

BAGHDAD, Feb 23: Iraq on Friday brushed aside as "disgraceful" a US ultimatum demanding it start withdrawing its troops from Kuwait today, reports Reuter. Iraq's ruling Revolution Command Council backed a Soviet initiative under which it would only start withdrawing after a ceasefire and which would give its troops 21 days three times as long as under the US timetable to leave the annexed Emirate. "We confirm that Iraq wants peace and is working seriously to support the Soviet initiative and facilitate its success, but not out of fear of Bush's threats," the spokesman said. The spokesman also denied American charges that Iraqi forces were burning oil fields in Kuwait and called for a United Nations investigation of the US accusation. The spokesman also said that the Iraqi leadership had delegated Foreign Minister Tariq Aziz, now in Moscow, to reply to the Soviet peace plan. He described as "disgraceful" Washington statements earlier on Friday in which Bush offered terms far stiffer than those being discussed in Moscow. Bush said that only public acceptance by Iraq and a withdrawal from Kuwait starting by noon US time today (1700 GMT) would avert an allied ground attack. The Iraqi spokesman said Bush and his allies lacked the courage to attack on ground. "Iraq is not afraid of his brutal force."

Moscow was a result of his own ultimatum. We confirm that Iraq wants peace and is working seriously to support the Soviet initiative and facilitate its success, but not out of fear of Bush's threats," the spokesman said. The spokesman also denied American charges that Iraqi forces were burning oil fields in Kuwait and called for a United Nations investigation of the US accusation. The spokesman also said that the Iraqi leadership had delegated Foreign Minister Tariq Aziz, now in Moscow, to reply to the Soviet peace plan. He described as "disgraceful" Washington statements earlier on Friday in which Bush offered terms far stiffer than those being discussed in Moscow. Bush said that only public acceptance by Iraq and a withdrawal from Kuwait starting by noon US time today (1700 GMT) would avert an allied ground attack. The Iraqi spokesman said Bush and his allies lacked the courage to attack on ground. "Iraq is not afraid of his brutal force."

BRIEFLY

Kuwaitis being rounded up: Kuwait charged that Iraqi occupation forces were rounding up men, women and children on the streets of Kuwait on Friday and transporting them by road to Iraq, reports Reuter from United Nations. The accusation was made in a letter to UN Secretary-General Javier Perez De Cuellar by Kuwait's UN Ambassador, Mohammad Abulhasan, who did not say how many people were involved. "I should like to inform you that Friday, Iraqi occupation forces are rounding up any Kuwaiti, man, woman or child on the streets, blindfolding and transporting them in vehicles to Iraq," he said.

Turkish Defence Minister quits: Turkish Defence Minister Husnu Dogan, a nephew of President Turgut Ozal, resigned on Friday after only four months in office, political sources said, reports Reuter from Ankara. They said Dogan, 46, resigned because of disagreements with Ozal over an attempt by the President's wife Semra to launch a political career of her own. No official confirmation was immediately available, but witnesses said Dogan had not appeared at the presidential palace to attend a national security council meeting chaired by Ozal.

Chinese travellers arrested: Argentine authorities have arrested 24 Chinese citizens traveling with false documents, police said Thursday, reports AFP from Buenos Aires. Seventeen of the travelers were caught with forged passports obtained illegally in Bolivia as they prepared to board a plane for Canada at the Ezeiza international airport, they added.

Israel lauds US ultimatum: Israeli leaders have praised the US ultimatum to Iraq but say Baghdad's war machine must be dismantled to avoid a future war, reports Reuter from Jerusalem. President George Bush demanded on Friday that Iraq start withdrawing from Kuwait by 1700 gmt, Saturday or face ground attack. Israeli officials greeted him unequivocal announcement with relief, they had feared that acceptance of a softer Soviet peace plan would leave Israel to face the Iraqi threat in the future.

Pressure in Egypt: Egyptian opposition parties stepped up pressure on Friday for an end to the Gulf War with passionate appeals to Arab leaders to back a Soviet peace plan, reports Reuter from Cairo. Seven opposition politicians agreed on messages to the leaders of Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Syria — all participants in the US led Alliance opposing Iraq over Kuwait. It is not in the interests of Egypt, the Arabs or humanity to insist on continuing to destroy and Arab country that declared its agreement to withdraw, said their letter to Egypt's Hosni Mubarak.

Nutan Behl dead: Nutan Behl a 1960's heart throb of Indian movie fans who won enormous critical acclaim for her versatility, died in Bombay Thursday, the Press Trust of India (PTI) reported, from New Delhi. Mrs. Behl, who starred in more than 100 movies in a career spanning 30 years, was 56 when she died in Bombay's breach candy hospital. She had been hospitalised a week ago with suspected lung cancer, PTI said.

All Ministers fired: Navymen defect
Mounting pro-democracy riots in Tirana: 4 killed
VIENNA, Feb 23: Albania's Communist rulers, toughening their stand against popular dissent, threatened to impose a state of emergency after at least two people died and several were wounded in a new wave of unrest, reports Reuter. A new Presidential Council, appointed by President Ramiz Alia on Friday following two days of anti-Communist riots in the capital, Tirana, said emergency rule was inevitable unless law and order were restored. State radio said at least two people had been killed earlier in the day when protesters tried to storm a military academy, where crisis talks were being held between political parties, the Armed Forces and the media, in Tirana. Opposition sources contacted in Tirana put the death toll at four — one policeman and three civilians — and said many others had been injured in the fighting. At least 50 people had been arrested. They said a crowd gathered outside the academy after reports that some military officers were planning to erect a statue of the late Communist Dictator Enver Hoxha in the place of another torn down by the protesters in central Tirana three days ago. Hoxha, who ruled with an iron hand for 45 years until his death in 1985, hated by some Albanians who blame him for the country's Stalinist past. The latest unrest followed two days of similar riots and occurred hours after Alia had sacked the government of Adil Carcani, appointed a new cabinet and created the Presidential Council. Another message adds from Belgrade: Albania sacked its entire government following unrest in the Communist-ruled country, the Yugoslav News Agency Tanjug said on Friday. It quoted Albanian television as saying the dismissal was decided by parliament. The decree was signed by President Ramiz Alia, successor to the late Enver Hoxha who ruled the Balkan country with an iron hand for 40 years until 1985. The Tanjug report could not be confirmed immediately. The announcement followed a wave of unrest in Albania, last bastion of Stalinism in Europe. Tanjug said a temporary presidential council had been formed under Fatos Nano, formerly Secretary General of the government. A report from Rome says: A group of lightly armed members of the Albanian Navy defected to the Italian port of Brindisi with their naval tanker on Friday and police said they had asked about obtaining political asylum. The harbourmaster's office at Brindisi, on the other side of the Adriatic Sea from Albania, said the 1,600-tonne Soviet-made Khobi class support tanker Semant had arrived under Italian Navy escort at the port around midday (1100 GMT). Officials said 24 Naval personnel and four civilians were on board the ship, which had sailed from near Vlora. It was not clear whether other Albanian Naval ships gave chase. The defection was the first by an Albanian Naval unit since the latest turmoil in the small Balkan state where anti-Communist protesters have gone on the rampage attacking symbols of Stalinism. The Albanian sailor told police they had seized the tanker at around seven P.M. (1800 GMT) on Thursday.



MOSCOW: Iraqi Foreign Minister Tariq Aziz (R) is greeted by his Russian counterpart Alexander Bessmertnykh (L) February 22 at Kremlin. —AFP/UNB photo

Off the Record

2,000 Iraqi POWs to get daily pay!

LONDON: Iraqi prisoners of war, already nearly 2,000 in number can expect to be paid a daily wage while they are in allied captivity, military sources said, reports Reuter. Under International Committee of Red Cross guidelines, the Iraqi POWs will receive about 75 pence (1.50 dollars) a day as a matter of course and this would rise if they agreed to work for their captors. The sources in London said the war prisoners would be able to spend their wages on items such as cigarettes, confectionery and razor blades on sale at canteens in POW camps. Under the Geneva convention, POWs cannot be forced to work against their will or be set tasks with a military significance. Instead they are expected to tend the wounded, bury the dead and clean their surroundings. The Allies hold more than 1,800 prisoners and expect that figures to rise sharply once ground fighting starts in earnest. "We intend to take some quite large numbers, a senior military source said. The Allies have erected large cages or prison camps to hold them. The POWs will ultimately be under the control of Saudi Arabia. But the nation which captures the prisoners remains responsible for them, including their daily pay, until they are repatriated when hostilities end. Under the Geneva convention, captors must evacuate POWs from the war zone and protect them from anger and public curiosity.

Saddam intervened in his marriage
NORTHERN SAUDI ARABIA: The groom wore a chemical protection suit, a flak jacket and carried a rifle. Instead of rice, his guests threatened to throw sand at him, reports Reuter. The bride wore white—but that was in another country some 8,000 miles (13,000 km) away. They exchanged marriage vows, thanks to a long distance telephone, the Governor of Florida, the 24th Infantry Division and the Commander of Allied Forces in the Gulf, General Norman Schwarzkopf. Specialist Kenneth Melford, 24, currently residing in the northern Saudi desert, and Tammy Hinton, 31 of Fort Pierce, Florida, were married last Friday despite the Gulf war, according to pool reports reaching Dhahran on Thursday. The honeymoon, however, will have to wait until the war is over. The couple have vowed it will be any place in the United States that doesn't have sand. They were supposed to have been married face-to-face in Fort Pierce last September but Saddam Hussein intervened. "He decided to mess around with the world and we didn't get a chance to do it before I was deployed," said Melford. He added, "I told her when we decided to get married that I wanted to do something she wouldn't forget." He succeeded. They had decided to put off their wedding but Melford's friends convinced him to do it by proxy.

Mozart died of head injury
NEW YORK: A French scholar believes Mozart died of a head injury, not rheumatic fever or poisoning as many thought, reports AP. The conclusion by anthropologist Pierre-Francois Puech of the University of Provence resulted from his finding a fracture in the skull believed to have been the composer's. The magazine said Mozart was known to have begun suffering severe headaches in the spring of 1790, more than a year before his death.

Gulf war costs \$ 1.7b a day

WASHINGTON, Feb 23: President George Bush asked Congress on Friday for 15 billion dollars in additional spending through March to cover the US share of a Gulf war that is costing more than 1.7 billion dollars a day in additional spending, his Budget Director said, reports Reuter. White House Budget Director Richard Darman said foreign governments thus far have contributed nearly 15 billion dollars towards the war effort and have pledged at least 53.5 billion dollars overall since Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in August. If foreign commitments are fully honoured, and if hostilities end by March 31, the 15 billion dollars working capital account should be sufficient to cover the US share of incremental costs, Darman said. If these conditions are not met however, it may be necessary to seek additional foreign contributions and US appropriations, Darman said. Darman, who has been struggling to cut into the massive Federal budget deficit, said, "We've had very good results" in receiving foreign contributions to the war effort.

She breathed more oxygen daily Imelda's shoes, in museum, still dazzle Filipinos

MANILA, Feb 23: Five years and more than a million visitors after the Philippine government opened a museum dedicated to the reign of Ferdinand and Imelda Marcos, curious crowds still come to gawk at her faded shoes. The former First Lady's collection of 1,220 pairs remains the top attraction at the Malacanang Palace museum, opened after the Marcoses were sent to exile and Corason Aquino came to power in a popular revolt from February 22-25, 1986. But as the fall of the Marcoses approaches its fifth anniversary and only 16 months remain in Aquino's term, the museum's fate is uncertain. "We only operate under President Aquino's mandate", Curator Eva Toledo said. "The next President may have the prerogative to turn it into his residence." Until then, curious Filipinos and foreign tourists are expected to keep coming to see the ornate halls and dim bedrooms where the Marcoses ate, slept and partied with famous friends from across the world. Marcos died in Hawaii in 1989, leaving his widow to face a racketeering trial in New York for allegedly plundering the Philippines during their 20-year rule and purchasing assets in the United States with the money. Despite her acquittal last year, Mrs Marcos remains indefinitely barred from returning to Manila. She is reputed to be one of the world's richest women, with a fortune that could run into billions of dollars. Miss Toledo said up to 1.5 million people had visited the museum since 1986, 80 per cent of them Filipinos. The museum occupies most of the Malacanang palace, a two-storey structure first built in the 18th century for Spanish colonial rulers. It was used by American governors before becoming the Philippine presidential residence. The museum was established after Mrs Aquino decided she could not live or work in the palace long associated with the Marcoses. Aides refurbished a detached

guest house and transformed it into the office of the president. Another state guest house across the street was turned into an official residence. The palace itself is used by Mrs Aquino largely for cabinet meetings and ceremonial functions, during which the museum is closed. Miss Toledo said the crowds have somewhat tapered off but visitors can still number 4,000 on a good Saturday, when the museum is opened to the public for free. Group tours are available for 200 pesos (7.14 dollars) per person. Museum guide said the mostly imported Imelda Marcos shoes, lined up on stands amid 6,673 articles of clothing she left behind, are what "most people are eager to see" when going on the hour-long museum tour. A pair of disco shoes on a pedestal features battery-operated dancing lights in transparent high heels. Nearby are six pairs of identical Charles Jourdan shoes, which Mrs. Marcos bought in quantity because she liked them so much. But the museum offers other surprises: a mini-hospital where Marcos was secretly sustained with dialysis machines, mystical symbols in the ceiling, and a Roman Catholic chapel with Hindu, Buddhist and Russian orthodox themes. Mrs. Marcos's many splendoured bedroom is another stunner. She slept on two queen-sized beds set side-by-side atop a balustrade platform, with a cascading white mosquito net suspended from the ceiling. At her side was an oxygen tank. A guide said Mrs. Marcos, a former Miss Manila, believed breathing pure oxygen in the morning was beautifying. Museum visitors are let in on some personal secrets of Marcos. Guides say he had a shoe and clothes collection to rival his wife's — 491 pairs of shoes and 6,900 articles of clothing. They said many of the shoes had a two-inch heel and two more inches of padding inside which made the late dictator taller than his wife, even in her bouffant hairdo and stiletto heels. But the Marcoses no longer monopolize the museum. Two rooms have been appropriated to house memorabilia of the Aquino era. One room showcases gifts to her from world leaders, including a chest-high pivoting globe from French President Francois Mitterrand.

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