

International

Allies win battle but Saddam master of war

DHAHRAN, Feb 3: Iraq's probing attacks into Saudi Arabia showed Saddam Hussein to be a master of basic principles of warfare: taking offensive action, achieving surprise, and maintaining troop morale, defense analysts say, reports AP.

Although the Iraqi leader probably sacrificed at least one full battalion in holding the Saudi town of Khafji for 36 hours, the action scored a psychological victory before allied air and artillery forced the soldiers out.

"I think it's been a jolt of the coalition," said Edward Foster, a researcher at the London-based Royal United Services Institute for Defense Studies.

"It's been a real jolt to public opinion in America and this country (Britain)," he said. "I think the assumption was we were setting the timetable. It's bound to open questions of intelligence."

US Generals briefing the media insisted the allies were not surprised. But analysts said if that were the case, the Iraqis should have been stopped at the border.

"They're saying nothing

went wrong with intelligence, but then they must know the effect of Saddam Hussein coming across the border and attacking Saudi Arabia," said Francis Tusa, European Editor of Armed Forces Journal International.

"You don't let a couple of battalions-plus of Iraqi troops wander over the border and not do something about it. It was very politically embarrassing," he said.

With nearly 4,000 Iraqi troops involved, Foster said, "You'd have thought someone would have seen them concentrating for an attack 12 hours in advance."

The allies initially played down the incursion—but are now touting it as a major victory.

US commander Gen. H. Norman Schwarzkopf on Wednesday called it "a mosquito on an elephant" and "militarily insignificant." The US military then had trouble explaining why it took 350 air strikes to beat back an insignificant foray which resulted in more than 500 Iraqi prisoners.

By the time Saudi and

Qatari troops retook Khafji on Thursday, backed by US Marine artillery and helicopters, allied commanders were calling it a decisive victory in the war.

US commanders were also buoyed by the sudden exposure of Saddam's dug-in troops and armoured columns, which allied air power then pounded.

US President George Bush and the US Generals in Saudi Arabia insist the Iraqi attacks will have no effect on the planning or timing of the allied ground offensive, expected sometime in the next few weeks.

The defense analysts agreed that the border incursions were not going to be the spark that started the ground war.

Nonetheless, in a war where television has a dominant role and perceptions are all-important, the unexpected Iraqi foray had an impact.

For one thing, the attacks destroyed the illusion that 30,000 allied air sorties had stunned the Iraqis into immobility. They also showed that rank and file Iraqi soldiers appeared to be highly motivated and fought tenaciously.

Three of the principles of war . . . are offensive action, surprise and the maintenance of morale. It seems to me the Iraqi attack on Khafji and around Wafra to the west can be justified on all three of those," Foster said.

By standing up to the allies, he said, Saddam's attack on Khafji "can be trumpeted as a victory."

Even if the total Iraqi casualties were 1,000 soldiers, Tusa said, "bear in mind the Iraqis do not mind losing men, so what's the problem?"

Saddam Hussein dictated to the Western world and on that score it was important."

The worst case I can think of is that the Iraqis are able to do this another couple of times — very basic, embarrassing little ground attacks — and they would then say, "We've now been able to do this to the forces of Satan and now we're leaving."

That's the worst case, that they can leave without anybody touching them," Tusa said. "He just walks off, with most of his forces still intact ... leaving the allies looking silly with all their ground forces."

It will take years for the poverty-stricken farm labourers of Kutawar, in Buner district of Pakistan's North West Frontier Province, to recover from the remote region's strongest quake in living memory.

"Everything is finished. We are poor people, what can we do?" Ghulam Khalim said.

"I don't expect we'll get anything from the government."

Officials in the provincial capital Peshawar said they expected the death toll to exceed 200 and it could go much higher. The quake measured 6.8 on the Richter scale.

Seventy-five deaths were reported from Swat and the Chitral and Dir districts of Northwest Frontier Province, which borders Afghanistan. Two villages in Swat's Kohistan area were said to be completely destroyed.

An unknown number of casualties were reported in Afghanistan where the quake, which also jolted parts of India and Soviet Central Asia, hit 16 provinces.

In Pakistan, at least 350 people were injured. Rescue

teams were trying to reach lay dead in the rubble on Saturday, skinned for the small amount of money a hide can bring.

In all my 45 years I have never felt such a tremor," said Ghulam Khalim, who was skinned for the small amount of money a hide can bring.

"Human life is human life," Khalim said.

"I was very afraid. I thought it was the end of the world."

Israel may retaliate chemical attack from Iraq : Cheney

WASHINGTON, Feb 3: US Defence Secretary Dick Cheney warned Saturday that Israel might retaliate with unconventional weapons if it came under chemical attack from Iraq, reports AFP.

Mr Cheney's warning, in an interview with Cable News Network, came amid renewed threats by Iraq that it was prepared to use weapons of mass destruction in a ground war against the United States and its allies.

Mr Cheney said Iraqi President Saddam Hussein might, "attempt to use it (chemical warfare) down the road."

But he added that "the possibility would then exist, certainly with respect to the Is-

raelis for example, that they might retaliate with unconventional weapons as well."

Asked what the US response would be, he said, "we don't rule options out or in."

Interviewed on CNN earlier Saturday, Vice-President Dan Quayle however said he could not imagine President George Bush ever ordering chemical or nuclear retaliation for any Iraqi use of such weapons of mass destruction.

I just can't imagine President Bush making the decision to use chemical or unclear weapons under any circumstances, Mr Quayle said.

You never rule any options out but I can't imagine him doing it because you have a

proper response if in fact Saddam Hussein escalates, he said.

That response would be to continue our very devastating campaign with conventional weapons.

We can overwhelm Saddam Hussein and his forces with our conventional capability and our conventional superiority, Mr Quayle said.

Earlier Friday the Iraqi Defense Ministry newspaper Al-Qadissiya warned, we will use all force and arm in our possession beginning with the knife and bullets, arms of annihilation and ending with the weapons of mass destruction because nothing deserves to live after Iraq.

Both Mr Cheney and Mr

Quayle said the 17-day old drive to force Iraq out of Kuwait was going well.

Mr Cheney stressed that in addition to ejecting Iraqi forces from Kuwait, the US-led multinational force aimed to "eliminate his (Saddam Hussein) offensive military capabilities, weapons of mass destruction, his Ballistic Missile capability ... to restore stability and security in the region."

Asked whether it would be enough for Iraq to announce a troop pull-out, the Defense Secretary said, "I would be happy with a situation in which the forces begin to walk back to Baghdad, and they left their tanks and their artillery and their armoured personnel

Quake razes Kitawar to ground

KITAWAR (Pakistan), Feb 3: Kitawar is one of the poor mountain villages which bore the brunt of the earthquake that rocked northern Pakistan on Friday. Not one of its mud-and-stone houses escaped damage, reports Reuter.

A mother and her 10-year-old son died as their house collapsed around them after she had rushed two younger children to safety. Her ailing father-in-law died in a neighbouring house when the heavy mud roof fell in.

"Everybody was asleep when the earthquake came," Omar Sadiq said on Saturday.

"We came out and we heard shrieks and crying. When we came over here we found the people were buried in the debris. They were dead."

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teams in the higher mountains where there are no roads and winter snows are unusually deep.

A weaker quake killed 5,200 people in the region in 1974.

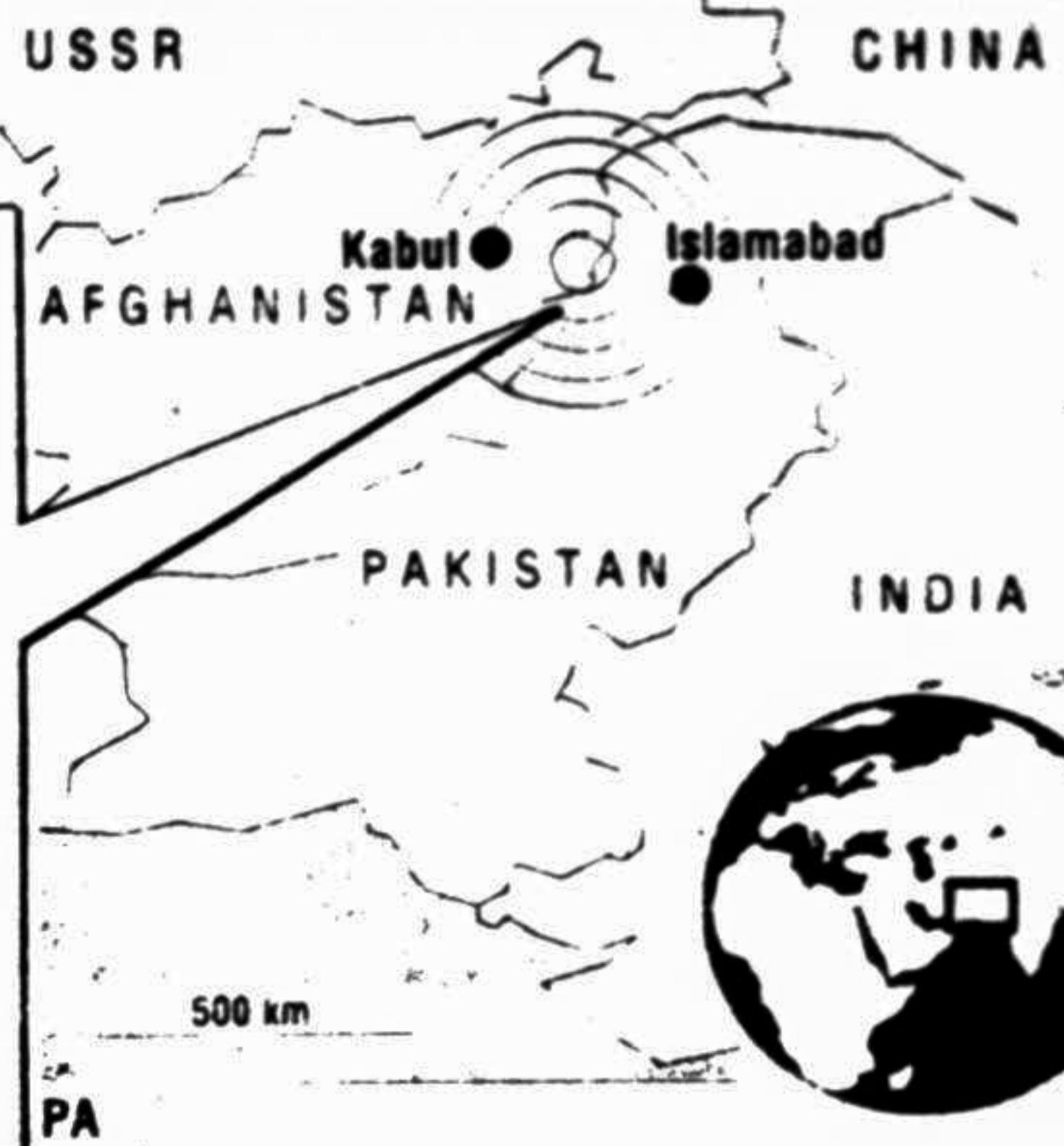
Sharif, visiting Chitral, said the government would pay 20,000 rupees (900 dollars) for every person killed and give each family affected 25,000 rupees (1,360 dollars) to rebuild their houses.

a week of rains.

The shock was particularly strong in Buner, where at least 32 people were killed and 544 houses destroyed. More than 200 cattle perished.

In Mingora, the main town

Many die in Pakistan earthquake



Location of earthquake measuring between 6.5 and 6.9 on the open-ended Richter scale, centred 60 miles beneath the earth's surface

In Kabul residents were woken by a tremor lasting 45 seconds

In Islamabad and nearby Rawalpindi houses shook for several minutes

First reports of 48 dead, many injured, more feared dead

Last October, 13 people were killed by a strong tremor in the same area of the Hindu Kush mountains. A 1981 quake killed 220.

Pakistan's northernmost Chitral district, where there were many casualties, is effectively cut off each winter as snow closes a high pass. The only alternative to flying in is by going through a rebel-held area of Afghanistan.

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Cattle brought inside to shelter from the winter could teams were trying to reach lay dead in the rubble on Saturday, skinned for the small amount of money a hide can bring.

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