

BRIEFLY

Allies to avoid mass killing : Allied forces are "aggressively" exploring ways of avoiding civilian casualties from their air attacks and are even considering announcing targets in advance, a senior US military official said in Riyadh on Thursday, reports AFP.

But Marine Brigadier General Richard Neal again blamed the mass deaths Wednesday at a Baghdad shelter on what he said was Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein's policy of mixing civilian and military targets.

Brig. Gen. Neal, Deputy Director of operations for the US central command, said the allies planned no major review of potential targets after the raid that killed at least 400 Iraqi civilians, according to relief workers at the site.

2 Tornado crew members missing : A British Tornado Gri Warplane went down during a mission over Iraq on Thursday and its two crew members are missing, the Ministry of Defence said in London, reports AFP.

It was the seven Tornado lost by the Royal Air Force since the beginning of the Gulf war on January 17.

The British Press Association news agency, quoting military sources in the Gulf, reported that the plane crashed during a raid on an Iraqi air base.

Six of the seven tornados were lost on mission while the seventh crashed in Saudi Arabia due to technical failure.

Irqi expelled in Turkey : Turkey has expelled an information Officer at the Iraqi embassy in Ankara allegedly for spying on Turkey's military secrets, the state-run radio reported last night, Xinhua reports from Istanbul.

The radio quoted Nusret Demiral, Attorney-General of the Ankara security court, as saying Abdulvahit U Nuseyin Muhammed was caught "red-handed" on February 1 while taking secret military documents from a Turk identified as Hicabi Kocigit, in the Ayranci district of Ankara.

More refugees cross into Iran :

Another 400 refugees from the war in Iraq have fled into Iran across the border post of Khosravi, the Iranian news agency IRNA reported Thursday, reports AFP.

The refugees from Somalia, Vietnam and Yemen were accommodated at a temporary camp after their arrival Wednesday, the agency said.

IRNA said almost 6,000 foreigners, as well as a small number of Iraqis have now fled through the Khosravi border post since the Persian Gulf war erupted January 17 with a US led aerial onslaught on Iraq.

A first group of Iranian correspondents entered Iraq through Khosravi on Wednesday to cover the Gulf war at the invitation of the Iraqi authorities, the agency in Tehran said.

US Navy resumes escort role : US and other Western navy ships will again escort oil tankers and other merchant vessels in the Gulf, a task instrumental in keeping the flow of oil through the waterway during the Iran-Iraq war, Lloyd's shipping service said Thursday, reports AP.

Warships are poised to advise merchant vessels entering the Gulf of potential hazards and mine threats, according to the London-based agency in Manama.

They also will "coordinate provision of escorts" to vessels headed north of Jubail, the shipping service said.

During the Iran-Iraq war of 1980-88, the warships escorted merchant vessels from the southern entrance of the Gulf at the Straits of Hormuz to their destinations to protect them against Iranian speedboat attacks and planted mines.

Phone call linked to war : Israel's Ambassador to Honduras, Shimon Agur, has received anonymous threats on his life, press reports Thursday quoted the diplomats as saying, reports AFP.

The Ambassador told the press Teguigalpa he had received threatening telephone calls apparently linked to the Gulf war, from crude, cowardly and ignorant people."

Bush-Sabah talks over phone : The exiled Emir of Kuwait, Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, talked on the telephone Thursday with US President George Bush, the official Kuwaiti News Agency KUNA reported, reports AFP.

The agency, monitored in Manama, said the two leaders discussed the "latest developments concerning the liberation of Kuwait." It gave no details.

Nepal free to buy arms : Shekhar

KATHMANDU, Feb 15: The Prime Minister said there was no question of sovereignty involved in this. It is about defence requirements and it is not comparable with other countries. It is a reality that our borders are open on such a long stretch," he said.

The Prime Minister also said that was keen to maintain and enhance its friendship with China.

On reports of the purchase of Chinese arms by Nepal, the Prime Minister said he neither discussed the matter nor did he have any information about it. There was no need for Kathmandu to purchase arms from anywhere, he said.

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