

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 GR1 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.

Iraqi expelled from 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 Nurettin Demiral, Attorney-General of the Ankara security court, as saying Abdulvahit U Nuseyni Muhammed was caught "red-handed" on February 1 while taking secret military documents from a Turk identified as Hicabi Kocoyigit, in the Ayrancil 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 Agour, has received anonymous threats on his life, press reports Thursday quoted the diplomats as saying, reports AFP.

The Ambassador told the press Tegucigalpa 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: Nepal is free to purchase arms from anywhere if India is not in a position to fulfil its defence requirements, Indian Prime Minister, Chandra Shekhar said here today, reports PTI.

Addressing a press conference prior to his departure for Janakpur in eastern Terai this morning, Chandra Shekhar said, "Our defence perceptions are similar and there will be no problem on this account. India would surely look into the defence requirements of Nepal and if we cannot fulfil its needs, it is free to purchase (arms) from anywhere."

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.

'Saddam can't be contacted without son's go-ahead'

NICOSIA, Feb 15: Allied warplanes have systematically bombed several of Saddam Hussein's palaces in what some analysts say may be an aerial hunt for the Iraqi President, reports AP.

Kurdish guerrilla officials, who have intelligence reports from northern Iraq, have said that US aircraft destroyed the Enlilshkey and Serseng palaces in the Amadiyah region on Jan. 25 and the Sere Rash palace in Erbil four days later. Both palaces are in northern Iraq.

The officials of the Kurdistan Democratic Party, who spoke on condition of anonymity, also reported an unsuccessful raid on a palace in the residential al-Arouba district of Mosul on Jan. 26.

The Iraqi President's heavily guarded Baghdad palace along the Tigris River was extensively damaged by Allied warplanes when the air offensive began Jan. 17.

Kurdish and other Iraqi exile sources as well as diplomats

in Baghdad said Saddam is constantly on the move in and around the capital, moving from one bunker to another to escape the relentless bombardments.

Saad Jabra of the New Umma Party, a resistance group whose leaders, including Jabra, operate from exile, said Saddam's security is so tight that even close aides, such as Foreign Minister Tariq Aziz, have trouble locating him.

To find Saddam, "Aziz must find Uday, Saddam's son, who in turn relays the messages to his father in whichever bunker he may be, then Aziz is contacted," Jabra said in a telephone interview.

Jabra, interviewed on condition his location not be revealed, said his information came from resistance sources inside Iraq.

US officials deny that the Allies are trying to kill Saddam, but say they are hitting his command bunkers in Baghdad.

Some analysts believe that the

WASHINGTON, Feb 15: George Bush, often rated too cautious in politics and diplomacy, has probably added his presidency to the stakes that ride on a war to liberate a tiny land in a faraway desert, reports Reuters.

The gamble in the Persian Gulf may finally persuade Bush critics that, for good or ill, they underrated the nerve of a man who has used military power before, who has savaged political rivals on occasion and who said all along he would drive Iraq out of Kuwait by force if he had to.

"This will not stand, this aggression against Kuwait," Bush stated at an August 5 news conference, three days after Iraq invaded the oil-rich emirate on its southeast frontier.

Bush said the same and more again and again — likening the moral challenge posed by Iraq to Nazi aggression in World War II — until finally yesterday the US-led air assault was unleashed on Iraq.

Ironically, the mailed-fist action by a man often lampooned as a "wimp" could ruin him politically if victory is not swift, clear-cut and won without great US losses.

While many Americans were impressed by Bush's adroit diplomacy in organising a Western and Arab alliance underpinned by UN authority — with Washington and Moscow on the same side for once — political analysts say his insistence on resorting quickly to firepower could make him a one-term president if it turns out badly.

Bush, a Republican who is expected to seek a second-four year term in 1992 may be hard pressed to explain why the "new world order" he said was at stake could not have been preserved by continuing to isolate Iraq economically. That is what many of his Democratic

Rushdie's death sentence irrevocable

NICOSIA, Feb 15: On the second anniversary of Tehran's death sentence against author Salman Rushdie, a senior Iranian cleric on Thursday insisted the edict was irrevocable, the Islamic Republic News Agency reported, reports AP.

Mohammad Vaez-Zadeh Khorasani told Muslims that the fatwa, or religious edict, could not be superseded by any other religious figure, according to Iran's official news agency.

The West is plotting "to pardon the infidel Salman Rushdie with a fatwa from a religious figure and keep its subservient author for future services," said the report by IRNA, monitored in Nicosia.

Two years ago, Iran's late Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini called on Muslims worldwide to seek out and kill Rushdie for defaming Islam in his novel "The Satanic Verses."

The Indian-born British writer has been hiding ever since, although he emerged for a few interviews and unannounced public appearances during the past few months.

He said he had embraced Islam and distanced himself from statements made by characters in his book, which many Muslims consider blasphemous.

Americans are going for targets where they believe they can kill the elusive Iraqi leader, but don't spell that out for fear of raising questions about the morality of their campaign to drive Iraq from Kuwait.

Some analysts believe that Saddam will have to be removed from power if the Allies are to achieve their goals of dismantling Iraq's military and bringing stability to the Gulf.

"Clearly cutting off the head, Saddam and his clique, is a military objective," Middle East military analyst Hans-Heino Kopetz said in a telephone interview.

Before the war, US Air Force Lt. Gen. Michael Dugan was sacked for publicly talking of "decapitating" the Iraqi leadership, and spelling out what targets would be hit when the air offensive was launched.

The pattern of the bombardment seems to have closely followed Dugan's scenario.

But some analysts do not believe the Allies are trying to kill Saddam.

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He succeeded Ronald Reagan as president in January 1989 after a bitter battle against Democrat Michael Dukakis, then governor of Massachusetts, in what is widely regarded as the nastiest US presidential campaign in modern times.



critics in Congress recommended.

Bush worked hard to rally support for the global trade boycott imposed after Iraq attacked and occupied Kuwait, relying on contacts he had made as vice president, UN ambassador, envoy to China and in other high official posts he has held.

He later said giving sanctions more time to work would allow Iraqi President Saddam Hussein to increase his military power, perhaps adding

nuclear weapons and making it that much harder to dislodge him.

"If we don't do something about it today, we're going to live to pay a much greater price tomorrow," he said in a recent interview. That reflected his belief that failure to challenge aggression brought about World War II, in which he served as a Navy carrier pilot and was shot down at sea.

The Gulf crisis was far from the first glimpse of a hardline George Bush despite constant

questioning of his mettle by critics who consider him nice but weak.

He succeeded Ronald Reagan as president in January 1989 after a bitter battle against Democrat Michael Dukakis, then governor of Massachusetts, in what is widely regarded as the nastiest US presidential campaign in modern times.

Like Reagan, Bush built a strong relationship with Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev — they called in a partnership — which resulted in unprecedented superpower cooperation in the showdown with Iraq, long a Soviet military client.

He chalked up job approval ratings unsurpassed by any US president in the history of polling, exceeding 80 per cent by early in his second year.

But his fumbling performance in last year's budget battle with the Democrat-controlled Congress caused Bush to skid in the polls and tarnished his leadership image.

The US tradition of rallying round the president in time of peril stopped Bush's mid-term decline but he still faces an array of potential re-election problems besides the Gulf war.

These include a serious economic downturn and rising unemployment after the boom years of the 1980's, the seemingly intractable national debt, escalating crime fuelled by drug abuse and a crisis of confidence in the US education system.

The Gulf showdown illustrated the irony that unlike Reagan, a feared sabre-rattler who used force sparingly, Bush projected a mild image but used force relatively often.

He sent paratroops and airpower to overthrow Panamanian strongman Manuel Noriega in December 1989, provided air cover to help Philippine President Corason Aquino

survive a coup in late 1989 and sent troops to El Salvador in an effort to rescue some Americans the same year.

George Herbert Walker Bush, whose friends still call him by his collegiate nickname "Poppy," was born on June 12, 1924, in Milton, Massachusetts, the son of financier Prescott Bush — later a senator from Connecticut.

He had a patrician upbringing in the posh New York City suburb of Greenwich, Connecticut and was educated at exclusive private schools and Yale University. He is a millionaire both in his own right and by inheritance.

He knows war at first hand, having left school at 18 to become the navy's youngest pilot in World War II. He flew 58 missions off carriers in the Pacific, was shot down at sea and was decorated for valor.

As the war was nearing an end in January 1945, Bush married Barbara Pierce. They have five children and 12 grandchildren.

After the war, he rejected a Wall Street job and moved to Texas to start an oil drilling firm that made him a fortune.

He caught the eye of then-president Richard Nixon, who brought him to the national stage as ambassador to the United Nations in 1971 and Republican Party chairman in 1973, a hot-seat in an era when the Watergate scandal was erupting.

After Nixon's resignation in 1974, president Gerald Ford named Bush to head the US Liaison Office in China from 1974-75 and to direct the scandal-plagued Central Intelligence Agency in 1976-77.

Bush was the only Republican to defeat Reagan in several 1980 primary elections, but Reagan swept him aside too. He seemed headed for political oblivion when nominee Reagan tried to recruit ex-president Gerald Ford as his running mate.

Ford spurned him and Reagan turned to the next-best-known Republican moderate around to balance the ticket — Bush.

Friends say the private Bush is unfailingly courteous and given to unprompted kindnesses. He is legendary for close friendships that go back more than 40 years.

An example is his Secretary of State, James Baker, who has known him since their days in Houston, Texas, in the 1950's.

"On the television he does not come across well," says John Overbey, Bush's first partner in the Texas oil business. "But I'll guarantee you that you can crisscross this country for the next three years and you won't find anybody who knew George Bush and didn't like him."

Off the Record

Any civilian death a tragedy: Barbara

WASHINGTON: First Lady Barbara Bush on Thursday took a regular commercial flight to Indianapolis, Indiana, to show Americans she feared no terrorist attack resulting from the Gulf war, reports AFP.

"I'm not afraid of flying," Mrs Bush said before taking her seat in the economy section of USAir Flight 257.

It was the first time she had taken a commercial flight since her husband George Bush became President two years ago.

"My husband and I talked about it. It just seemed like an important thing to do," she said, adding that she was setting an example for many Americans who were taking fewer flights since the outbreak of the Gulf war out of concern for terrorist attacks.

Nevertheless, when Mrs Bush arrived at Washington's National Airport, loudspeakers cautioned travelers not to leave unattended baggage about and apologized for any inconvenience caused by heightened security measures.

In other brief comments, Mrs Bush regretted all civilian casualties caused by Allied bombings in the Gulf war. "Any civilian death is a tragedy," she said.

He is just an observer

AT THE KUWAITI BORDER: A football a mile (kilometer) away never fails to send a shiver down the camouflage-covered spine of Lt. Abdullah Al-Rashood, one of the watchers in the war with Iraq, reports AP.

Rashood is a member of a Saudi observation unit at the front of the front. His job is to use, unaided optics, high-powered binoculars and ultra-sensitive listening devices to detect any sign of Iraqi movement.

He spends many of his evenings perched atop the high wall of sand that stretches along the southern border of Kuwait. This is literally the line in the sand that separates Iraqi positions from Allied forces.

Early on a clear day, before the desert reflects heat that distorts the view from his high-powered spyglasses, Rashood says he can pick out details of Iraqi troop positions about 10 miles (16 kilometers) away.

"I can see the road, I can see trucks, sometimes I can see people," said Rashood, 27, who has been married for seven months and posted in the desert for six. "I don't think Iraqis are ready to give up yet."

The first tier of the front is not tanks and artillery, but Saudis, Americans, French, Syrians, Egyptians and British who hear and see a lot but often don't know what to make of it.

"In the night, we see a light far away from us, and you wonder if they are scouts," said Lt. Ahmed Al-Hattani, leader of the Saudi unit that lives in a tent nestled up against the wall.

He said the listening devices they used can pick up voices from about 12 miles (19 kilometers) away, footfalls in the sand from 2 miles (3.2 kilometers) away.

She was in fact a man

BANGKOK: An Italian businessman has filed for divorce after discovering his Thai bride of eight months was a confidence trickster who had undergone a sex-change, an official at the Italian Embassy said, reports Reuters.

She said Paolo Poiris, a 27-year-old soft drinks salesman who married Riam Khuenchan a week after they met last year, was hoping to annul the marriage in a Thai court because he was unaware his partner was transsexual.

"I don't know whether he had the full (sex-change) operation or not, but he had fake documents saying he was a woman, so the marriage was registered here," the official said.

Riam, 26, who is now in a Bangkok jail for drugging and robbing a foreign tourist, has also been tried for forging an identification card.

Sex-changes are not recognised under Thai law.

Footsteps of a 'Pardeshi'

MOSCOW: Afanastus Nikitin, the Russian merchant and traveller visited India more than five hundred years ago, spent almost three years there and wrote the famous book "The Voyage Beyond the Three Seas" about his travels, reports IAN.

In this work he justly and with true empathy shows the life of Indians at that time. The joint Soviet-Indian film "Pardeshi" which was released in the late 50s, was devoted to the travels of Afanastus Nikitin. Indians have probably seen and still remember this film especially those of the older generation.

In order to retrace the journey travelled by Afanastus Nikitin, Andolag Alexei Gortovsky, a Novosti employee sets off for India.

This present-day tracing of Afanastus Nikitin's journey on foot has the goal of once again drawing the attention of Indians and Soviets alike to the greatness of the feat of this Russian traveller, researcher and writer of the 15th century as well as the goal of conducting and as detailed as possible study of the various aspects of modern India along this route of the first traveller. The journey is one of some 2000 km. It crosses four states: Gujarat, Maharashtra, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh. The journey on foot is expected to take approximately nine to ten months.

Allied estimate of bombing casualties

13,000 Iraqi tanks, 800 armoured vehicles destroyed

RIYADH, Feb 15: More than 13,000 Iraqi tanks over 800 armoured vehicles and at least 1,100 artillery pieces have been destroyed and many more damaged during nearly a month of Allied bombing, a US military spokesman said Thursday, reports AP.

US military officials said that clear weather and sharply intensified bombing runs in the Kuwaiti theater had allowed the Allies to boost the number of tank kills by nearly 75 per cent over the figure given less than a week ago.

A British military spokesman said that Allied warplanes, including British Tornados had knocked out more than 55 per cent of the

594 hardened aircraft shelters Iraq had before the war.

US marine corps Brigadier General Richard Neal, Deputy Director of operations for the US central command, told a press briefing that a US Air Force EF-111, a raven electronic jamming plane, crashed in northern Saudi Arabia early Thursday killing both aircrew.

Brig Gen Neal also said that allied forces would not be conducting any special review of targeting following the US bombing of a facility in Baghdad early Wednesday which according to Iraq authorities left more than 400 civilians dead.

But he said the Allies would

aggressively "pursue ways of avoiding such casualties possibly including the option of announcing targets ahead of time to thwart what he said was Iraqi President Saddam Hussein's practice of mixing civilian and military targets."

Saudi military spokesman Ahmed Al-Robayan said four Saudi civilians were injured Thursday by debris from two Iraqi Scud missiles fired at northern Saudi Arabia in the first daylight Scud attack of the war.

Colonel Al Robayan said the missiles disintegrated in flight. And that three cars were set afire, a home was destroyed and a workshop damaged by debris

Dressed for Combat

What the typical American soldier wears and carries while on maneuvers in the Persian Gulf region. TOTAL COST: \$1,452.10

Desert helmet \$103.00
Helmet cover \$2.50
Desert hat \$4.90

Field pack \$35.75
Back frame \$23.85
Shoulder straps \$5.30
Strap pad \$11.30
Sleeping bag \$64.25

Chemical protective clothing
Overgarment \$68.15
Overshoe \$8.70
Glove set \$7.85
Helmet cover \$3.55
Mask \$120.00
Mask hood \$8.60
Atropine kit \$14.00
Detector kit \$49.07

■ ALSO:
Fragmentation vest \$251.50
Body armor cover \$24.65

Desert coat \$15.48
Suspenders \$6.95
Brown undershirt \$2.40
Night parka \$28.70
Parka liner \$11.85
Neckerchief \$4.10

M16 rifle \$475.00

Two-quart canteen \$5.45
Canteen cover \$8.75
Belt \$6.60
Small arms case \$4.30
Tool carrier \$2.00
First aid case \$3.35

Desert trousers \$14.40
Drawers \$1.50
Night trousers \$19.50

Boots \$33.20
Socks \$1.65

