

60,000 Iraqis, 126 Allied troops killed in war

WASHINGTON, Mar 1: Figures for Iraqi casualties in the Gulf war may never be known with certainty, but according to a computer model by a military expert here they could top 60,000 dead and wounded, reports AFP.

General Norman Schwarzkopf, US commander in the Gulf, refused to put a figure on Iraqi casualties during a press briefing Wednesday. But he said allied forces had found a "very, very large number of dead" in Iraqi

trenches along the Saudi-Kuwaiti border. The troops hunkered down in these positions - known as the Saddam line - were mainly raw recruits who had been pounded by air strikes and artillery since the war erupted on January 17.

Trevor Dupuy, an authority on battlefield damage assessment here, said a computer model of the war which he had developed yielded about 60,000 Iraqi dead and wounded, but counselled that these figures

should be treated "with great caution".

According to Saudi sources, the Iraqis suffered between 85,000 and 100,000 dead.

A battlefield body count could serve little purpose, as observers believed many Iraqi dead had probably been hastily buried close to where they fell to prevent any threat to surviving troops' health.

History has shown that it is always difficult to establish precise figures for casualties, especially when fierce fighting

is concentrated in a relatively small area as was the case with the bombardment and later breaching of the Saddam line.

But there is little vagueness when it comes to allied losses which were put at an extraordinarily high 126 killed in action and 51 missing, with 13 being listed as prisoners of war.

The figure for Iraqi prisoners keeps climbing with the latest from French military sources being 80,000. On Wednesday, Gen. Schwarzkopf had put the figure at 50,000.

And it is possible that 12 hours after a ceasefire came into effect, groups of frightened bewildered Iraqis are still wondering the battlefield

seeking someone to surrender to.

Allied officers are more certain of their ground when it comes to damage done to the Iraqi army.

Marine Brigadier General, Richard Neal, said that 42 Iraqi divisions - with 623,000 men at the start of the war - have been defeated, destroyed or rendered ineffective although the remnants of one division fled with their equipment north of the Euphrates.

Brig. Gen. Neal said that Iraq still had between 25 and 27 divisions - most of them infantry units - which are for the most part deployed on Iraq's northern and eastern frontiers.

MANAMA, Mar 1: Kuwaiti Emir Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah on Thursday decided to set up a special committee to map out the Emirate's security policy, the official KUNA reported, says AFP.

The senior security committee will be tasked with drawing arrangements for security "inside and outside" the Emirate, it said in a dispatch received here.

Chaired by Crown Prince Saad Al-Abdallah Al-Sabah, the Prime Minister, the panel will "give ministries and other government organisations directives concerning state security" and also draft bills reported to security, it said.

Meetings will be held in secret, and details of them will only be published on the written authorisation of Prince Saad.

On Tuesday Sheikh Jaber decreed a three-month Martial Law to be administered by Prince Saad.

It empowers him to ban public meetings, dissolve groups or associations, censor the press and place telephone conversations under surveillance.

Kuwaiti officials have already made clear that they will launch a crackdown on those who sympathised or collaborated with the Iraqis during the seven-month occupation.

A senior Kuwaiti police officer earlier announced that some 300 Kuwaiti law enforcement agents had left the United Arab Emirates (UAE) for home Thursday.

Colonel Mohammed Al-Qatani said the return had been ordered by the Kuwaiti government, exiled in Saudi Arabia since Iraq's August 2 invasion.

US, Iraqi envoys meet in UN: truce terms conveyed

NEW YORK (United Nations). Mar 1: The UN Security Council Thursday suspended consultations on a draft resolution to order a formal cease-fire in the Gulf war, reports AFP.

The current President of the Council, Simbarashe Simbabwe Mumbengegwi of Zimbabwe, and the man who will succeed him as of today, Austrian Ambassador Peter Hohenfellner, have been asked to begin bilateral consultations on this issue.

The fifteen council members tossed out the idea of holding an immediate formal session to listen to statements from various non-council member speakers such as the Ambassadors of Kuwait and Saudi Arabia.

The drafting of the cease-fire resolution - the US representative presented a broad outline of his country's own draft to council colleagues - will depend on the various military arrangements worked out between Iraqi and coalition army officials.

The US draft is likely to call for:

- Release of all Kuwaiti detainees and third country nationals in Iraqi hands.

- Acceptance and implementation by Iraq of all UN resolutions on the Gulf crisis.

- Maintaining the arms embargo against Iraq if President Saddam Hussein remains in power.

- Acceptance in principle of Iraq's liability for war damages.

- Immediate return of Kuwaiti assets such as airplanes and incubators taken out of the Emirate after the August 2 invasion.

- Lifting all economic sanctions against Kuwait, originally imposed to protect its assets from Iraqi depredation.

US and Iraqi representatives here also met early Thursday, diplomats said. During their discussion, the US Ambassador conveyed the terms of the permanent cease-fire outlined late Wednesday by President George Bush.

Earlier Thursday, UN Secretary General Javier Perez de Cuellar expressed great satisfaction with the cessation of hostilities and hope that his organisation would be asked to send peacekeeping forces to the area as soon as possible.

The council could resume its consultations on Friday.

A few violations of ceasefire reported

RIYADH, Mar 1: Allied military officials said Thursday that the cease-fire in the Gulf War was holding, but reported a few violations including an incident in which Iraqi tanks exchanged fire with US forces, reports AP.

The US military spokesman, Brig. Gen. Richard Neal, said Iraqi T-55 tanks and multiple rocket launchers fired on elements of the 18th Airborne Corps that were trying to remove the remains of US airmen who were killed in a helicopter crash.

"We responded and destroyed two T-55 tanks and two multiple rocket launchers," Neal said. "And that's the way it's going to work," he added, referring to troops' orders to respond aggressively to any Iraqi cease-fire violations.

He said that in addition to the incident he described, there had been several other cease-fire violations, as expected.

BRIEFLY

15 UK troops killed in war: British Gulf Commander Lt. Gen. Peter De La Billiere said in Riyadh Thursday that 15 British servicemen had been killed and 31 wounded in action in the Gulf war, reports Xinhua.

Among the killed soldiers, nine were victims of US "friendly fire" when a US A-10 jet, attacked two British vehicles.

General De La Billiere in London said a further 12 men, all Tornados pilots and navigators, were listed as missing. Some of them might become Prisoners of War in Iraqi hands.

Sons drown father: Two peasants in southwest China's Guizhou province drowned their father because he had a serious skin disease, the official legal daily newspaper in Beijing said, reports Reuter.

Fearing their father had leprosy, the two sons tricked him into going to a local reservoir and pushed him in "to get rid of the contamination", the newspaper said.

One of the sons pelted a stone at his father as he struggled in the water. Local police have arrested the two men.

Bodies of copter victims found: A Bell-212 Bristow helicopter which crashed over the Atlantic Ocean on Sunday, has been recovered with nine bodies of victims, reports Xinhua from Lagos.

The news agency of Nigeria reported Thursday the helicopter crashed 22 miles off the coast in the country's south-eastern state Akwa Ibom while heading for the berth operations platform at Qua Iboe operation terminal from the Asabo oil well platform.

The victims, believed to be technicians and staff of a foreign oil company operating in Nigeria died mainly of shock resulting in heart failures. Only four passengers were rescued.

The mobil producing Nigeria said in a statement that a team of accident investigators from the Federal Civil Aviation Authority had moved in to investigate the cause of the accident.

Kuwait plunged into darkness: Kuwait City was plunged into pitch black darkness in early afternoon Thursday as dense smoke from burning oil wells and heavy storm clouds swept over the city, reports AFP.

With no electricity in the city, the only lights visible came from scattered automobile headlights and emergency electrical generators in hospitals.

The blackout lasted for about 20 minutes before the skies, helped by a sea wind, began to brighten into a dirty grey haze.

Kuwaiti residents in Kuwait City said the daylight blackout had occurred on several occasions since Iraqi troops began setting oil wells alight.

New UN Council President: Dr. Peter Hohenfellner, the Permanent Representative of Austria, assumes the Presidency of the UN Security Council for the month of March, Thursday, replacing Zimbabwe's Ambassador, Simbarashe Mumbengegwi. Reuter from United Nations reports.

The post rotates monthly according to the English alphabetical order of the Council's 15 member delegations.

Hohenfellner, who will be dealing with the aftermath of the Gulf war, spent many years in the Middle East before taking up his UN post three years ago.

He was Austria's Ambassador to Lebanon and Cuba and served in his country's embassies in Algeria, Tunisia, Hungary and Czechoslovakia.

Captives' release demanded: Kashmir separatist militants fighting Indian rule demanded the release Thursday of captive colleagues in exchange for the kidnapped daughter of a prominent local politician, reports Reuter from Srinagar.

"She (Naheeda Imtiaz) is safe with our girls' wing. We want the release of some of our colleagues," a man who said he represented the Jammu and Kashmir Student Liberation Front (JKSLF) told Reuter by telephone.

The JKSLF would announce whom it wanted freed from jail after the government had contacted Sofi Ghulam Mohammad, the Editor of the Urdu-language Srinagar Times, he said.

Pak-China ties to grow: Pakistan, seeking other sources of weapons after suspension of US military aid, has agreed to step up defence cooperation with China, Pakistani officials said in Beijing Friday, reports AFP.

Pakistan has turned to China as a major source of weapons following Washington's decision to suspend military assistance last year because of fears that Islamabad was developing nuclear arms, one official said.

Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, on a four-day official visit, said in a press release it was agreed that existing cooperation in the defence sector would be expanded and strengthened.

Truce in Salvador: Salvadoran leftist rebels announced Thursday they would observe a unilateral cease-fire so as not to disrupt upcoming legislative and municipal elections, reports AFP.

The Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front said in a statement in Mexican City the suspension of offensive operations would be in force on election day, March 10, as well as the day before and the day after.

The communique was released after a meeting here between guerilla leaders and representatives of Salvadoran opposition parties.

Korean division won't last: Roh: South Korean President Roh Tae-woo predicted Friday the division of the Korean Peninsula would not last beyond the next three or four years, reports Reuter from Seoul.

"We are riding on a new wave of world peace and harmony. The days of division on the Korean Peninsula are numbered," he said in a speech to commemorate Korea's independence movement against Japanese colonialists.

"This division... will not go beyond the next three or four years," Roh said.

Bhumibol okays Junta's new constitution

BANGKOK, March 1: King Bhumibol Adulyadej on Friday approved the new military junta's interim Constitution, starting the process toward formation of a provisional government, reports AP.

Details of the document were not immediately available, but junta leaders have said it aims to reduce the widespread practice of vote-buying.

Junta leader Gen. Sunthorn Kaogsoong, the supreme commander of Thailand's armed forces, said the military seized power last Saturday because Prime Minister Chatichai Choonhavan's elected government was corrupt, tried to destroy the military and protected enemies of the monarchy.

Also Friday, the junta ordered major changes in the tax code, including a 5 percent cut in the top tax rate, will allow greater deductions for business expenses, families, employees and pensioners.

The changes, an apparent bid to garner public support, also will benefit top military officers.

draft Thursday to replace the 1978 constitution they abolished upon seizing power. Junta spokesmen said a military delegation flew to the northern city of Chiang Mai on Friday morning and presented the draft to the King at the Phuping Palace.

An interim government will be announced immediately after the Constitution is approved, along with a legislative assembly that will draft a permanent constitution this year, junta spokesmen said. Elections would be held once it is finished, they said.

The bloodless takeover was the ninth successful coup in Thailand's six decades as a constitutional monarchy that has been dominated by the military.

The approval of the widely revered King is required for all major political changes. He apparently had legitimised the junta in a "royal command" Tuesday, although at least one scholar questioned the genuineness of that command.



AMMAN: Young Jordanian women walking on February 28 at the head of pro-Saddam Hussein demonstration hold up a placard concerning United Nations resolutions referring to the Palestinian cause. —AFP/UNB photo

Why did Saddam not use chemical arms?

RIYADH, Mar 1: Why didn't Saddam Hussein use chemical weapons against allied forces? The speculation ranges from shifting winds to bombed-out artillery to fear of nuclear retaliation, reports AP.

Gen. Sir Peter de la Billiere, the British commander, said Thursday the allies had information that the Iraqis had chemical weapons available and "were likely to use them" in the ground war.

But the 100-hour ground campaign ended without a single chemical warhead being fired. "I say thank God they didn't," said Gen. H. Norman Schwarzkopf, the US commander, who thinks he'll never find out exactly why.

Some chemical weapons, however, were found on the battlefield. US Marines who overran an Iraqi position during the ground offensive "found chemical weapon stores," a senior US military source said Wednesday, speaking on condition of anonymity. He had no additional details.

In the eight-year Iran-Iraq War, Saddam's forces used mainly artillery to launch chemical weapons against Iranian troops and against rebellious Kurds in their own country.

Fear of a chemical attack had been an overriding concern in preparations for the Gulf War: All allied service members were issued a gas mask and protective clothing and underwent training on how to inject themselves with antidotes.

Every Scud missile

launched by Iraq after the war started on Jan. 17 was tested for chemical traces. There were none.

Before the war, Western intelligence estimates said Saddam had stockpiled vast amounts of mustard gas, a blistering agent that killed thousands in World War I, and two newer gases. Those were so-called nerve agents, which are absorbed through the skin and fatally attack the nervous system.

Schwarzkopf speculated that intensive bombing during

the 40-day air war destroyed artillery used to launch chemical shells.

"I think we were probably highly, highly effective in going after their artillery," he said. "They had major desertions in their artillery" units.

In planning the ground war, Schwarzkopf said, "the nightmare scenario" was getting hung up in the Iraqi trenches "and then have the enemy artillery rain chemical weapons down on troops."

Iraq claims victory

LONDON, Mar 1: Iraqi radio late Thursday claimed victory in the Gulf war, contending that despite a "high price," it stood up to the armed might of 30 nations and "rubbed the nose of the United States in the dust," reports AFP.

The commentary by the official radio came as Allied troops consolidated their armoured ring around the tattered remnants of the 600,000-man Iraqi forces in southern Iraq and Kuwait.

"You have stood up to 30 nations led by the one superpower and emerged with laurels of victory and pride," the radio said in a broadcast monitored by the BBC.

"Iraq has succeeded in demolishing the aura of the united states—the empire of evil, terror, and aggression. Iraq has punched a hole in the myth of American superiority and rubbed the nose of the

United States in the dust". But the radio also referred, for the first time, to the cost of the conflict.

"While the cost of the war and standing up to the United States and its allies was heavy enough, capitulation to it, god forbid, would have cost even more."

"Our victory has been attained at a high price, as has the preservation of our sovereignty and dignity which is all the more reason why we should guard our achievements and reinforce our victory and stay the source of our principle, unchanging line."

"The Iraqi victory is clear because the Palestinian issue has been placed at the forefront of world events after remaining deliberately forgotten and covered in dust by the imperialists and Zionists for 40 years," it added.

Kuwaiti Crown Prince given total power to execute ML

MANAMA, Mar 1: Martial Law, declared earlier this week by Kuwaiti ruler Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah allows for bans on meetings, the dissolution of associations, press censorship and the monitoring of mail and telephone communications, reports AFP.

The 90-day law, published Thursday by the official Kuwait news agency KUNA, gives its administrator, Crown Prince Saad Al-Abdallah Al-Sabah, near absolute power to implement it.

The law contains 12 Articles and also authorises the expulsion of non-Kuwaitis or their detention if they threaten public safety, the agency added.

AFP from Nicosia adds: The Al-Sabahs, who have ruled Kuwait since the 18th century, were Wednesday poised to return to the Emirate after being chased out when Iraq invaded their country August 2.

The Kuwaiti Emir, Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, and his family fled the invasion and sought refuge in the western Saudi resort city of Taif, where

the government-in-exile has been led by Crown Prince Saad Al-Abdallah Al-Sabah.

Six members of the royal family were killed, including Sheikh Fahd Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, the Emir's brother, during an Iraqi assault on the royal residence.

Baghdad ordered the seizure of all property and goods belonging to the Al-Sabahs, which were turned over to the Iraqi government soon after Kuwait was annexed on August 8.

The 17, 818-square-kilometer (6, 880 square-mile) Emirate had a population of 2,014,135 before the Iraqi invasion and was one of the richest countries in the world, boasting a per capita gross national product of 13, 400 dollars in 1988.

A day after the invasion, Kuwaiti assets were frozen by several governments in order to deny them to Iraq.

The Sunni Muslim Al-Sabah family is directly descended from the Bani Khaled tribe of Najd in modern-day central Saudi Arabia, from where the

Al-Khalifas of Bahrain and Qatar and the Al-Sauds of Saudi Arabia also originated.

The family counts thousands of members and has been enlarged through marriage with other families of the northeastern Gulf.

Kuwait's first ruler from the family was Sheikh Sabah Bin Jaber, or Sabah I, whose 10-year reign began in 1752.

Besides Sabah I, 13 Governors of Kuwait have been members of the family. One of the most famous was the seventh ruler, Sheikh Mubarak Al-Sabah, who signed a friendship and cooperation treaty with Britain in 1899.

Also known as Mubarak Al-Kabir, or the great, he was a shaper of modern Kuwait and created the country's first public services. He instituted the line of succession that is still followed.

Ahmad Al-Jaber, father of the current Emir, ruled from 1921 to 1950 and in 1923 signed the first oil prospecting contract. The first crude oil shipment was made in 1946.

In 1961, Sheikh Abdallah

Salem Al-Sabah, father of the current Crown Prince, terminated the friendship and cooperation treaty with Britain and Kuwait became independent.

Sheikh Abdallah also gave the country its constitution introducing a system of parliamentary representation. But the national assembly was dissolved in July 1986.

A national council, a temporary body created by the Emir in April 1990, was charged with paving the way for a return to parliamentary life.

The last Kuwaiti government comprised 23 members, with the Al-Sabahs holding the most senior portfolios: Foreign Affairs, Interior and Defence.

Three members of the family—not directly related to Sheikh Jaber—were taken hostage when pro-Iranian fundamentalists hijacked a Kuwaiti jetliner on April 5, 1988.

They were released later that month, along with the rest of the passenger, in Algiers.

Off the Record

Megaphone the prime weapon

WITH THE 101ST AIRBORNE DIVISION IN IRAQ: Spec. Michael Landolf's main weapon wasn't an M-16. It was a megaphone, reports AP.

He was one of dozens of Arabic speakers in the 101st Airborne Division that played a key role in the allied ground attack against Iraq.

A recent graduate of a 63-week training course at the Defense Language Institute in California, Landolf spent only three weeks at the division's headquarters in Kentucky before being rushed to the front.

"Where these guys go, I go," Landolf said as the battalion roared into Iraq on Tuesday in the largest helicopter-borne air assault in military history.

In one attack, the 20-year-old from California helped convince more than 450 Iraqi soldiers to give themselves up. Speaking from an Apache helicopter gunship, the gangly, bespectacled soldier told the forces they would be slaughtered if they didn't give up.

"They got the point," he said. The 101st Airborne has about 100 men like Landolf, part of an attempt by the US army to complement brute strength with finesse, intelligence work and tactics.

Like many of his comrades, Landolf's road to the army stemmed from a love of languages.

In high school, Landolf took a trip to the famed military language school to attend a class in Russian, one of his favourite subjects.

"In five minutes, the instructor taught us 200 words, more than I had learned in a month at high school," Landolf said. "From then on, I knew I wanted to attend that school."

On Tuesday night, forward troops attacking an Iraqi installation just south of the Euphrates River thought they saw civilians inside.

"The linguist, send the linguist," barked a voice on the other end of the radio.

Landolf dropped his pack, slung his M-16 over one shoulder and his megaphone over the other. Accompanied by two snipers, he sneaked toward enemy lines.

"You are facing overwhelming force from the US Army," he said over the megaphone.

Silence followed, and he repeated the call. Dogs began to bay. Troops entering a building determined that it had been a false call — no civilians were around. The barking continued.

"I guess I'm not too persuasive with cantines," he said.

Nurse kills 20 patients

LONDON: A Kuwaiti nurse said on Thursday she had killed with lethal injections about 20 wounded Iraqi soldiers brought to her hospital for treatment, reports Reuter.

The woman, who said she was 24-years old but refused to give her name, told Britain's Independent Television News (ITN) that she had been a volunteer nurse at a Kuwaiti hospital throughout the seven-month Iraqi occupation.

"The first month they bring lots of Iraqis... They bring the ambulance full of Iraqi soldiers," said the woman, wearing a black head scarf tied to reveal only her eyes.

She said they had been wounded in clashes with Kuwaiti resistance fighters.

"I give them injection... to kill them," said the woman, speaking in broken English.

Asked if she killed any, she replied, "Yes... maybe about 20... I go anywhere... even in his neck... he is screaming... He doesn't know from injection... anything."

All about minting of a gold medal

WASHINGTON: Legislation to mint a Congressional gold medal for the US Commander in the Gulf, General Norman Schwarzkopf, was introduced in the Senate on Thursday, reports Reuter.

Its sponsor, Senator Trent Lott, Republican of Mississippi, said Schwarzkopf's performance in the Gulf war put him in company with other military recipients of the award such as World War General Douglas MacArthur and General of the Army George Marshall.

"This is a national award for a national hero," Lott told the Senate. "General Schwarzkopf has led the high noon showdown at the Kuwaiti corral and come away a victory."