

Covert operation to oust Saddam discussed

Saudi Arabia wants US to arm Iraqi opposition

NEW YORK, Jan 19: Saudi Arabia is pressuring the Bush administration to secretly arm and give intelligence to Iraqi opposition forces so they can work to overthrow Saddam Hussein, a newspaper reported Sunday, says AP.

Another major allied air campaign against Iraq — and possibly sending American ground troops back into the region — would be required to complete Hussein's ouster, The New York Times said. The United States and its allies

defeated Iraq in the Gulf war a year ago.

The Saudis want the United States to give arms and intelligence to Kurdish rebels in north Iraq, Shi'ite Muslim fighters in the south and Sunni Muslim opposition forces in central Iraq, the Times said, quoting US and allied officials it didn't name.

The goal would be for the opposition to draw out and divide Hussein's remaining Republican Guards, the highly trained units protecting his

strongholds around Baghdad, then subject them to allied air attacks, the newspaper reported.

Iraq's air force has been grounded since the end of the Gulf war, and military officials believe that destroying Hussein's remaining tank divisions and helicopter fleet would lead to his final defeat, the Times said.

"There has to be a combination of a major covert operation and a major air operation and then leave the rest to the

Iraqi people," a senior allied official who has been discussing the proposal with Bush aides was quoted as saying.

The Times said that some of the sources who reported on the Saudi-backed plan did so in the hope that the report would instill confidence in the Iraqi opposition; others hoped that public knowledge of the proposals would spur an outcry or a congressional response.

Hussein's ability to stay in power despite his defeat in the Gulf war threatens to become a political liability for President Bush as he seeks re-election this year.

The anti-Saddam planning in the United States is being coordinated by officials from the Defence and State Departments, the Central Intelligence Agency and the National Security Council, the Times said.

Senior American and Saudi officials reportedly have discussed military and covert operation actions over the past 10 days, but it wasn't clear whether Britain and France had been consulted.

On Thursday, the first anniversary of the Gulf war's start, Bush praised "the efforts of thousands of brave Iraqis who are resisting Saddam's rule." An administration official told the Times that Bush's statement was part of a deliberate American effort to nurture and develop and Iraqi resistance.

The officials who spoke to the Times said no decisions on covert action have been made and no list of options had been presented to Bush.

Blast kills one in Rawalpindi

RAWALPINDI, Jan 19: A bomb exploded in a crowded market Saturday evening, killing an Afghan refugee who was trying to connect the device and wounding six others, police and witnesses said, reports AP.

Police Chief Iqbal Row said the dead man was attempting to connect a timing device to the explosives and place it under a parked car at Raja Bazar in Rawalpindi, adjacent to the federal capital of Islamabad.

But because of a power blackout in the city, Row said, he could not see properly and apparently hooked the wrong connections.

The police chief identified the dead man as Mohammed Yusuf, an Afghan who had been living in the area of Pakistan that borders Afghanistan.

China executes 40 for criminal offences

HONG KONG, Jan 19: Some 40 people have been executed separately for criminal offences in the Southern Chinese province of Guangdong, a newspaper here reported today, reports AP.

The executions Saturday in eight districts and four countries in the provincial capital, Guangzhou, followed separate mass gatherings to denounce the crimes of some 40 people, Wen Wei Po Daily said.

A Hong Kong man, identified as Hu Weidong, 34, was executed for trafficking dangerous drugs, while others were convicted of arms and property crimes, it said.

Nuclear scientists of former Soviet Union working in Libya

LONDON, Jan 19: Soviet nuclear scientists have been lured to Libya by salaries over \$100,000 to work on top-secret nuclear research, the Sunday Express reported, says AP.

Igor Cherniyev, 46, who previously worked for the Institute of Nuclear Research near Moscow, was quoted by the paper as saying he was working with three other Soviet nuclear scientists in Libya's remote Awbari desert.

Western governments have expressed increasing concern at the potential for the proliferation of nuclear weapons following the break-up of the Soviet Union. Western defence experts estimate there are between 30,000 and 50,000 Soviets with nuclear expertise.

Cherniyev was quoted as saying he had been working for Libya since September at a salary of 60,000 pounds (about \$108,000) — more than 20 times his salary in the former

Soviet Union — plus a rent-free house and car.

"We have excellent conditions here and are treated with great respect. Our knowledge is clearly of great value to the Libyans," he was quoted as saying in the front-page story.

"My wife and I did not take a political decision to come here — it was simply that we could make a better life for ourselves," the Sunday Express quoted him as saying.

"We have a salary here that would rank as untold riches in the old Soviet Union. We also have as much food as we want," he was quoted as saying.

The paper did not give any details of the nuclear research being conducted for the Libyans.

The Sunday Express also said, without attribution, that Iraq has sent nuclear material to Algeria because it wants "to counter developments" in Libya's nuclear programme.

G M Syed put under house arrest

ISLAMABAD, Jan 19: Sind separatist leader G M Syed has been put under house arrest, an official in Karachi said today after he reportedly took part in a meeting that challenged "the integrity of Pakistan."

The official told AFP that Syed, 89, was being detained for 60 days at his home in Karachi, called Haider Manzil.

The Associated Press of Pakistan (APP) news agency said he was put under house arrest Saturday.

Syed has been arrested and detained on several past occasions by the Pakistani authorities.

Leader of the nationalist organisation Jiye Sind, Syed

supports the secession of the southern Pakistani province and its establishment as a separate entity that would be known as Sindhudesh.

"The Sind government has announced that G M Syed will be placed under house arrest with immediate effect," APP reported.

"Detention orders have also been issued for those individuals who had yesterday (Friday) spoke against the integrity of Pakistan, while making speeches at the function held to celebrate the birthday of G M Syed at Karachi," the news agency added.

Off the Record

Actor becomes chancellor

LONDON: Actor Sir Peter Ustinov has landed a new role as chancellor of Durham University in northeast England, reports AP.

The 70-year-old actor was chosen by the university's senate and council Friday from more than 60 nominations for the largely ceremonial post.

"My reaction is one of surprise, disbelief and unmitigated delight," Ustinov said Saturday. "One of my great regrets is that I was never able to go to university."

Ustinov is the 160-year-old university's 10th chancellor. He succeeds the late ballerina Dame Margot Fonteyn.

Condom defence for high school goes

PARIS: France should distribute condoms in high schools to help fight AIDS, a woman government Minister said Saturday, reports Reuters.

Veronique Neiertz, junior Minister for women's rights, proposed in a newspaper interview that condoms be sold for a symbolic price of one franc (18.5 U.S. cents) from distribution machines.

They presently cost five franc (93 cents) each from machines in cafes and hospitals.

"I favour distributing condoms in all public places, including high schools," Neiertz told the Daily Le Parisien.

France has more AIDS cases than any other western European country, with 15,534 reported in 1991.

There's cat in the phone

BOYNTON BEACH, Fla.: It was one howler of a whodunit, and even Ms. Marple was stumped, reports AP.

Police rushed to Barbara Marple's apartment to find out why 911 was being repeatedly dialed without anyone speaking on the other end. Turned out it was a series of catcalls.

After repeated calls last Sunday night in which the caller hung up without saying a word, police went to Ms. Marple's house. The 23-year-old supermarket employee denied making the calls, but the police insisted on checking inside.

In a bedroom, Ms. Marple and the police found her calico cat, named Kitten, with one paw on the cordless phone.

Kitten didn't simply press a speed-dial button. She punched 9-1-1 in sequence the first time. Then she hit the redial button.

Indian FM in Japan

TOKYO, Jan 19: Indian Foreign Minister Madhav Singh Solanki arrived Sunday for talks with Japanese leaders on expanding economic cooperation and on international affairs, reports AP.

Solanki, visiting for the 40th anniversary of diplomatic relations between the two countries, is the first Indian Foreign Minister to visit Japan since P V Narasimha Rao, now the Prime Minister, came in 1982.

He is to meet with Prime Minister Kichii Miyazawa, Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Michio Watanabe and other government and business leaders.

Before leaving for Tokyo, Solanki said in an interview with the Japanese economic newspaper Nihon Keizai Shimbun that India would like more investment from the United States and Japan.

He is to meet on Monday with Watanabe, Finance Minister Tadamasa Hata and business leaders.

BRIEFLY

Pak journalists observe strike:

Journalists in Pakistan's southwestern province of Baluchistan went on strike on Saturday protesting violence against reporters, says Reuters from Quetta.

About 200 journalists marched through the provincial capital Quetta demanding protection against violence across the country.

The Baluchistan strike, which union sources said had shut 12 daily newspapers in the province for the day, followed an attack this week on a reporter in Quetta by unidentified men. Journalists blame political and ethnic groups unhappy with media criticism for the attacks, most of which have occurred in Sind province.

Iraqis urged to cut spendings:

President Saddam Hussein on Saturday called on Iraqis to reduce their everyday spending in order to beat the international embargo against their country, the official INA news agency said, AFP reports from Baghdad.

Addressing a group of school children just over a year after the start of the US-led war against Iraq, Hussein told the youngsters to "avoid unneeded purchases, dress soberly and accept the frugal food given to you by your parents," INA said.

"The enemy assembled more weapons and men than us, but we beat them by our faith, which they could not take away from us," the Iraqi leader said.

On Wednesday, Hussein said that he himself would do without luxury products for a year in order to help beat the embargo.

Palestinian shot dead in WB:

An Israeli soldier shot and killed a Palestinian "accidentally" Saturday and wounded another serviceman in the West Bank, while in Jerusalem a Palestinian stabbed and injured a border guard, AFP reports from Jerusalem.

Palestinian Musa Abdel Hassan Dabasessa, 32, was killed when troops tried to arrest him for reasons undisclosed by the army near the village of Nuba.

A soldier fired at him "accidentally" killing him and wounding another Israeli troop, the army said, adding that an investigation into the incident was launched.

Indefinite curfew in Kashmir:

An indefinite curfew was claimed on the southern Kashmir town of Anantnag on Saturday after anti-India street protests turned violent, police said, Reuters reports from Srinagar.

At least 30 people, including some policemen, were injured when protesters calling for independence clashed with Indian security troops police said.

The demonstrators were protesting at a what they alleged were excesses committed by security troops during searches for secessionist militants earlier this week.

In Srinagar, summer capital of Jammu and Kashmir state, a militant group which kidnapped a scientist this week demanded the release of five of its jailed members in exchange for his freedom.

Road mishaps claim 31 in Turkey:

Thirty-one people were killed and nearly 90 were injured on Saturday in bus accidents in icy roads in western Turkey, Reuters reports from Ankara.

Two buses collided on a motorway between Samsun and Istanbul, killing 25 people and injuring 43, several of them critically, the semi-official Anatolian news agency reported.

Six people were killed and 45 were hurt when their bus, heading for a ski resort in mount Uladag, went off the road near the town of Bursa and plunged into a ravine, it said.

Turkey has one of the highest road-accident death rates in the world.

Libya calls for UN meet to eliminate terrorism

NICOSIA, Jan 19: Libya, accused by the West of supporting terrorist groups, has called for a special meeting of the United Nations General Assembly to eliminate terrorism, reports Reuters.

The state-run Libyan news agency Jana said today the request was made in a letter by Libyan Foreign Minister Ibrahim Mohamed Beshari to UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali. Libya has said Beshari will not attend a UN Security Council debate on Tripoli's alleged involvement in the bombing of American and French airliners in which a total of 441 people died.

Jana quoted the letter as saying a special General Assembly session would allow "the international community to deal with the reasons behind international terrorism and eliminate it."

The United States, Britain and France say that have enough support to adopt a Security Council resolution on Monday calling on Libya to surrender agents suspected of the bombings.

Libya has denied involvement. Its proposal to form a neutral jury to try the alleged agents were rejected by the West.

Libya's Second-in-Command Abdel-Salam Jalloud is currently visiting China, apparently to try to persuade it to veto the resolution.

Body formed to revive Soviet Communist Party

MOSCOW, Jan 19: About 200 pro-communists, including Russian legislators, formed an organization here Saturday aimed at reviving the defunct Soviet Communist Party, reports AP.

Members of the new committee for unity of communists in the country said they wanted to join forces with other communist organizations in Russia, including the Communist Workers' Party of Russia.

Politicians, military officers and a Russian orthodox Deacon made speeches calling for a referendum to be held on the price liberalization which took effect in Russia on January 2.

Kohl recalled what he called "the darkest chapter in our history" to mark the 50th anniversary of the Nazi party congress that set in motion the assembly-line massacre of millions of Jews during World War Two.

The Wannsee conference of January 20, 1942, named after an elegant Berlin villa where it was held, turned the murder of Jews from a matter of random executions into a genocide industry involving almost every institution in society.

"The memory of this past must never be lost here in Germany. It is a serious burden on us Germans, but it has also helped us create a stable, free

democracy. Initially in the west and then in the east of our fatherland," Kohl said.

East and west Germany merged in 1990 after hardline communist rule dissolved in the east, ending 45 years of division caused by the wartime defeat of the third reich.

Kohl said the Wannsee conference, grouping senior officials of the security police and various ministries, was conducted in "merciless bureaucratic language" about an "imminent final solution" for Jews in Europe.

"In the end we had the horror of Auschwitz, Treblinka or Maidanek (death camps), the murder of millions of helpless children, women and men — a crime whose monstrosity defies human comprehension," Kohl said in a statement.

"Those who lost their lives as innocents and those few who survived the horror — they all warn us not to forget

Negotiators share PLO's views, says Arafat's aide

WASHINGTON, Jan 19: A senior Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) official Saturday insisted that Palestinian negotiators at Middle East peace talks shared the PLO's views, reports AP.

The Palestinian delegation at the talks "is 100 per cent united with its people and its leadership," said Nabil Shaath, a top aide to PLO chief Yasser Arafat. Shaath said that for the Palestinian people, the PLO was that leadership.

"There is absolutely no chance of creating a wedge," Shaath told a conference of Arab-Americans.

While US law bars entry into the country by PLO members, Shaath was allowed into the United States under a waiver granted by Secretary of State James Baker. The PLO official was not scheduled to meet with US officials during

the visit.

The latest round of the bilateral Arab-Israeli negotiations ended in Washington Thursday without the parties agreeing on a venue or an exact date for the next round.

Lebanon's Foreign Minister Faris Bouez told Voice of Lebanon radio station his Syrian-backed government would not attend the Moscow talks either.

He said he had briefed the Russian Ambassador to Lebanon on what he termed Israel's policies to isolate the Arab states which he said would lead to the failure of any peace talks.

The Bahrain daily Al-Ayam quoted Nabil Shaath, an adviser to PLO chief Yasser Arafat, as saying the Palestinian delegates would withdraw from the Middle East peace process if Washington provides

Israel with 10 billion dollars in loan guarantee.

Palestinians say the guarantees would allow Israel to divert funds to the building of new settlements in the occupied territories and to cover the cost of resettling immigrants from the former Soviet Union.

On his return to Egypt, Moussa played down his apparent failure to persuade Syria to attend.

But Moussa confirmed that Egypt, the one Arab country to have made peace with Israel, would attend the talks.

Diplomats in Cairo expressed little surprise at Syria's stand. "They have said all along they wouldn't go unless there was progress in the bilaterals," said one western diplomat. "There was very little Egypt could do to change that."

New rulers claim seizure of Gamsakhurdia's stronghold

ZUGDIDI, Georgia, Jan 19: The ruling military council claimed it seized a stronghold of President Zviad Gamsakhurdia, but said supporters of the deposed leader mounted successful attacks and captured more weapons, reports AP.

The chaos Saturday in the former Soviet republic was further heightened by mystery about the movements of Gamsakhurdia, who returned to Georgia last week after a 10-day exile in Armenia.

The Military Council's armed forces commander, Tengiz Kitovani, claimed Gamsakhurdia left Zugdidi for another western Georgian city, Sukhumi, the Tass news

agency reported.

He predicted Gamsakhurdia could leave Georgia on Sunday on a plane bound for the Russian city of Astrakhan.

The report could not be immediately verified. Earlier this week, Kitovani said Gamsakhurdia spoke to supporters in Zugdidi, but Central Television later said Gamsakhurdia has not made public appearances.

Armed opponents routed Gamsakhurdia from the Georgian capital of Tbilisi on January 6 after a month of fighting that killed at least 113 people. The opposition coalition charged that Gamsakhurdia had become a

dictator and was persecuting opponents since his election in May.

In Tbilisi on Saturday, acting Prime Minister Tengiz Sigua said troops claimed control of Samtredia "without firing a single shot." The city, a railway hub about 185 miles (300 kilometers) west of Tbilisi, was among several controlled by Gamsakhurdia supporters.

Gamsakhurdia should be brought to trial and severely punished for the grave political mistakes that have isolated Georgia from the civilized world, Sigua said at a news conference, Russian media reported.

Genocide of European Jews a moral burden: Kohl



democracy. Initially in the west and then in the east of our fatherland," Kohl said.

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"In the end we had the horror of Auschwitz, Treblinka or Maidanek (death camps), the murder of millions of helpless children, women and men — a crime whose monstrosity defies human comprehension," Kohl said in a statement.

"Those who lost their lives as innocents and those few who survived the horror — they all warn us not to forget

that the inviolable dignity of human beings must always be the measure of our behaviour," he added.

A permanent Holocaust exhibit and library will be unveiled on Monday's anniversary at the Wannsee villa, which has been an industrialist's home, a Nazi officers' guesthouse and a retreat for schoolchildren over its 77-year history.

A Holocaust chain-of-command stretching from Hitler's chancellery to local registry offices enabled the systematic deportation of Jews by train from all corners of the huge wartime reich to remote death camps in eastern Europe.

About six million Jews died during the 1933-45 reich, the great majority in camps from 1942 to the waning days of the war in 1945. Survivors helped found Israel in 1948.

Scholars consider the Holocaust unparalleled in history for its chillingly methodical ef-

iciency and its occurrence in a German culture with a classical intellectual tradition.

Wannsee's 50th anniversary comes at a time of renewed debate about the Nazi past, kindled in part by disclosures German exporters helped arm Iraq against Israel and by a resurgence of violent xenophobia in Germany.

German-Jewish alienation lingers behind the veneer of official reconciliation between Germany and its leftover 40,000 Jewish community as well as Israel.

Thirteen per cent of Germans in a poll published by the news magazine Der Spiegel on Saturday expressed anti-semitic sentiments.

A survey released a week ago showed a third of Germans felt Jews exerted too much influence in the world, while most Israeli Jews expressed a strong dislike for Germans.