

Sanctions to remain until Libya complies with UN demands : US official

NICOSIA, Apr 16 : Libya sank into isolation on Wednesday as the world community, including its Arab neighbours, applied United Nations sanctions against it, reports AFP.

Many countries, including France and the United States, said they were cutting Libya's diplomatic presence on their territories, while several Libyan planes tried in vain to break an embargo on air links with the country.

Meanwhile a top US official in Washington stressed that the sanctions will remain in effect until we are satisfied that Libya had complied with UN demands concerning air-line terrorism.

Italy scrambled jet fighters when a Libyan Arab Airlines plane entered its airspace en route for Switzerland, and the plane later returned to Tripoli.

Egypt, Libya's eastern neighbour, also turned back a Libyan plane.

The United States, France, Germany, Belgium, Italy, the Netherlands and Spain were among countries which said they were expelling Libyan diplomats.

Russia said it would apply the sanctions, although Moscow radio said the decision had not been easy because of the country's historical links with Libya.

Tripoli, meanwhile, said it would take reciprocal action against the embargo, which went into force early on Wednesday because of the country's refusal to hand over two men accused of involvement in the bombing of a US airliner.

Libya has said handing the two men over would infringe on its sovereignty, although it offered to deliver them to a neutral country for trial.

The Security Council in New York ordered the sanctions to go ahead late on Tuesday after a last-ditch attempt by Libya to obtain a restraining order from the UN International Court of Justice in the Hague ended in failure.

The sanctions also include a ban on arms sales to Libya.

Russian legislature approves government reforms

MOSCOW, Apr 16 : The Russian legislature gave its formal approval Wednesday to the government's reforms in a key vote that marked a victory for President Boris Yeltsin and could strongly influence the shape of future administrations, reports AFP.

By a margin of 518 to 203, members of the congress of people's deputies voted in favour of a resolution that gives Yeltsin wide-ranging authority to continue reforms until December 1.

Meanwhile ITAR-Tass quoted a well-informed source as saying Yeltsin had formally rejected the collective resignation offered by his government on the weekend and expressed his total confidence in the government.

Yeltsin reportedly rejected the resignation in a telephone conversation with First Vice Prime Minister Yegor Gaidar.

Russian Khasbulatov, the Speaker of the parliament and one of the most outspoken critics of the government, said after the vote on the reforms that the parliament was ready for honest and mutually advantageous cooperation with the government.

He said the resolution did not lay down specifics on the role of the legislature in the policy-making process but asserted that it offered moral support to the executive powers, notably to the President.

Khasbulatov's remarks contrasted sharply with state-

ments he made Wednesday after the government tendered its resignation when he described ministers as lost kids trying to blackmail the legislature.

Khasbulatov has spearheaded efforts by the parliament to curtail Yeltsin's powers and to make the government directly accountable on more issues to the parliament.

In a resolution approved Saturday, the parliament sharply criticized the government's economic reforms and gave Yeltsin three months to re-organize his government and quit as Prime Minister. The government described the move as unacceptable.

The resolution approved Wednesday, while supported

by the government in its draft version, nonetheless contained potentially serious contradictions when it was read by Khasbulatov prior to the vote.

In particular it stated that Yeltsin must draft plans for restructuring of the government in line with the decisions of the fifth and sixth congress.

The fifth congress, held last November, gave Yeltsin special powers to run the economy until December 1. Saturday's resolution appeared to be aimed at ending those powers in three months. Nonetheless, the vote indicated that many hardliners in the parliament had been won over to the argument, put forward by Yeltsin's supporters, that there were no realistic alternatives to the current course of reforms.

It also appeared to support the current administration's conviction that Russia, at least for now and the next few years, needed a strong presidential style government instead of a parliamentary republican system.

Earlier Wednesday, deputies approved plans to integrate the new Russian federation treaty signed last month into the country's new constitution, but failed to debate any new draft constitutions due to disagreements between conservatives and reformers.

Gleb Yakunin, a leading member of the pro-government democratic Russia movement, said conservatives, who dominate the parliament believed that a new draft constitution prepared by the parliament's constitutional committee was too radical.

The 57-page draft emphasises human rights and democracy in governmental structures but was described recently by St Petersburg Mayor Anatoly Sobchak as incomprehensible. Sobchak has drafted an alternative.

The congress was due to continue debate on the constitution and, notably, the states of Crimea, on Thursday and some sources have predicted the current session could run into next week.

Y'slav army deployed in Bosnia

SARAJEVO, Apr 16: A unit of the Serbian-led Yugoslav Federal Army was deployed in part of the Bosnia-Herzegovina capital yesterday, as Washington issued a stern warning against Serbian aggression in the former Yugoslav republic, reports AFP.

The Federal Army troops, which the Muslim and Croatian populations say are siding with ethnic Serbians in the conflict now engulfing the republic, were sent to two Sarajevo neighbourhoods where fighting was underway between Serbian separatists and local police.

In Washington, the US State Department, warned that Serbia was set to become an "international pariah" if Serbian civilian and military authorities "continue their aggression against Bosnia".

Spokesman Margaret Tutwiler said the United States would ask for Serbia to be expelled from the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) unless it halted its offensive against Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Britain also yesterday said Serbian leader should be persuaded to adopt a "reasonable attitude" and urged all sides to step back from the fighting.

Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd, in an interview with the BBC, said the Serbs "know they cannot exist in isolation, that they are at the heart of Europe and there is no way in which they can survive or continue to be isolated."

Meanwhile, leaders of a self-proclaimed Serbian Republican in the Bosnia-Herzegovina late yesterday order an all-out mobilization of Serbian fighters.

Serbian defense groups on Bosnian territory now constituted the "army of the Serbian Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina," the community SRNA news agency reported.

The Serbs led by separatists under the banner of the Serbian Democratic Party, are laying claim to some 65 per cent of Bosnian territory. The Serbian community accounts for one-third of the Bosnian population.



TORKHAM, Pakistan: A truckload of Afghan refugees heading back to Afghanistan, enters the last Pakistani outpost at the Pakistan-Afghanistan border town of Torkham Wednesday amid hectic peace efforts by the United Nations. —AFP/UNB photo.

BRIEFLY

4 Indonesians crushed to death : Four Indonesians were crushed to death under 25,000 bottles of coca-cola when a delivery truck overturned in West Java, a newspaper reported Thursday, AFP says from Jakarta.

The Pelita Daily said the truck skidded off the main road between Jakarta and Bandung, dropping its load on a family of seven pedestrians.

Sikh rebels kill 9 Hindus : Sikh militants dressed as Indian army soldiers dragged nine members of a Hindu family from their home and shot them to death near a Sikh holy shrine, police said Thursday, AP reports from Amritsar.

Ten Sikh rebels sneaked into the village of Bhangali Kalan on the outskirts of Amritsar midnight Wednesday and forced Chimam Lal — a rich trader — his wife, four sons and three nephews out of their home, said Senior Police Superintendent Paramjit Singh Gill.

The rebels lined the nine people in a street alongside a Sikh shrine in the village and gunned them down with AK-47 assault rifles, Gill said.

The killers then fled, firing on a police check post in a neighbouring village. A policeman on security duty alerted army troops patrolling the area who cordoned off several villages in the region, Gill said. In an ensuing encounter, the troops shot dead three rebels.

Palestinian shot dead : Israeli troops Wednesday shot dead a Palestinian and wounded 18 others in clashes on the occupied Gaza Strip, Palestinian sources reported, AFP says from Jerusalem.

A special undercover unit in Khan Yunis opened fire from a car with local plates on cars carrying two men from an armed group of Fatah, the main Palestine Liberation Organisation group, they said.

The Palestinians fired back but Zakaria Kaban, 23, was shot dead his colleague managed to escape, although he was wounded.

The dead man had earlier been identified as Salma Mohammad Baraka. His death took to 888 the number of Palestinians killed by Israeli bullets since and uprising erupted in December 1987, according to a toll compiled by AFP.

Arens warns Beirut : Israeli Defence Minister Moshe Arens warned Wednesday that his country blamed the Syrian-backed government in Beirut for anti-Israeli operations in Southern Lebanon, AFP reports from Raahaya.

We consider the Lebanese government to be responsible for the terrorist activities of Hezbollah, Arens said, referring to a Lebanese Muslim fundamentalist group.

We know it receives its instructions from Damascus to authorise such activities. It is the responsibility of this government to end it, he said over the radio station of an Israeli-backed militia in South Lebanon.

If it not capable, Israel has the means to do it, warned Arens, who was on a tour of an Israeli-imposed security zone in the south.

Six miners killed in explosion : At least six coal miners were killed in an explosion and cave-in Wednesday at a mine at Bergkamen in the Ruhr Valley, a spokesman for the Ruhrkohle Company said, AFP reports from Bonn.

A seventh miner, earlier reported missing, was evacuated by helicopter and was being treated for serious burns suffered in the gas explosion which touched off the cave-in.

The company spokesman said the accident, which occurred some 800 meters (2,600 feet) underground at the Haus Aden mine, did not appear to have any connection with an earthquake that shook parts of Germany on Monday.

Ruhrkohle spokesman Werner Stegmann said company experts could find no immediate explanation for the explosion, which was apparently caused by Methane, or firedamp.

Charges filed against Garcia : President Alberto Fujimori's government, seeking to solidify its control of the country, has filed charges against its leading foe, ex-President Alan Garcia, AP reports from Lima.

Garcia and his former Interior Minister, Agustin Mantilla, are charged with possessing illegal ordinance including machine guns and explosives, according to the Wednesday edition of the government gazette, El Peruano.

Garcia has been in hiding since April 5, when Fujimori suspended the constitution and closed Congress and the courts in what he called a crackdown on corrupt politicians and judges.

Fujimori says these people were blocking his attempts to reform the economy and fight drug lords and guerrillas. He says a "renovated democracy" will return to the country within 18 months.

Seven killed as Tamil rival groups clash

COLOMBO, Apr 16: Seven civilians killed in eastern Sri Lanka in a reported shoot-out between rival Tamil groups were members of one family that was wiped out in a revenge attack, Tamil sources here said today, reports AFP.

The military had said the civilians were caught in cross-fire when Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) guerrillas exchanged fire in Batticaloa with rival People's Liberation Organisation of Tamil Eelam (PLOTE) cadres.

Afghan generals urge UN to gear up peace process

KABUL, Apr 16 : Afghanistan's top generals appealed Thursday to the United Nations to accelerate efforts to bring a peaceful end to the country's 13-year-old civil war. Muslim rebels, however, said it was too late for the UN plan, reports AP.

Meanwhile, diplomats in Kabul and Pakistan insisted that President Najibullah had not fled the Afghan capital, as Iranian Radio had reported earlier Thursday.

The generals have pulled hundreds of reinforcements into Kabul after the rebels on

Wednesday captured the country's main military base and the Communist-style government's vital supply route to the former Soviet Union.

Rebels said they were trying to form their own 28-member commission to go to Kabul, possibly as early as this weekend, to take power from Najibullah's Soviet-installed government.

"It's too late for the UN Plan," said Masood Khalili, a spokesman for Jamiat-e-Islami (Party of Islam). It is one of the seven main resistance groups that spearheaded an offensive

that many now fear has killed hope for the UN peace plan.

"The UN formula is gone, the UN should now provide a new formula for the surrender of Najib to mujahedeen forces," said Khalili, speaking from the Pakistani border city of Peshawar, the headquarters of the Afghan resistance.

The UN special envoy on Afghanistan, Benon Sevan, has been trying to implement a plan to install a neutral council of 15 Afghans to replace Najibullah. The council would govern Kabul until an interim government can be chosen at a

peace conference. Najibullah has promised to surrender his executive powers to the temporary council and to step down.

Although Najibullah's move was initially praised by the guerrillas, many now believe it weakened a government already riven with ethnic and personal differences.

It also caused middle — and low-ranking officers in the military to cut secret deals with the guerrillas and encouraged the radical rebels to make one last attempt to bring down Najibullah, the

former secret police chief installed by Moscow in May 1986.

Troops loyal to the government were placed on high alert. Two of Afghanistan's country's top generals, Asif Dilawar and Mohammed Nabi Azimi brought 700 militia and soldiers from northern Afghanistan to prevent an expected attack on the city's southern outskirts and to protect Kabul's airport.

They appealed to the UN to quickly form the interim council and thwart any rebel



A reception was held in Thimphu last week to bid farewell to Syed Muazzem Ali, the Ambassador of Bangladesh to the Kingdom of Bhutan. Photo shows the sister of the King of Bhutan, Ashi S C Wangchuk cutting a ceremonial cake to mark the occasion. Second from left is the Bangladesh Ambassador and next to him is his wife, Mrs Nishat Ali.

Aquino may be forced to testify in a libel suit

MANILA, Apr 16: Philippine President Corason Aquino may be forced to testify again in a libel suit she filed against a local newspaper columnist, local newspapers reported here Thursday, reports AFP.

The reports said the appeals court had ruled that the president was not immune from being compelled to testify in court as a witness in the suit she filed against newspaperman Luis Beltran.

Aquino sued Beltran after he reported that she had hidden under her bed when rightist military renegades attacked her residence during a bloody 1987 coup attempt.

She was compelled to testify in court against Beltran in October, 1991, in a highly embarrassing session which was broadcast live on several television stations.

The palace had previously rejected attempts to compel her to testify in court a new. Palace spokesmen could not be contacted for comment.

Thai parliament session begins Opposition members protest Suchinda's premiership

BANGKOK, Apr 16 : Opposition members were black today at the opening of Thailand's new parliament to protest the naming of military strongman Suchinda Kraprayoon as Prime Minister, reports AFP.

About 50 students passed out literature outside the building denouncing Suchinda for taking the premiership, and Chaiwat Sinsuwong of the opposition Phalang Dharma Party carried an oil-burning lamp because, he said "this nation is so dark."

As the MPs trooped into the national assembly building they passed a former house member, Chalard Vorachai, who was in the ninth day of a hunger strike to protest Suchinda's appointment.

On Wednesday, political supporters of Suchinda delivered a wooden coffin to the building as a gift to Chalard to mock his protest. Police later

removed the coffin, saying it was a bad omen.

Chalard began his fast April 8, the day after Suchinda left the top military post and was named Prime Minister by royal decree. Democrat Party MP Supat Thampet also began a hunger strike on Wednesday.

Suchinda was supported for the premiership by five pro-military parties that hold 195 of the 360 seats in the elected house. He insists he took the post to break a political stalemate, and that the backing of the five parties means he also has the support of the general public.

The opposition protest today was led by Chamlong Srimuang, head of the Palang Dharma Party that swept 41 of the 45 seats in Bangkok.

MPs said they were black to protest the premiership going to a non-elected MP and to mourn the passing of democracy in Thailand.

FIS leader imprisoned for 10 years

ALGERIA, Apr 16 : Algeria's military court sentenced a leader of the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) to 10 years in prison on Wednesday, stripping him of political rights in a signal of continued crackdown on fundamentalism, reports Reuter.

Less than four months ago, Mohammed Said's party was set to take power in parliament after a first-round victory in a general election, bringing hope to Muslim fundamentalists in neighbouring North African countries and the Middle East.

The authorities cancelled the poll days before the second round, sparking unrest in a score of towns and cities. Said, given the heaviest jail sentence since the unrest and similar clashes last June, apparently jumped bail and was sentenced in his absence.

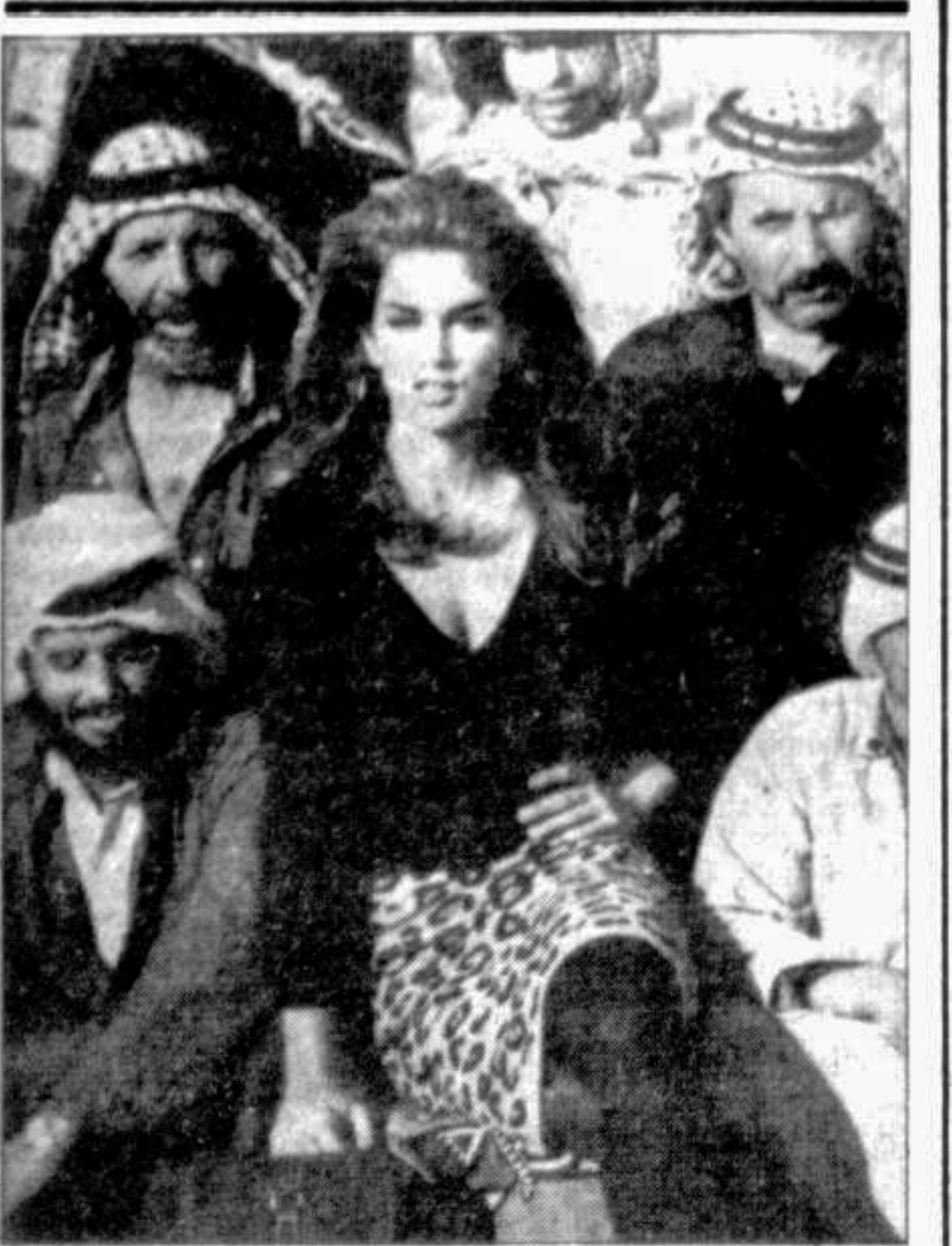
US warns to exple Serbia from CSCE

WASHINGTON, Apr 16: The United States warned yesterday that it would ask for the expulsion of Serbia's delegation from the CSCE if it did not halt its offensive against Bosnia-Herzegovina by April 29, reports AFP.

The state department said it would call for an emergency meeting of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) to discuss expelling the Serbian Delegation if the situation had not improved by April 29.

"Our message to Serbian civilian and military authorities is that if they continue their aggression against Bosnia, and to deny human rights to Serbia's own citizens, Serbia will very quickly become an international pariah," said State Department Spokeswoman Margaret Tutwiler.

Off the Record



WEST BANK: International top model Cindy Crawford poses with Bedoings during a photo session for a famous fashion magazine here Wednesday. — AFP/UNB photo.

She hates Marlon Brando

PAPEETE : A French magistrate is seeking to question the American film star Marlon Brando in connection with the May 1990 murder of his daughter's boyfriend, judicial officials said Wednesday, reports AFP.

But Brando has shunned all requests to testify since a list of more than 30 questions to him was first issued by a French investigating magistrate on February 19, they said.

The film star has even refused to acknowledge the judicial order, known as an international rogatory commission.

The Papeete magistrate here wants to question Marlon Brando following statements reportedly made to investigators by Cheyenne Brando implicating her father in Drollet's murder.

Cheyenne Brando told investigating magistrate Max Gatti, according to an unconfirmed report in Wednesday's editions of the French newspaper Le Figaro, that she "hated" her father.

Cheyenne Brando, Christian Brando's 22-year-old half-sister, has been charged in this French south Pacific territory in connection with the murder but has not yet gone on trial.

French judicial officials said that Marlon Brando's refusal to submit to questioning was holding up the prosecution of his daughter.

Priceless momentos stolen

FORT WORTH : Priceless momentos belonging to golf legend Ben Hogan including the diamond-encrusted gold belt buckle he received as winner of the 1953 S Rae Hickock Award, have been stolen from the trophy room at the Colonial Country Club.

A \$5,000 reward was posted by club officials Wednesday for information leading to the conviction of the thief and for the return of the items stolen Monday night from the club's Ben Hogan Trophy Room.

Bob Guth, Colonial's general manager, told the Fort Worth Star-Telegram that the insured value of the three items taken is \$37,000.

"None of this stuff is replaceable. It has tremendous intrinsic value," Guth said. "We just want it back."

The Hickock Belt and the 1941 Hershey medallion were stolen from the club on Aug 25, 1980. They were recovered the following week when thieves attempted to sell them to undercover police officers.

Guth said the 79-year-old golfing legend dropped by the Colonial on Wednesday to talk about the thefts.

Hogan could not be reached for comment, the newspaper reported.

Iraq withdraws troops

WASHINGTON, Apr 16 : Iraq, which has been massing troops and weapons in Kurdish areas in the north, seems to be withdrawing from those areas, an administration official said yesterday, reports Reuter.

"It now appears that the Iraqi forces are in one of those periods where they're tending to withdraw from points of confrontation and avoid armed clashes with the Kurds," he said.

The official briefed reporters at the foreign press centre on condition that he not be named.