



A woman signs an open letter to United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan opposing a war in Iraq as part of a protest from a group that calls itself "No Blood for Oil" across from the UN headquarters on Monday in New York. The group attempted to deliver a letter to Annan and were stopped by police at the front gate, who arrested about 10 demonstrators.

US works on new UN draft as Iraq softens stance

Washington won't be 'handcuffed' by resolution: Powell

AFP, Washington

Top US officials Monday revised Washington's draft UN Security Council resolution on weapons inspections in Iraq as Baghdad signalled it might accept a new inspection regime to avoid US military attack. Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, Secretary of State Colin Powell and national security adviser Condoleezza Rice huddled here to re-work the measure, which has been criticised by France, Russia and other members of the council, according to US officials who requested anonymity. Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman General Richard Myers, CIA director George Tenet and White House chief of staff Andrew Card were also expected at the closed-door meeting. "The game plan is to place it on the table tomorrow for a possible vote on Thursday," said a senior official who declined to be named. But as President George W. Bush's advisers pondered the wording of the new draft, Baghdad signalled a softening of its stance, saying it "will take into consideration" any resolution the United Nations might adopt on condition that it did not serve as an excuse for a US strike. "If a resolution is adopted which respects the UN charter, international law, Iraq's sovereignty, security and independence, and does not cover the

bellicose aims of the United States, we will take it into consideration," Iraqi President Saddam Hussein said. Another report says, the US will not be "handcuffed" if the UN decides not to act against Iraq, US Secretary of State Colin Powell said in an interview published here Tuesday. While Washington will return to the UN Security Council to debate any violation by Iraq of a new arms inspection regime, it will not wait forever if the council fails to act, Powell was quoted by The Irish Times as saying. In an interview in Washington with foreign correspondents, Powell told the Irish paper that the concerns of countries like Ireland could be met by giving them the opportunity to debate non-compliance by Iraq. If the weapons inspectors were unable to do their job this would be referred to the Security Council to discuss and possibly pass another resolution, he said, according to the Irish Times. The US would take part in such talks, but the resolution now being discussed would have to ensure that "while this process is ongoing, the United States is not handcuffed so that if... it looks like the Security Council will not choose to act, the United States is not handcuffed if (it) feels that, with other like-minded nations, action is required."

Indian military jet crashes in residential area: 2 killed

AFP, New Delhi

Two people were killed when an Indian military Jaguar fighter jet crashed into a residential area during a training flight in the northern Indian state of Haryana, Star News television reported Tuesday. The report said the crash occurred in the military cantonment town of Ambala in Haryana. The pilot ejected to safety, it added. A defence official confirmed the crash but could not immediately say if there had been casualties. The Indian Air Force, which is the world's fourth largest, has been plagued by crashes in the recent past. According to official figures, at least 221 MiG-21s, worth tens of millions of dollars, were lost in crashes between 1991 and 2000, killing around 100 pilots.

Top Laden associate killed in Yemen

AP, Washington

US forces killed a top associate of Osama bin Laden in Yemen in a missile strike, expanding the war on terror with America's first overt attack on suspected al-Qaida operatives outside of Afghanistan, a US official said Monday. Qaed Salim Sinan al-Harethi was one of several al-Qaida members traveling by car in northwest Yemen when a Hellfire missile struck it Sunday, killing him and five others. The official, speaking on the condition of anonymity, said the attack was believed to have been conducted by a CIA aircraft, possibly a missile-carrying Predator drone. The official Yemeni news agency, local tribesmen and the U.S. official confirmed the strike killed al-Harethi. Witnesses said they saw an aircraft, possibly a

helicopter, in the area. Hellfires can also be launched by attack helicopters. The others killed were believed to be low-level operatives. The attack occurred in the northern province of Marib, about 100 miles east of Yemen's capital of Sana'a, where al-Qaida is considered active. US counterterrorism officials have said al-Harethi, also known as Abu Ali, was al-Qaida's chief operative in Yemen and a top target of US anti-terrorism efforts. An associate of bin Laden since the early 1990s in Sudan, al-Harethi is a suspect in the bombing of the destroyer USS Cole in Aden, Yemen, on Oct. 12, 2000. The CIA declined comment. On Monday, Defence Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld told a Pentagon press conference, "It would be a very good thing if he were out of business."

Polls within 90-day: Sharon Israel urges world to take on Iran after Iraq

REUTERS, Jerusalem

Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon said Tuesday he would dissolve parliament and hold early elections within 90 days after he failed to form a new right-wing coalition government. Sharon made the announcement six days after his main partner in his "national unity" coalition, the centre-left Labour Party, quit in a dispute over funding for Jewish settlements, leaving the right-wing leader without a parliamentary majority. Sharon said his desire to preserve Israel's "special relationship" with the United States was a main consideration in deciding not to press ahead with efforts to woo ultranationalist parties into his minority government. "I will dissolve the Knesset and call general elections within 90

days," he told a news conference. The ballot would be about nine months ahead of schedule. Sharon said he had refused to give in to "political extortion" while courting partners for the narrow coalition he had hoped to form. Opinion polls have shown Sharon and his right-wing Likud Party the clear favourites to win the next election in the midst of a 2-year-old Palestinian uprising against Israeli occupation. But Sharon must first overcome a tough challenge from former Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu for the right to run as the party's candidate. Another report says: Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon has called on the international community to target Iran as soon as any war with Iraq is over, The Times reported Tuesday.

In an interview with the British daily, Sharon also issued what The Times described as his clearest warning yet that Israel would strike back if attacked by Iraqi chemical and biological weapons. He told the paper: "If Israel is attacked by weapons of mass destruction... Israel will react." Sharon also said that Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat could have an ongoing role as a "symbol", but could not have a role overseeing financial or security functions, in an apparent departure from previous statements that Arafat is "irrelevant", The Times said. The daily also reported that Sharon had said the Israeli government was considering an unprecedented crackdown on the Islamic movement within its own borders, fearing that a small minority of Israeli Arabs were turning against the country.

N Korea to reconsider missile moratorium

DPRK's missile threat not serious: Koizumi

AFP, Seoul

North Korea on Tuesday warned it would "reconsider" its moratorium on missile tests if normalisation talks with Japan failed to make progress. The official Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) quoted a foreign ministry spokesman as saying opening normalisation talks last week in Kuala Lumpur were a failure and blamed Japan. "Upon learning about the outcome of the talks, the relevant organs and people of the DPRK (North Korea) are becoming increasingly assertive that it is necessary to reconsider various points related to security including the nuclear and missile issues," the spokesman said. "The DPRK should reconsider the moratorium on the missile test fire in case the talks on normalising the relations between the DPRK and Japan get prolonged without making any progress." At a summit between Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi and North Korean leader Kim Jong-Il in Pyongyang in September, North Korea agreed to extend the moratorium on missile tests. Last week officials from Japan and North Korea

opened normalisation talks in Kuala Lumpur but no headway was made as Japanese officials pressed the North over its nuclear weapons program and the kidnapping by North Korea of Japanese citizens. The spokesman said "no progress" was made because the Japanese were sidetracked by other issues. Meanwhile, Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi said Tuesday he did not take seriously a threat by North Korea that it would reconsider its moratorium on missile tests if bilateral normalisation talks failed. "I do not expect the North Koreans will trample on the fundamental principles and the spirit of that declaration," Koizumi told reporters in reference to a commitment by North Korean leader Kim Jong-Il in September to extend the moratorium. "So we would not take seriously that sort of statement." Koizumi said North Korea's nuclear program was a serious regional security issue that was discussed among leaders at the annual Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) summit, in which China and South Korea also participated in parallel meetings.

Voters to decide on control of Congress

AP, Washington

Halfway through a presidential term buffeted by terrorism and an improbable tangle in Congress, Americans were voting Tuesday in elections that offered both parties tantalising possibilities but no sure bets. Republicans and Democrats each had at least an outside chance of taking clean control of Congress. But the prospect of more of the same the GOP holding the House, Democrats commanding the Senate and President Bush navigating the two was also very much in play. Anxiety was found high and low heading into a day certain only to bring surprises. Aboard Bush's plane on a four-state final swing Monday, the expectations were buoyant but tinged with nervousness. On the ground in Missouri, a Democratic senator would not venture far beyond: "I just feel something out there." The suspense was left for voters

to settle in elections that also will reshape power in governor's offices across the country and help determine whether Bush and his Democratic opposition can build a record to run on in 2004. Bush, his popularity high but his ability to translate that into votes for his party unproven, stumped in the Midwest and South to close out a vigorous campaign for Republican candidates. He implored Americans to return Senate control to his party and end the obstructionism he blamed on Democrats. "That's what I'm looking for some allies," Bush told Missouri Republicans before a windup evening rally in Dallas and his return to Washington on Tuesday. Democrats fought to motivate voter turnout, calculating that apathy would work against them, in a district by district drive to reclaim control of the House and protect their whisker-thin hold on the Senate.



Israeli policemen inspect the destroyed entrance of a commercial centre in Kfar Saba, just north of Tel Aviv on Monday. A suicide bomber killed two people in an attack on the shopping mall in the Israeli town of Kfar Saba also wounding some 30 people in the blast.

Di's butler sells story to media

AFP, London

Princess Diana's former butler Paul Burrell, cleared of stealing hundreds of her belongings, will tell his story in a series of articles in Britain's Daily Mirror this week, the paper announced Monday. The newspaper has paid "a substantial six-figure sum" for the rights to thoughts and recollections from Burrell, 44, who served the princess until her death in 1997. And the private ITV broadcasting network said Burrell had agreed to give his first television interview, for a six-figure sum. The hour-long programme, to be screened on Sunday, will also feature "video diary" footage of Burrell's life in the six months leading up to his trial at the Old Bailey court in central London. Burrell was last week acquitted of stealing items belonging to Diana after Queen Elizabeth II intervened in the case, confirming that Burrell had told her of his intention to retain some of the princess's papers for safekeeping. "I have been offered more than one million (pounds) for my story but I am not interested in just making the most amount of money that I can," Burrell said in a statement issued by Daily Mirror, a popular left-of-centre tabloid. "I believe that the Daily Mirror will let me tell the true story as it is. I hope people will read my interviews... and understand what really happened to me." Mirror editor Piers Morgan said



Filer of Paul Burrell, former butler to Diana, Princess of Wales, holds a portrait of her in this file photo from May 3, 1998. The trial of Paul Burrell dramatically collapsed on Nov 1 with the former Royal butler found not guilty on all counts of theft.

Turkey's new ruling party to maintain pro-West stance

AFP, Ankara

The untested winner of Turkey's election denied Monday it had Islamist leanings and vowed to press for EU membership, in messages designed to allay fears it might deviate from its pro-Western path. "We are not a party with an Islamist axis," said Recep Tayyip Erdogan, leader of the Justice and Development Party (AK), a movement with Islamist roots which won a sweeping victory in Sunday's elections. "Our undertakings in the upcoming days will clearly show that," Erdogan told a press conference as he laid out his plans for government. The AK party, which faces the risk of being banned in a pending court case, won 363 of the 550 seats in parliament with 34.2 percent of the vote, ousting most sitting MPs and radically altering Turkey's political landscape. Disenchanted with political tensions and the worst economic recession since World War II, voters pushed out veteran Prime Minister Bulent Ecevit's three-party coalition in a major blow to the country's secular political elite. AK is now set to form Turkey's first one-party government in more than a decade, a prospect that

buoyed financial markets which see political stability as key to the success of vital economic reforms. Turkey is now waiting for the AK party to propose a prime minister - expected next week at the earliest - and a cabinet list. But the charismatic Erdogan is constitutionally barred from becoming prime minister because of a 1998 conviction for religious sedition. The party also has a tough task ahead as the powerful military, the guardian of Turkey's secular system, stills harbours doubts over its commitment to secularism. "Turkey is a democratic and secular state. ... This army is our army. It is the apple of our eye and nobody should interfere between us," said Erdogan. Initial reaction across the world was cautious, with the United States joining the European Union in expressing readiness to work with the new government, while voicing hope that it will cast its lot in with the West. The United States is keenly watching developments in Turkey - the only Muslim member of NATO - whose airbases could be a key part of any military strike on Saddam Hussein's regime in Iraq. "We must judge the next Turkish government on its actions," EU foreign envoy Javier Solana told the French newspaper Le Monde.