

Bush for disarming Iraq now

Powell wants Arab League to rekindle Saddam exile possibility

REUTERS, Washington

Iraqi President Saddam Hussein has no intention of disarming and must be forced to do so, President Bush said in a newspaper interview published on Friday.

"My attitude about Saddam Hussein is that if he had any intention of disarming, he would have disarmed," Bush told USA Today.

"We will disarm him now," he said later in the interview.

Bush called war his last option, but he also said he believes Americans fully understand that the United States could soon go to war, the newspaper said.

"I've thought long and hard about the consequences and the price that could be paid," Bush said.

In preparation for a possible war with Iraq, Washington has amassed a large military force in the Gulf region, including about 200,000 ground troops.

Bush has said the United States will lead a coalition of nations to disarm Iraq by force if necessary if Saddam does not comply with UN demands to destroy his alleged banned weapons of mass destruction.

"We're still a battlefield," Bush said, speaking of his belief that Saddam is a threat to the United States and the world. "Part of that war is dealing with a

dictator who can serve as an arsenal and or training ground for terrorist networks."

The newspaper said Bush expressed little concern about the debate at the United Nations, the opposition of some allies, or the prospect of a veto of a second UN resolution that would legitimise an invasion of Iraq.

Bush said that seeking a second resolution was "a commitment to our allies and friends," adding that regardless of the outcome, "the most important part about whatever happens is that (Saddam) be disarmed."

AFP adds: US Secretary of State Colin Powell on Thursday resurrected the idea that war with Iraq could be avoided if Saddam Hussein would step down and urged Arab leaders to encourage such a step at an upcoming summit.

Powell's unprompted comments were unusual in that previous similar suggestions have dwindled and seemed to lose credibility amid the lack of a sponsor and Saddam's categorical rejection of exile.

"I never see war as inevitable but time clearly is running out," Powell told reporters after an EU-US ministerial meeting here, before launching his apparent 11th-hour appeal to prevent conflict through Saddam's departure.

He said he wanted the Arab League, whose leaders will meet this weekend in Egypt to discuss the Iraq crisis, to tell Saddam that he is "running out of time" to comply with UN disarmament demands or face war.

7 charged with trafficking US missile to China

AFP, Los Angeles

US authorities said Thursday they had charged four people and three companies with illegally exporting or plotting to ship US missile and fighter jet parts to communist China.

The seven defendants were charged at the end of a five-year investigation into the illegal shipping of sensitive weapons, including parts used in surface-to-air missiles and fighter aircraft, prosecutors revealed.

All seven, including two people of Chinese origin, were based in the Los Angeles area and allegedly attempted to export parts for weapons such as the AIM-9 "Sidewinder" heat-seeking anti-aircraft missile to China.

Strategies can halve heart disease

REUTERS, London

Strategies such as reducing blood pressure and cholesterol levels and cutting salt in fast foods could halve cases of cardiovascular disease worldwide, health experts said Friday.

Heart disease and strokes are a leading causes of death and disability worldwide, but an international team of researchers said an assessment of health strategies used in wealthy nations could also benefit people in less developed nations.

US drops terror alert level to yellow

AP, Washington

The Bush administration lowered the national terror alert Thursday from orange to yellow, suggesting the immediate threat of an attack on US soil had eased. Still, Americans were warned to "continue to be defiant and alert."

Counterterrorism officials said al-Qaeda remains capable of attacking, and they cautioned people not to think the threat had passed.

Analyst Gerald Steinberg predicted that even if Mitzna stood firm, his ailing party could split and some members could decide to join Sharon "within a few weeks, very much," he told Sharon in front of the Knesset.

He responded to Sharon's inaugural speech by promising to lead a "responsible but fighting" opposition. "You have an opposition party which Israel needs very much," he told Sharon in front of the Knesset.

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