

# US, UK vow to stay on track in Iraq

**AP, Baghdad**  
The British foreign minister and American senators visiting Iraq on Wednesday played down concerns that the US-led occupation risks descending into a Vietnam-style quagmire, saying the remnants of Saddam Hussein's regime will be crushed.  
"A quagmire? No," Jack Straw told reporters at the British mission in Baghdad. "These actions against the coalition forces won't succeed and will be dealt with."  
The comments coincided with a statement by President Bush on Wednesday vowing that anti-US attacks would not keep the United States from fulfilling its mission in Iraq.

Insurgents have stepped up their attacks in recent days, hurling grenades, ambushing convoys and shooting troops patrolling the streets. A US marine injured along with three of his peers when their vehicle was hit by a rocket-propelled grenade south of Baghdad on Tuesday died from his wounds, the US military said Wednesday.  
That brought to 26 the number of US soldiers killed in hostile fire since Bush declared an end to major combat on May 1.  
Also Wednesday, a US Marine was killed and three others were injured while clearing mines near the south-central Iraqi city of Karbala, the US military said. The cause of their deaths was not immediately released.

"We are taking the fight to the enemy," said Sen. Pat Roberts, a Republican of Kansas, one of nine US senators on a three-day tour of Iraq. He and the other senators traveled Wednesday to the northern city of Kirkuk, where they grilled US military officers about the recent spate of anti-American attacks and the hunt for Saddam's alleged weapons of mass destruction.  
To quell the burgeoning resistance, US-led forces have launched a series of lightning raids across Iraq. One such operation northeast of Baghdad, dubbed Operation Sidewinder, entered its fourth day Wednesday.

Sidewinder has netted "20 high-value targeted individuals" consisting of former leaders of Saddam's Baath Party, former leaders of Saddam's Fedayeen militia and a former Iraqi military intelligence officer, a military statement said.  
The statement did not give the identities of those detained, and no one on the United States' top 55 list of most-wanted Iraqi fugitives was among them.  
US officials insist there is no nationally coordinated resistance to the occupation, and it remains unclear exactly which groups are staging attacks - though most suspicion falls on Saddam's former security forces.



**US soldiers investigate the scene of an attack in a residential area of central Baghdad on Thursday. Three soldiers were wounded and an Iraqi civilian killed in what was also believed to be a RPG attack, although one witness said he believed attackers had thrown a hand grenade.**

## WHO removes Toronto from SARS-alert list

**AFP, Toronto**  
The World Health Organisation (WHO) Wednesday declared Toronto free of the spread of SARS after the city reported no new cases for 20 days.  
Canadian health officials meanwhile vowed to maintain a vigilant SARS watch after being burned by a recurrence once before.  
The Geneva-based UN health agency said the last probable case of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome had been detected in Toronto on June 12 and was immediately isolated.  
Two incubation periods -- 20 days -- without a new case of SARS have now passed, meaning the chain of human-to-human transmission is considered broken, WHO said in a statement posted on its website.  
"This is a great achievement for public health in what we hope is the final phase of the global emergency," said David Heymann, WHO executive director for communicable diseases.

## Bush 'exploring all options' for Liberia US asks Taylor to leave country

**AP, Washington**  
President Bush has stepped up US pressure on Liberia's president to resign while holding off on a decision on possibly sending peace-keeping troops to the troubled African nation.  
As foreign leaders called on Taylor to leave the country, the president sharply denounced Liberian leader Charles Taylor from a White House podium Wednesday.  
"One thing has to happen: Mr. Taylor needs to leave the country," Bush said. "In order for there to be peace and stability in Liberia, Charles Taylor needs to leave now."  
But Bush and Secretary of State Colin Powell said Wednesday they had not decided whether to send peacekeepers to the West African nation, as UN Secretary General Kofi Annan and other world leaders

have urged. Annan has said he would like to see the United States lead a multinational peacekeeping force in Liberia, which has been wracked by months of fighting between forces loyal to Taylor and rebel groups trying to oust him.  
Taylor has refused to leave office. A UN-backed court in neighboring Sierra Leone has indicted Taylor for crimes against humanity for his backing of rebels in that country whose signature atrocities included hacking off their victims' limbs.  
Taylor told CBS Radio on Wednesday that US troops would be welcomed inside the country, that he would be willing to leave Liberia in about three months and called for the United Nations war crimes charges against him to be dropped.  
"I'm not sure if asking the democratically elected president to leave is the solution, but I will leave," he said.

## Schroeder demands Berlusconi's apology for his Nazi jibe

**REUTERS, Berlin**  
German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder demanded a full apology on Thursday from Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi after he compared a German lawmaker with a Nazi concentration camp guard.  
"This comparison is inappropriate and completely unacceptable," Schroeder said at the beginning of a speech in the German parliament.  
"I expect that the Italian prime minister will apologise fully for this unacceptable comparison," he said to applause.  
The German government on Wednesday called in the Italian ambassador to Schroeder's office to explain the comments.  
Berlusconi made the remarks in a debate in the European Parliament in Strasbourg after a speech presenting Italy's priorities

for its six-month presidency of the European Union, which began on Tuesday.  
He later said he did not mean to offend German feelings, but he declined to retract the comment or apologize.  
The German media slammed the comments on Thursday, stirring the row with some strong remarks of their own.  
Franz Josef Wagner, a commentator for Germany's best-selling Bild daily, wrote an open letter to Berlusconi in which he praised Italian food and the country's rich cultural heritage, but said the Italian leader had done his country no favors.  
"You, Silvio Berlusconi, are currently the richest, most influential and most controversial Italian. But spaghetti Berlusconi won't feature on any menu. Spaghetti Berlusconi will not conquer the world. Spaghetti Berlusconi doesn't taste good."

## Campbell admits tinkering with Iraq dossier

**AFP, London**  
British Prime Minister Tony Blair's top aide, Alastair Campbell, has admitted tinkering with a security report seen as bolstering the campaign for US-led action against Iraq, a confidential letter published Thursday in a London newspaper showed.  
Significantly, Campbell denied a BBC allegation, that according to an unnamed source, he personally inserted into the report a claim that Saddam Hussein could launch weapons of mass destruction within 45 minutes.  
Details of the letter, sent to a parliamentary committee investigating the government's case for war, were leaked to The Guardian newspaper.  
The letter is expected to form a crucial part of the Foreign Affairs Select Committee's final assessment, due next Monday, into whether ministers deliberately misled parliament and exaggerated intelligence, against the

wishes of security services, over Iraq's alleged weapons of mass destruction, the daily said.  
The letter is said to have been cleared by the chairman of the Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC), which brings together the chiefs of all British intelligence agencies.  
It reveals that Campbell, Blair's director of communications, suggested 11 changes be made to a draft of the Iraq dossier, published in its final form by the British government on September 22, six months before it launched war on Iraq alongside the United States.  
According to Campbell's letter, six of his proposed changes were acted upon, four others were not while the other was already under way.  
Amongst changes made were the removal of the words "vivid and horrifying" in the human rights section of the dossier after Campbell deemed them to be unnecessary.

He also questioned why the draft report said Saddam's sons "may have" the authority to launch chemical weapons, instead of "have". But Campbell's request for the removal of the word "may" was turned down by the JIC.  
He was also told there was no intelligence to suggest Iraq had secured uranium and that the phrase "sought to secure" would have to remain.  
Meanwhile, in a passage dealing with Iraqi dual-use facilities Campbell successfully argued that the phrase "could be used" be replaced with "are capable of being used".  
He also successfully proposed that the section detailing how long it might take for Iraq to develop nuclear weapons be more clearly explained, although the letter does not give details of what changes were made.

## French court frees Iranian group leader

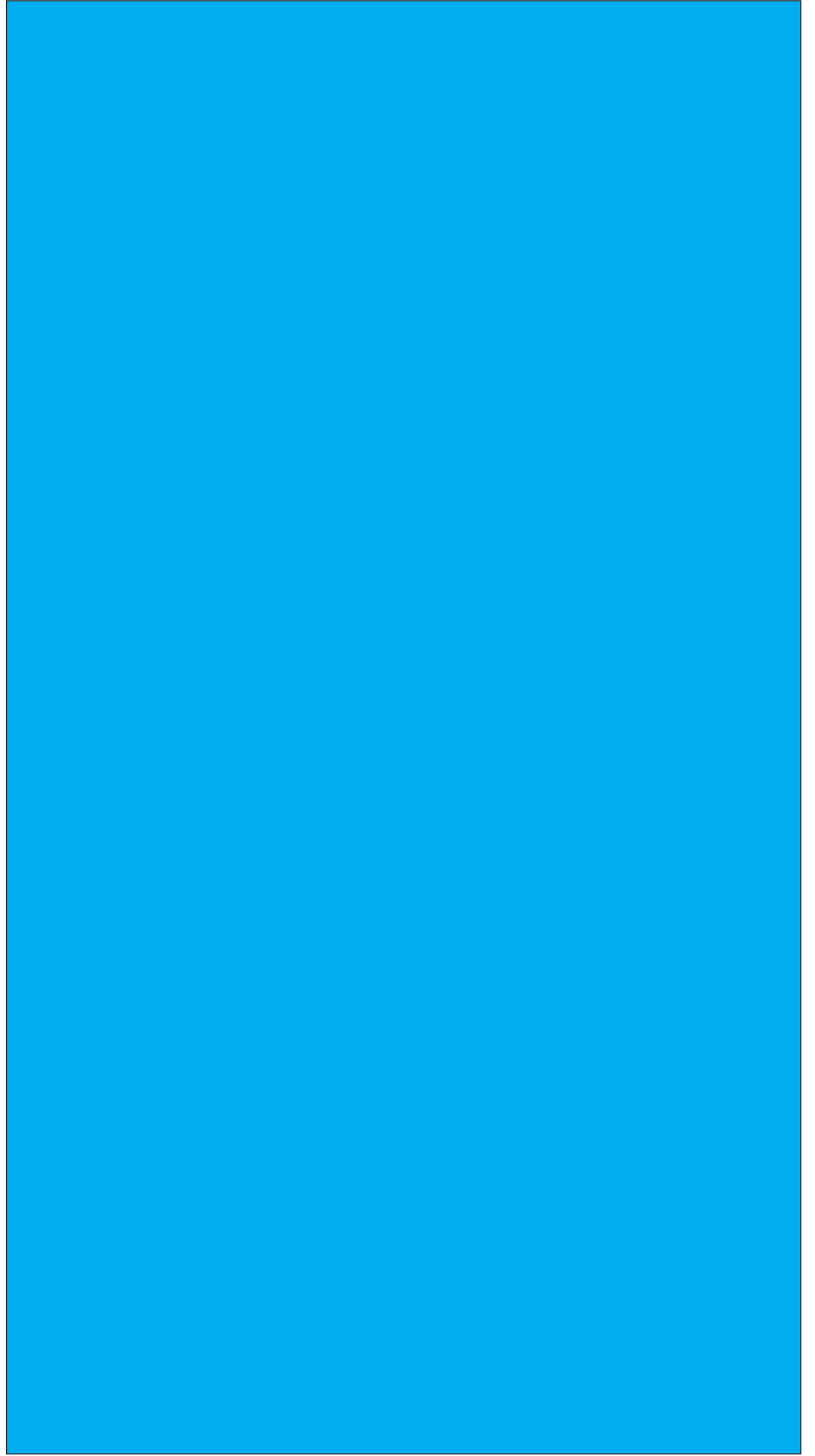
**AP, Paris**  
A French court on Wednesday ordered the release of nine people arrested during a recent broad anti-terrorism sweep, including the leader of an exile group seeking to topple Iran's ultra-religious government, judicial officials said.  
But the Paris appeals court said Maryam Rajavi, a leader of the group Mujahadeen Khalq, and one other defendant must first pay bail. Rajavi was ordered to pay about \$95,000 and likely will not be released before Thursday, the officials said.  
Two other jailed members of the most powerful Iranian opposition movement were released Tuesday.  
Rajavi and more than 150 other group members were detained in a June 17 sweep of their European headquarters - a walled compound north of Paris where police found \$9 million in cash.  
France's counterintelligence agency, the DST, claims the Mujahadeen was planning attacks on Iranian diplomatic missions in Europe and assassinations of Iranian secret agents in Europe.



**Nelson Mandela (C) strikes a thoughtful pose as he sits with British Prime Minister Tony Blair (L) and former US President Bill Clinton, during a gala night the centenary of the Rhodes Trust and the establishment of the Mandela Rhodes Foundation, at Westminster, on Wednesday.**

## World corruption poll points fingers to politicians

**AFP, Berlin**  
Political corruption is the biggest scourge facing the world, but most acutely Argentina and Japan, according to a global survey of public perceptions released Thursday by an international watchdog.  
The poll for Transparency International found that when asked which area of public life they would most like to rid of corruption, people in three out of every four countries pointed to politics.  
Police, the courts and medical services followed, while other areas -- such as education, customs, business licensing, utilities, passports, the private sector and tax revenue -- were seen as less damaged by sleaze.  
"The people of the world are sending a clear message to political leaders: they must rebuild the trust of ordinary people," Transparency chairman Peter Eigen said in Berlin.  
"It is time to recognise the full extent of corruption among the political elites in both the developed and developing worlds, and the need to curtail conflicts of interest and political immunity."  
Questions on corruption were included in a general household survey of more than 40,000 people in 47 countries by the Gallup polling institute.



**Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Bangladesh to the European Union Syed Maudud Ali (R) is presenting the letter of credence to Romano Prodi, President of the European Commission in Brussels recently.**