

## Hunt for Saddam heats up

AFP, Tikrit

Saddam Hussein is running scared, the US military said Monday, as troops scoured the fallen dictator's home region of Tikrit, hoping to land a knockout blow to insurgents once and for all.

"Life is uncomfortable for these people. These guys are having a hard time just getting on. They are losing their freedom of action. One by one, they are going away," said Colonel Jim Hickey of the army's 4th Infantry Division (4ID).

But as the hunt for Saddam and his shadowy supporters heats up, civilians find themselves caught in the crossfire, raising the question of whether US forces have used excessive force as they defend themselves on the frontline of a guerrilla-style war. Hot on last week's slaying of Saddam's sons, Uday and Qusay, a US assault on a home in Baghdad's wealthy Mutahidda district, based on a tip the fallen dictator was hiding with relatives, ended with five dead, witnesses said.

The coalition meanwhile quietly plods ahead with its rebuilding efforts, as the US-vetted 25-member Governing Council convened Monday to start the process of selecting cabinet ministers and a president.

The meeting, which opened at 10:25 am (0625 GMT), was chaired by acting council head Mohammed Bahr al-Ulum.

Back in Tikrit, the 4ID kept up its pressure, cutting off Saddam's network of supporters who could offer him a safe house, but Hickey believed there were still a few places the toppled strongman could still go.

"There are certain families and tribes he could fall back on," Hickey said.

"He could fall back on Al-Awja in a heartbeat," the commander added, referring to the nearby village where Saddam was born.

Over the weekend, the 4ID arrested 13 bodyguards of Saddam, in testament to the flood of tips coming in, according to the military, since Uday and Qusay were

gunned down.

"These guys are afraid of us. They can't accept the attrition," Hickey said.

"They are losing one or two a day. They are slowly being run down."

US Joint Chiefs of Staff chairman General Richard Myers, touring the country, also said Sunday Iraqis were coming forward with greater information.

"What I found today ... there's been a big spike in Iraqis coming forward, about weapons caches and where people are," said Myers, who arrived from Kuwait and toured Tikrit.

"The point is about Saddam Hussein he is so busy surviving, he is having no impact, no impact on the security situation here. He is trying so hard to save his own skin," said Myers.

Despite the clear successes, events have taken an ugly turn on the ground as the constant US raids appear to alienate Iraqis.

In the latest such incident, US

forces stormed a house late Sunday in Baghdad's Mansur neighborhood, said the home's owner, himself a relative of the former president.

Witnesses said five people were killed as US troops raided the house, but a US soldier at the site said they were only returning fire. It was not immediately possible to confirm the toll.

July has been the bloodiest month for US troops since Washington declared an end to hostilities three months ago, with fatalities accounting more than half the 49 soldiers killed since May 1.

Fourteen soldiers were killed last week alone -- including three in an ambush at a children's hospital at Baqubah northeast of Baghdad -- making it the worst seven days since US troops seized Baghdad on April 9.

Witnesses said assailants fired a rocket-propelled grenade late Sunday at a US tank in Baqubah, possibly causing casualties. There was no US confirmation.

## 'Suu Kyi will not remain detained for long period'

AFP, Jakarta

Pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi will not remain in detention in Myanmar "for a long period," the country's Foreign Minister Win Aung said Monday.

But the minister, facing international outrage over the arrest of the Nobel peace prize winner, refused during his visit to Indonesia to give any timeframe for her release.

Asked by reporters if Suu Kyi would be freed, Win Aung replied: "Yes of course. She will not remain there for a long period."

He was speaking after meeting Indonesian Foreign Minister Hassan Wirayuda, who repeated calls for Suu Kyi's immediate release.

Suu Kyi was detained after she and her supporters, who had been making a political tour, were ambushed on May 30 by a pro-government mob in an incident feared to have left dozens dead.

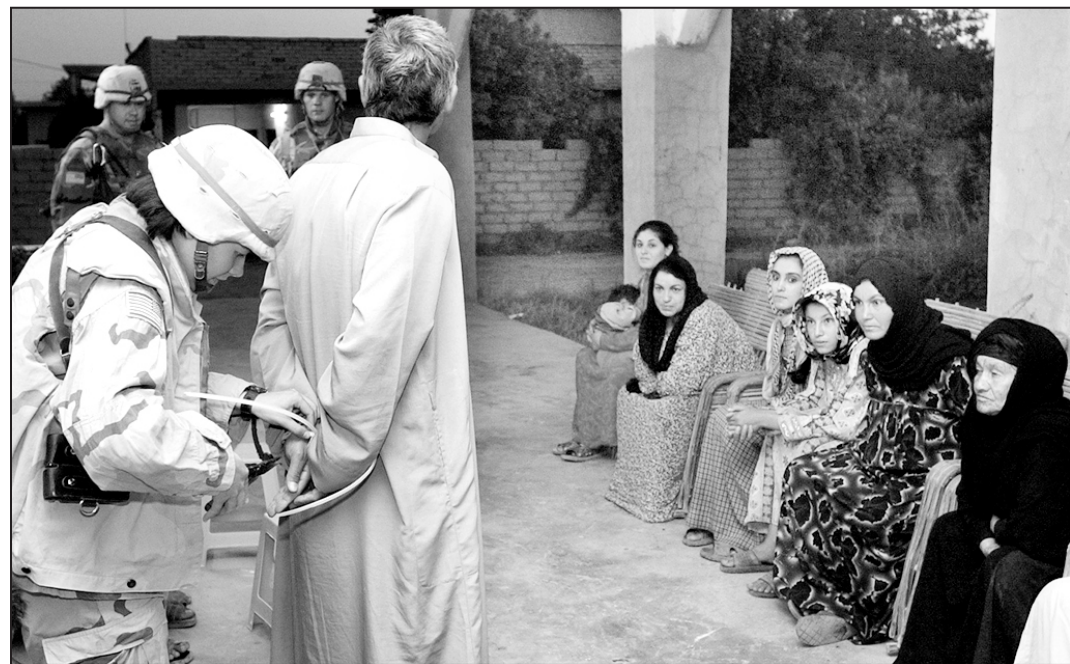


PHOTO: AFP

A US Army military intelligence officer attached to the 10th Cavalry, 1st Brigade, 4th Infantry Division, removes handcuffs from a man who was held briefly by soldiers as family members watch on Monday during a pre-dawn raid on a house in Tikrit, about 180 km north of Baghdad. American troops carried out a raid on three farms in Tikrit, the hometown of toppled leader Saddam Hussein, after receiving a tip from an Iraqi informant that the ex-president's new head of security was staying in one of them, Lieutenant Colonel Steve Russell of the Fourth Infantry Division, told Sky News.

## Musharraf must give up uniform by Oct '04: MMA

PTI, Islamabad

The opposition Mutahidda Majlis-e-Amal has extended the deadline for President Pervez Musharraf to renounce his military position till October 2004 and has agreed to enter into a dialogue with the Jamali government on the "controversial" issue of Legal Framework Order, drawing criticism from other opposition parties.

"We proposed that we are ready to give October 2004 deadline for separating the two offices, the Army Chief and the President, being held by General Pervez Musharraf," MMA Deputy Chief Qazi Hussain Ahmed told reporters after the much-awaited parliamentary party meeting, which was boycotted by the opposition Alliance for Restoration of Democracy.

Qazi Hussain said the government has accepted that the LFO was a "controversial" issue, adding "in the four-hour meeting, the government has not insisted that

LFO is part of the Constitution". Confirming the decision of the six-party alliance, Information Minister Sheikh Rashid Ahmed said the meeting discussed the "controversial points" of the LFO.

"The MMA has proposed October 2004 as far as uniform is concerned," Ahmed said. "...they have given a proposal on the LFO's controversial clauses and we reserve a decision".

Ahmed said even if the government accepts this October 2004 deadline, President General Pervez Musharraf's tenure at presidency would start after that time-frame.

While the MMA agreed to continue the dialogue with the government on LFO issue, it said a clarification on the issue by Jamali government as demanded by the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) and Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz), would facilitate participation of the entire opposition in the talks.

Meanwhile, hardline Jamiat

Ulema Islam chief Fazlur Rahman's recent visit to India has generated a huge stir within the six-party alliance and has angered Pakistan-based militant outfits operating in Jammu and Kashmir.

Before leaving Pakistan, the JUI-F chief had assured the Mutahidda Majlis-e-Amal leaders that he would not speak against the alliance's policy towards Kashmir, sources in the MMA said. But, his controversial statements on the Line of Control (LoC) and his "close to opposition" attitude towards the struggle in Kashmir had created a stir in all circles in Pakistan.

Sources told the daily Dawn that JUI-F had decided to send its delegation to India when leader of jammat-i-Islami party Qazi Hussain Ahmad and others in the MMA had refused to welcome a Jamiat Ulema-i-Hind delegation led by Asad Madni that wanted to visit Pakistan as part of an "Ulema diplomacy" to initiate dialogue between the two countries.

## India plays down Chinese intrusion

AFP, New Delhi

India's media has expressed alarm over an alleged intrusion by Chinese troops last month, even though the government Monday downplayed the incident.

India has officially protested to China over the alleged June 26 intrusion into Arunachal Pradesh state, but is not unduly alarmed by it or by Beijing's silence on its complaint, diplomatic sources said.

The media expressed concern, however, warning that such incidents affected a new bonhomie between the two neighbours who fought a brief war in 1962.

"What has happened is a local thing and can be handled at the battalion level and China's silence on our diplomatic protest does not really bother us too much," a highly-placed Indian foreign ministry official said.

## Clare Short attacks Blair anew over Iraq

AFP, London

A former British minister who resigned over the war on Iraq on Monday launched a new attack on Prime Minister Tony Blair, describing him as an "emporer" and a "neo-Conservative" and blaming his government for an "abuse of power" which helped push a leading arms specialist to suicide.

Blair was "a complete convert to the neo-Conservative view of the world" espoused by the hardliners behind US President George W. Bush, said Clare Short in an interview with the newspaper The Independent.

She said the death on July 18 of David Kelly, an arms specialist who had been embroiled in the controversy over whether the former Iraqi regime possessed weapons of mass destruction, had been at least partially caused by the government.

## Koizumi hints at snap polls in autumn

AFP, Tokyo

Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi told members of his ruling party on Monday to give up their summer holiday and prepare for a political "moment of truth" in the autumn, most likely a snap general election.

"The summer holiday is about to start but I don't think you can afford to rest under the circumstances you are faced with," he told a meeting of Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) lawmakers when the country's parliament closed an extended 190-day session.

## New light shed on Nixon role in Watergate scandal

REUTERS, Washington

Thirty years after it happened, a former top aide to Richard Nixon says the former president personally ordered the 1972 burglary of the Democratic Party headquarters in the Watergate Hotel.

Jeb Stuart Magruder, the deputy director of Nixon's 1972 campaign, revealed in a PBS documentary to air on Wednesday that Nixon personally ordered the bungled break-in at the luxury Watergate Hotel complex. The incident began a series of events that led to impeachment hearings. He became the only US president to resign in 1974.

## Aide of ex-Philippine president arrested

Mutiny signals underlying problems: Arroyo

AP, Manila

Philippine police arrested an aide to disgraced former President Joseph Estrada Monday and were investigating a senator for their suspected role in a mutiny by soldiers demanding the government step down.

President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo vowed to prosecute all 296 mutinous soldiers who seized a Manila shopping complex for 19 hours before giving up without a shot Sunday.

Arroyo, who had threatened to crush the rebellion with tanks and sharpshooters, told the nation Sunday night that the peaceful squelching of the rebellion was "a triumph for democracy."

"I assure the world that this event does not in any way injure our national security and political stability," she said in a televised address hours before she was to give her annual state of the nation speech Monday in which she was expected to stress her control of the country.

She said that 296 soldiers, includ-

ing 70 officers, were involved and that all would face prosecution based on "the articles of war."

Reuters adds: A failed mutiny by 300 Philippine soldiers took on political overtones Monday as police arrested an aide to ousted President Joseph Estrada and the government ordered an investigation into the roots of the weekend uprising.

Delivering her annual State of the Nation address just hours after police arrested Estrada's aide, President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo said the siege in central Manila was deplorable, and suggested there was political scheming behind the rebellion.

"Such actions are deplorable and will always be met with the full force of the law, including the political component," she said of the mutiny.

Already five junior officers, who organized the uprising, were questioned Monday under guard and will likely face courts martial, said army spokesman Lt. Col. Joselito Kakilala. The other mutineers were confined to barracks.



PHOTO: AFP

Ramon Cardenas, ex-political advisor to former President Joseph Estrada, speaks to journalists at the National Bureau of Investigation office in Manila on Monday after he was arrested following a raid on his home. Cardenas was arrested in connection with a failed mutiny by junior military officers who had demanded President Gloria Arroyo's resignation.



PHOTO: AFP

A woman, carrying a heavy load on her head, passes by an Israeli soldier (R) checking Palestinians at the Hawara checkpoint south of the West Bank town of Nablus on Monday. Israel made more conciliatory gestures to the Palestinians as Prime Minister Ariel Sharon arrived in the United States for probably his toughest talks yet with US President George W. Bush.

## Sharon arrives in US for toughest talks

### Israel to set free 540 Palestinian prisoners

AFP, Jerusalem

Israel made more conciliatory gestures to the Palestinians Monday as Prime Minister Ariel Sharon arrived in the United States for probably his toughest talks yet with US President George W. Bush.

Israel announced Sunday night that it would release 540 Palestinians detained in Israeli jails, including 210 members of the hardline Hamas and Islamic Jihad groups.

Only a fraction of them are held for security-related offenses, and although Palestinian militant leaders described the move as insufficient, Israel has softened its initial stance that no Islamists would be freed.

The level of violence has substantially receded since four major Palestinian groups declared a suspension of anti-Israeli attacks a month ago, but the armed movements have repeatedly threatened to drop their truce unless all 6,000 Palestinian prisoners are released.

In what could be seen as another gesture to appease Washington ahead of Tuesday's talks between Sharon and Bush,

the Israeli army said Monday it had dismantled a settlement outpost in the southern West Bank overnight.

Four hilltop tents near the city of Hebron were removed and two settlers resisting their evacuation were arrested by police, the army said.

The roadmap for peace, which Washington has helped to draft, calls for all settlement outposts built since Sharon came to power in March 2001 to be removed.

Yet Israel has fallen far behind schedule on that chapter of the blueprint, and the anti-settlement organization Peace Now claims that more wildcat settlements have been set up than dismantled over the past three months.

As part of its package of conciliatory steps, Israel also announced Sunday a series of measures to loosen the stranglehold on the civilian population in the Palestinian territories.

The Israeli army has started lifting several major checkpoints which were set up between Palestinian cities as a result of Operation Defensive Shield, launched in the spring of 2002.

Military sources explained that the move was designed to restore some level of freedom of movement in the West Bank and "revive the Palestinian economy", stressing that Israel was running a significant security risk by scaling down its set-up.

Israel has also granted thousands of new work permits for Palestinians in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank to work in Israel.

In addition, the government announced over the weekend that it was considering handing over security control in two other West Bank cities it reoccupied last year.

Israeli troops redeployed a month ago around the Gaza Strip and the southern West Bank city of Bethlehem, where Palestinian security services took over policing duties, in line with the roadmap for peace.

As Washington was struggling to kickstart the implementation of the plan, three days after Palestinian prime minister Mahmud Abbas had his first talks at the White House, the situation nevertheless remained tense on the ground.

## Taliban threaten death to US collaborators

### 6 Afghan cops killed in ambush

REUTERS, Spin Boldak

Residents of a southern Afghan town close to the Pakistani border woke on Sunday to posters threatening death to 25 "informers" accused of collaborating with US and Afghan government forces.

The posters, in the local Pashtu-language, appeared overnight in mosques in Spin Boldak and nearby villages and were attributed to the Taliban regime overthrown in 2001, residents said.

"These people will be killed at the appropriate moment," said one of the posters signed "Taliban Mujahideen." Mujahideen means "holy warrior."

"These people have played important role in the massacre of Taliban Mujahideen, it said. "These people have been cooperating with the American forces and their agents despite Taliban warnings."

Mullah Abdul Samad, an intelligence official in the former Taliban regime, said the list contained the names of "informers" hired by the Afghan government.

"They have been given privileges and facilities by the government for spying on the Taliban activities," he told Reuters by satellite phone from an undisclosed location.

Meanwhile, six Afghan policemen were killed in an ambush by suspected Taliban and al-Qaeda guerrillas in the southern province of Helmand at the weekend, a provincial official said on Monday.

Haji Mohammad Wali, spokesman for the governor of Helmand, told Reuters the policemen were on patrol in Helmand's Girishk district late on Sunday when their vehicle came under attack from rocket-propelled grenades and automatic rifles.



PHOTO: AFP

Children play on a giant piece of driftwood washed up on the shores of Kennedy Island in the remote Western Province of the Solomon Islands on Monday near where John F. Kennedy's patrol boat PT-109 was rammed by a Japanese destroyer on August 2, 1943. Adventure tourists from around the world will commemorate the 60th anniversary of JFK and his ten surviving crewmen's swim from the wreckage of their boat to the islet with a 5km swim to Kennedy Island on August 3.