

'IRAQ'S CHEM WEAPONS' US 'covered up' stash after 2003 invasion

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

The US military has reportedly covered up the discovery of huge numbers of chemical weapons in Iraq - stocks which now lie in the occupied lands controlled by Isis. According to an expose published today by the New York Times, American soldiers reported finding around 5,000 chemical warheads or bombs after the invasion of Iraq and deposition of Saddam Hussein in 2003. Between 2004 and 2011 at least 17 US soldiers and seven Iraqi police officers were exposed to nerve agents or mustard gas chemicals, but were encouraged by the Pentagon to downplay or under-report any injuries, the Times reported. President George W Bush led the US into war in Iraq on the back of assertions that Saddam Hussein had recently-built weapons of mass destruction, supplies that had only increased in the aftermath of the 9/11 terror attacks. Yet all the chemical weapons found by soldiers were manufactured before 1991, the Times reported. They consisted largely of 155-millimeter artillery shells or 122-millimeter rockets - not designed for mass destruction, and produced in the 1980s during the Iran-Iraq war. According to the Times, the reports were embarrassing for the Pentagon because, in five of the six incidents in which troops were wounded by chemical agents, the munitions appeared to have been "designed in the US, manufactured in Europe and filled in chemical agent production lines built in Iraq by Western companies". It was also reportedly embarrassing for the US government that had found chemical weapons - but not of the kind that they had claimed existed. Perhaps the most disturbing aspect of the chemical weapons discovery is that many were reportedly kept near where they were built in compounds around the Muthanna State Establishment.



Kurdish people watch smoke billowing from Kobane as they gather upon a hill overlooking the Syrian town of Kobane, also known as Ain al-Arab, in the southeastern village of Mursitpinar, Sanliurfa province, yesterday. PHOTO: AFP

Iran opposes extending nuke talks

AFP, Vienna

Iran's foreign minister said yesterday that Tehran opposes extending troubled nuclear talks beyond a November 24 deadline, even though major stumbling blocks remain in the way of a deal. "We only have 40 days left to the deadline and... none of the negotiators find (an) extension of talks appropriate," Mohammad Javad Zarif said in Vienna, a day after six hours of intense talks with US Secretary of State John Kerry. "We share this view... and we think there is no need to even think about it," Zarif said in the Austrian capital. The deal being sought, after more than a decade of rising tensions, is meant to ease concerns that Iran might be able to develop nuclear weapons under the guise of its civilian programme. To do this, the "P5+1" powers want Iran to scale down its atomic activities, offering in return relief from painful sanctions, but Iran is resisting this.

Kurds gain ground in Kobane

AFP, Mursitpinar

Kurdish forces held out in Kobane yesterday as a jihadist offensive entered its second month, but the Pentagon warned US-led air strikes may not prevent the Syrian border town's fall. US warplanes struck 14 times near Kobane yesterday, the American military said. Central Command said the air attacks Wednesday and Thursday "successfully struck" 19 IS-held buildings, two command posts, a heavy machine gun, three sniper positions and other targets. US-led forces have now carried out more than 100 air strikes near Kobane since September 27, according to Central Command figures. US military officers say the town may eventually fall but insist Kobane is not a "strategic" location and that other areas carry more importance, particularly in western Iraq and the suburbs of Baghdad. As the tempo of air strikes dramatically increased this week, Pentagon spokesman Rear Admiral John Kirby said on Wednesday the raids had killed "several hundred" fighters from the ISIS group near the town. Meanwhile, British Foreign

FIGHT AGAINST ISIS DEVELOPMENTS

- Coalition airstrikes intensify, push back Jihadists
- UK to re-deploy drones from Afghanistan to Iraq
- Russia denies intel sharing deal with US on ISIS

Secretary Philip Hammond yesterday told parliament that Britain will shortly begin re-deploying its unmanned armed drones from Afghanistan to counter ISIS in Iraq. The remotely-piloted Reaper aircraft will provide surveillance, reconnaissance and intelligence support to the Iraqi troops and international coalition forces. The drones can also launch bombs and missiles. It will be the first time Britain has deployed Reapers outside Afghanistan, where Britain is completing a pull-out of combat troops this year. And Moscow yesterday denied a US

assertion that it had agreed to ramp up intelligence-sharing with Washington over the ISIS group, saying it would provide no such help without UN Security Council approval. The statement by Russia's foreign ministry contradicted a declaration by US Secretary of State John Kerry made after a meeting in Paris on Tuesday with his Russian counterpart Sergei Lavrov. It pointed out that a bilateral commission involving Washington and Moscow that aimed to help tackle terrorism had been scrapped by the US. In Kobane, Kurdish official Idris Nassen said IS had pulled back from some areas of the town but appealed for more air strikes as well as weapons to fight the jihadists. Ground fighting alone has killed more than 600 combatants, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said. Nato member Turkey has stationed troops, tanks and artillery just over the border - in some cases only a few hundred metres (yards) from the fighting - but has not intervened. It also has yet to allow US jets to mount attacks from its territory, and Turkish PM Ahmet Davutoglu said only Syrian refugees could cross into Syria to defend Kobane, rejecting Western calls to open the frontier.

Don't try to blackmail Russia

AFP, Belgrade

President Vladimir Putin accused his US counterpart Barack Obama of a hostile approach towards Russia, warning in a Cold War-style tirade that Moscow would not be blackmailed by the West over Ukraine. Putin fired off his combative comments shortly before he arrived amid tight security to a red carpet welcome in Belgrade, seeking to cement Russia's influence in its loyal European ally. Belgrade is staging its first military parade in 30 years to mark the 70th anniversary of its liberation from Nazi occupation - an event brought forward by four days to coincide with the visit by the Kremlin strongman. In some of his most pugnacious comments yet on Russia-US ties, Putin took issue with Obama's speech at the UN General Assembly last month, when he listed "Russia's aggression" in eastern Ukraine among top global threats, along with Islamic State jihadists and Ebola. He told the Serbian daily Politika it was "hard to call such an approach anything but

hostile". "We are hoping our partners will understand the recklessness of attempts to blackmail Russia, (and) remember what discord between large nuclear powers can do to strategic stability," Putin said. He branded attempts by the West to isolate Russia over the six-month conflict in Ukraine an "absurd, illusory goal" and accused Washington of meddling in Russian affairs. Putin, who is to meet Ukrainian leader Petro Poroshenko in Milan today, called on Kiev to start nationwide dialogue, saying there was a "real opportunity" to halt the war. Putin reiterated that Moscow was ready to mend fences with Washington but only if its interests are genuinely taken into account. Putin's predecessor Dmitry Medvedev spearheaded a "re-set" in ties with Washington but relations have quickly unravelled since Putin returned to the Kremlin for a third term in 2012. Russia is now facing its deepest period of Western isolation since the Cold War, with US and EU sanctions dealing a blow to its already stuttering economy.



Kerry's plane grounded ... again

AFP, Vienna

Globe-trotting top US diplomat John Kerry was left hoofing it back on a commercial flight from Vienna yesterday, after his ageing Air Force plane broke down for the fourth time this year. After marathon talks on Iran's nuclear programme in the Austrian capital Wednesday, Kerry's party of more than 40 State Department staff and journalists were checking out of their hotel rooms before dawn yesterday when the news came that his Boeing 757 needed unspecified repairs - again. Since taking up his post in February 2013, Kerry has flown some 566,000 miles around the globe and visited 55 countries spending some 249 days on the road. He's well on his way to overtaking his predecessor Hillary Clinton who flew just short of a million miles in her four years in office, visiting a record 112 countries. But despite a normally well-planned, logistic operation to move Kerry and his posse of staff, security agents and the travelling press as he jumps from country to country, he has been beset this year by a number of glitches.

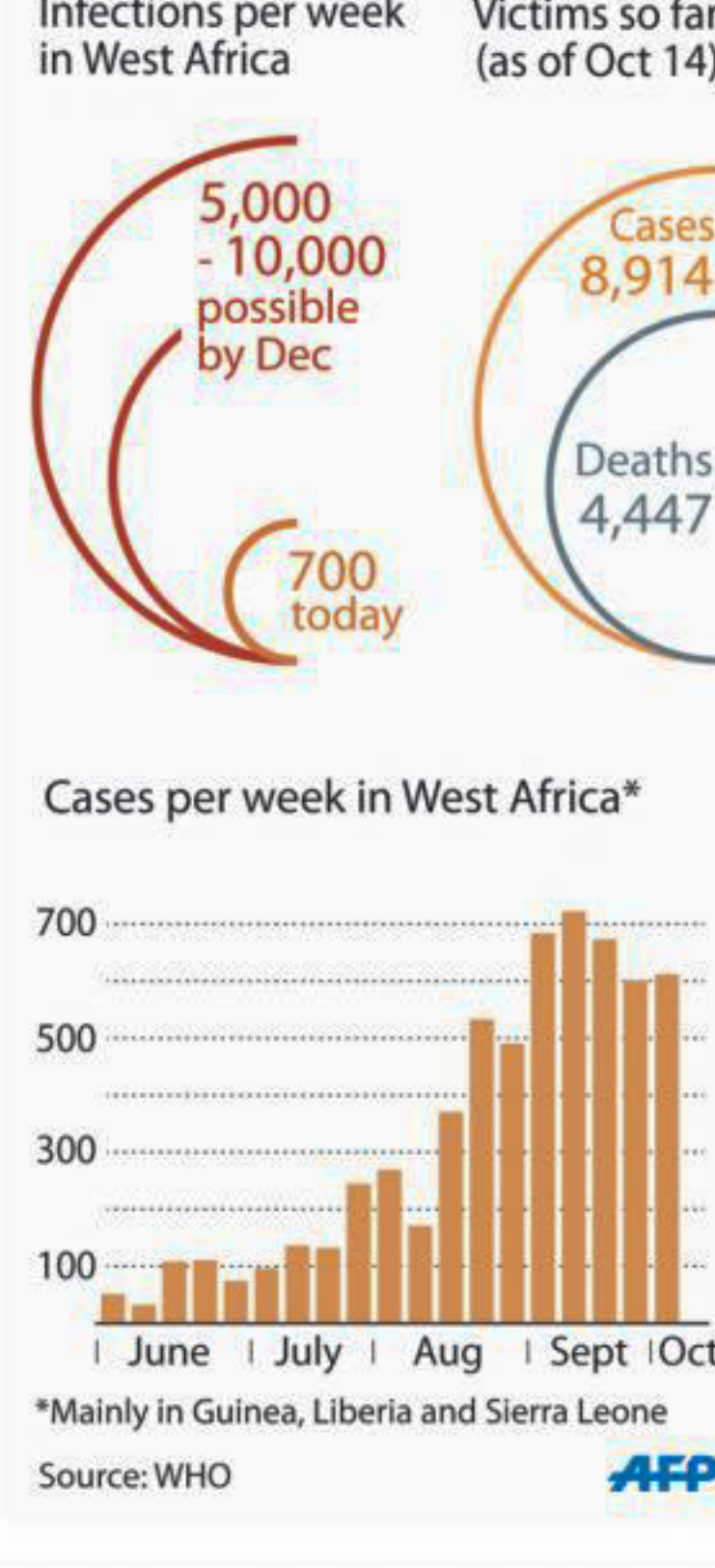
World pledges Ebola action

AFP, Geneva

Ebola's escalating spread constitutes the worst global health emergency in years, world leaders warned, vowing to dramatically step up the response to the virus that has already killed nearly 4,500 people. As of Sunday, 4,493 people had died out of a total of 8,997 cases in the outbreak now affecting seven countries, according to latest figures from the World Health Organisation. US President Barack Obama on Wednesday called on the world to do more, while insisting his own country would be "much more aggressive" in its response, after a second Texas hospital worker tested positive for the disease. The fact that the newly infected Dallas caregiver took a domestic flight the day before she was quarantined magnified global fears about air travel. Obama tried to ease those fears, but urged his counterparts from Britain, France, Germany and Italy to better coordinate their plans to combat the outbreak. EU health ministers yesterday agreed to launch an immediate review of the screening of passengers departing Ebola-hit countries in West Africa, health commissioner Tonio Borg said. The health ministers meeting in Brussels had also

agreed to "coordinate" measures at entry points to the 28-nation European Union, although any decision on screening for Ebola rests with individual countries. France said yesterday it will start carrying out health checks this weekend on all travellers arriving by plane from Guinea, one of the worst-hit nations. Airports in Britain, Canada and the United States have already introduced stepped-up screening of travellers arriving from West Africa. Senior US lawmakers overseeing homeland security also joined calls Wednesday for a temporary ban on all travel from West Africa. The WHO warned this week that the infection rate could reach 10,000 a week by early December in a worst-case scenario. European Union health ministers will meet in Brussels, with member states under pressure to follow Washington in sending troops to West Africa to help fight the virus. The UN Security Council urged the international community to "accelerate and dramatically expand" aid to the West African countries battling the epidemic. Meanwhile, the US Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) issued an alert for all passengers who travelled on an October 13 flight from Cleveland, Ohio to Texas.

The Ebola crisis



HK leader reopens talks offer

AFP, Hong Kong

Hong Kong's embattled leader made a dramatic u-turn yesterday reopening his offer of talks with student protesters a week after the government abruptly pulled out of discussions aimed at ending more than a fortnight of mass democracy rallies. The offer by Chief Executive Leung Chun-ying came a day after video footage of plainclothes officers beating a handcuffed demonstrator as he lay on the ground sparked widespread anger. But question marks remain over whether fresh talks can make any substantive headway in the stalemate between the government and protesters. Leung warned that Beijing had no intention of rescinding its insistence that his successor be vetted by a loyalist committee before standing for election in 2017 - a core demand of protesters. "Politics is the art of the possible and we have to draw a line between possibilities and impossibilities," he said. The Asian financial hub has been rocked by mass rallies for nearly three weeks calling both for full democracy and Leung's resignation.



Blossom crowned the world's tallest cow

MAIL ONLINE

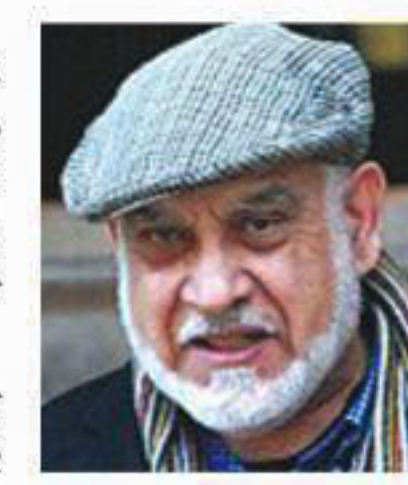
A 6ft 4in cow from Illinois has been named the tallest in the world. Blossom, a 13-year-old Holstein Friesian cow, is owned by Patty Hanson and lives on her farm in Orangeville. Patty and Blossom posed for their official Guinness World Records photo shoot this week. Blossom reaches Hanson's shoulder which is actually taller than Bulls star Derrick Rose. Hanson says she sought the record after veterinarians and the cow's foot trimmer constantly noted the 2,000lb animal's large size. According to the Guinness Book of Records the shortest cow is Blaze, who measures 2 ft 3.19 in from the hoof to the withers, as verified in Sanford, Florida, on 7 July 2013.

UK slave girl kept in cellar awarded \$160,000

AFP, London

A deaf and mute girl smuggled to Britain and kept as a slave for almost a decade must be paid £100,000 (\$160,000) by her captors, a court ruled Wednesday. Trafficked from Pakistan as a 10-year-old girl, the victim was repeatedly raped by Ilyas Ashar, 85, who along with his wife Tallat, 69, forced her to work as their servant. She was discovered in the cellar of their five-bedroom house sleeping on a cot bed by investigators looking into allegations of money laundering. Now in her 20s, she learned a form of sign language to testify at the trial last year. "The money will in no way make up for what she went through over a number of years, but it will help her move on with her

life and continue her inspiring recovery from these awful events," said Salford Chief Superintendent Mary Doyle. The court calculated the Ashars should pay the victim £101,300: what she would have been paid if she had earned the minimum wage working for the couple for 12 hours a day, every day since 2003 except for ten days off. The two also must also pay back benefits to the state that they wrongfully claimed for the girl. The victim, who cannot be named, could not read or write but was taught to write her name by the Ashars so that they could claim social benefits on her behalf. Ilyas Ashar was earlier jailed for 15 years for rape, trafficking and benefit fraud, and his wife Tallat was jailed for five years for trafficking and benefit fraud.



The Daily Star
grameenphone
VOICE NEWS SERVICE
Dial 2222
for the latest news highlights in English

ADMISSION in 2015 session
Green Bud Nursery School
(A leading Kindergarten in the city near Rose Garden at Gopibag)
Play group to Std-III
Contact:
(Only in all working days between 8.30 am to 1 pm)
School Office: 49-4/D, R.K. Mission Road, Gopibag, Dhaka-1203.
Phone: 02-9591512
Mob: 01199-050060, 01715-469312
OLD STUDENTS REUNION: Please contact to school office and phone

Wanted Regional Sales Manager for India based Cosmetic company - with minimum experience of 10 years - Submit your CV at Glamour World Ayurvedic Products - (Somi's) www.gwayurvedic.com Ph - 01787739916