

Tension in the Middle East intensifies

The United States bolstered its forces in the Persian Gulf on Wednesday with a call-up of reserves, and Jordan closed its border with Iraq because of the strain of thousands of evacuees fleeing Iraq and occupied Kuwait.

Iraq, meanwhile, claimed that two aircraft flying in from Saudi Arabia violated its airspace. The official news agency quoted a military spokesman as saying the planes penetrated the southern border and flew three miles into Iraqi airspace.

It did not identify the planes, nor say if they were military aircraft. It also was not clear if the spokesman was referring to a penetration of Iraq's own southern border with Saudi Arabia or that of Kuwait, which Baghdad now considers part of Iraq.

On the diplomatic front, cracks appeared in what had been unprecedented U.S.-Soviet unity in face of the Iraqi threat. Reports from the United Nations said Moscow was slowing efforts to obtain U.N. approval of a resolution to allow warships to enforce sanctions against Iraq.

In Moscow, officials disclosed that Soviet military experts continue to train Iraqi soldiers to use their Soviet-built weapons, three weeks after Moscow cut weapons supplies to protect the invasion of Kuwait.

Secretary of State James A. Baker III telephoned Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze to urge Moscow to cooperate more fully in isolating Iraq, a State Department official said, speaking on condition of anonymity.

The response Baker received was a request for a slowdown at the United Nations, U.S. officials told The AP. But they said Shevardnadze did not threaten a Soviet veto or other means to stop America from seeking approval of a military blockade and that in fact Moscow was using its close ties to Iraq to urge the release of Americans and other Westerners trapped in Iraq and Kuwait.

Also Wednesday, a 19-year-old sailor was killed in an electrical accident aboard the USS Antietam, a Navy spokesman said. Petty Officer Third Class Daniel M. Jones, an electrician's mate, was the second serviceman to die as a result of the Persian Gulf crisis. Air Force Staff Sgt. John Campisi, 30, died Aug. 12 when he was hit by a military truck.

The State Department announced it would defy Saddam Hussein's demand to close the U.S. Embassy in Kuwait by Friday but said it would reduce the staff. Other nations, including Britain, have announced plans to do the same.

State Department spokesman Richard Boucher said the decision was consistent with "our obligations to the American private community." About 2,500 Americans have been trapped in Kuwait and an estimated 500 in Iraq since Iraqi forces invaded Kuwait on Aug. 2.

There are about 120 U.S. diplomats in Kuwait.

Jordan's announcement that it was closing its border came shortly after King Hussein told a news conference that a total of 42,000 foreigners had crossed into Jordan during the day, the largest number since the Persian Gulf crisis erupted Aug. 2 with Iraq's invasion of Kuwait.

Interior Minister Salem Msadeh said the border was being closed because of "concern for the health situation of the arrivals and to ensure suitable arrangements for their stay in Jordan."

Hussein also said he would embark on a new round of talks with Arab leaders in hopes of defusing the crisis. He declined to say where he would go or with whom he would meet.

Speaking in his palace to a room crowded with journalists, Hussein said he believed "We are almost facing a crisis of the world gone mad." Many Egyptians, Palestinians and

other mostly Arab refugees fleeing Kuwait have entered Jordan. Only a few Westerners have been able to flee to safety. Iraq is holding the rest in a bid to force the withdrawal of the U.S.-led multinational force defending Saudi Arabia from Iraqi aggression.

Saddam's vow to place foreigners at military installations as human shields against attack drew more angry protests Wednesday. British Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd called the Iraqi president a "destructive loser" whose tactics reflect his isolation. Denmark suggested Saddam may be seeking to divide the allies by freeing some foreigners but holding others.

The State Department says 54 Americans are believed to have been seized by Iraqi authorities, and Britain says 21 of its citizens are being held at Iraqi installations.

Iraq said Wednesday it would allow some French and Japanese nationals to leave as a "goodwill gesture." About 731 Japanese and 560 French citizens are trapped in Iraq and Kuwait.

Before the announcement, an Iraqi state newspaper warned Europe and Japan of danger "if they walk in the steps of Washington." Another said Iraq would take war "into the cities of attacking nations."

Pope John Paul II made his first public comment on the crisis Wednesday, pointing to "the danger of war" and offering a prayer for peace.

President Bush ordered the Pentagon to call up reserves for active duty in the gulf. He did not say how many units were called up, but sources said as many as 40,000 may join Operation Desert Shield by the end of the month.

It was the first activation of military reserves in 20 years.

At the same time, the United States intensified the military buildup in the Persian Gulf. The aircraft carrier Saratoga steamed through Egypt's Suez Canal toward the Red Sea to join a growing American flotilla, a canal spokesman said.

U.S. and other warships have been shadowing Iraqi vessels in the gulf to enforce the U.N. embargo. One of those vessels, an Iraqi tanker that defied warning shots from an American warship, reached Yemen's port of Aden Wednesday and dropped anchor near two other Iraqi ships in the harbor. Yemen had told the U.N. Security Council that it would turn away the tanker and adhere to U.N. sanctions.

President adds reserve forces to Gulf effort

WASHINGTON - President Bush ordered the first mobilization of reservists since the Vietnam War on Wednesday, declaring the part-time soldiers "essential to completing our mission" of opposing Iraq's Saddam Hussein in the Middle East.

Officials said as many as 40,000 "weekend warriors" could be in uniform by the end of the month.

"We continue to pursue our objectives with absolute determination," Bush said of the Persian Gulf buildup. He spoke at a news conference at his vacation home in Kennebunkport, Maine, after signing the order for the Pentagon to call up reservists.

Officials declined to identify units that would be activated, or to say when they would be called. But Army sources said some could be called up within 24 hours of Bush's order.

Defense Secretary Dick Cheney, appearing alongside Bush after returning from a six-country trip to the Persian Gulf, said he would decide exactly how many reserves to call up after he meets with the military service chiefs today.

In a further sign of the scope of the U.S. military buildup, Bush also authorized Cheney to extend enlistment terms of servicemen. The Pentagon said it had no immediate comment on how or when it might use that authority.

The call-up won quick support from the chairmen of the armed services committees in both the House and Senate.

Rep. Les Aspin, D-Wis., called it an "appropriate and essential act," and Sen. Sam Nunn, D-Ga., said the action would give military planners greater confidence in the availability of reserves in future contingencies.

The last time reserves were activated for military purposes was 1968 when 35,280 were called up by President Johnson following the Tet offensive in Vietnam and the North Korean seizure of the U.S. surveillance ship Pueblo. In 1970 President Nixon ordered a call-up during a mail strike.

Bush, meeting with Cheney and Colin Powell, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, at Kennebunkport, signed an executive order that stated:

"I hereby determine that it is necessary to augment the active armed forces of the United States for the effective conduct of operational missions in and around the Arabian Pen-

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