

Possible air blockade of Iraq supported

International pressure on Saddam Hussein intensified Monday as European nations retaliated for raids on diplomatic premises in occupied Kuwait, and support appeared to grow for the idea of an air embargo against Iraq.

Oil prices jumped Monday, pointing to pessimism about prospects for a settlement of the 6 1/2-week-old Persian Gulf standoff. Oil futures soared to record levels, above \$33 a barrel, on the New York Mercantile Exchange.

In a sign of Iraq's growing isolation, the Soviet Union, Baghdad's longtime patron, said Monday it would re-establish diplomatic ties with Saudi Arabia. The Saudis infuriated Iraq by agreeing to become the main staging ground for the deployment of a huge U.S.-led multinational force after the Aug. 2 Iraqi takeover of Kuwait.

Sensitivities about the role of the U.S. force were underscored when a top U.S. military man was sacked after discussing contingency plans for air strikes against Baghdad.

The fired official, Air Force chief of staff Gen. Mike Dugan, made the remarks while touring U.S. military installations in Saudi Arabia, and they were published Sunday in The Washington Post and the Los Angeles Times.

Arab radical groups, meanwhile, ended a three-day conference in Amman, Jordan on Monday with calls for suicide attacks against the U.S. forces. Ibrahim Al-Kharraz, a member of the Libyan Peoples Congress, pointed to the 1983 suicide attack on the Marine barracks in Beirut that killed 241 U.S. servicemen.

In Iraq, there was an outburst of anti-American sentiment in the state-run newspapers Monday, a day after Iraqi television aired an eight-minute message from President Bush to the people of Iraq. "Shut Up, Mr. Bush," one headline said.

Bush's videotaped message, in which he warned that Saddam was leading Iraq into war, was followed immediately by an Iraqi commentary blasting the speech as "full of lies and contradictions." Hundreds of demonstrators then took to the streets of Baghdad, chanting "Death to Bush!" and "Death to America!"

In Brussels, Belgium, European Community nations announced they would expel Iraqi military attaches and restrict travel by other embassy personnel to protest break-ins by Iraqi troops at diplomatic premises in occupied Kuwait last week.

The Iraqi raids on Dutch, French, Belgian and Canadian embassies or

diplomatic residences in Kuwait were unanimously condemned Sunday by the U.N. Security Council.

Additional expulsions were announced by member nations including Britain, which said it was deporting six diplomats and 23 Iraqi nationals deemed a danger to national security. France and Italy had already announced such steps over the weekend.

The EC ministers were also weighing a possible air blockade of Iraq to enforce the U.N. trade embargo against Iraq. British Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd said there was strong support among the EC ministers for such a blockade.

An air blockade would involve the interception of planes approaching Iraq and would pose a far greater danger of triggering hostilities than the boarding of ships in the Persian Gulf, which has been done under the U.N. naval embargo.

Spain's foreign minister, Francisco Fernandez Ordenez, told reporters in Brussels that the Spanish Embassy in Kuwait was cut off and surrounded by Iraqi troops for the first time Monday. Bangladesh, which closed its Kuwait embassy last week, said Monday its ambassador to Kuwait and four other diplomats had been denied permis-

General fired for telling plans

WASHINGTON - Defense Secretary Dick Cheney fired Gen. Mike Dugan as Air Force chief of staff Monday after Dugan's public comments about contingency plans to unleash massive air raids on Iraq and target Saddam Hussein personally.

Dugan, in the top Air Force job only three months, violated Pentagon rules by publicly discussing likely military targets inside Iraq and disclosing classified informa-

tion about the size of U.S. forces in the gulf area, Cheney said.

"There are certain things we never talk about," Cheney said in explaining his decision to fire Dugan. He cited "operational matters" such as the selection of specific targets for potential air strikes and the targeting of foreign leaders.

Dugan was away from the Pentagon on Monday and not available for comment, his office said.

tion to leave Baghdad.

In other developments:

- About 6,000 Kuwaitis fled their homeland over the weekend after Iraqi troops suddenly opened the only border crossing to Saudi Arabia. But the flow slowed to a trickle on Monday. Refugees said Iraqi troops were seizing draft-age Kuwaiti men and forcing their wives and daughters to travel on to Saudi Arabia without them.

- An Egyptian military source said Egypt was sending 250 soldiers to

Saudi Arabia Monday and more would follow in a few days, joining the estimated 4,000 Egyptian troops already in the region. The source, who spoke on condition of anonymity said Egypt would also send tanks, armored personnel carriers and air defense systems to Saudi Arabia.

- A senior Iranian delegation met in Baghdad with an Iraqi team led by foreign undersecretary Wisam Al-Zahawi to discuss normalization of ties between the two nations, which fought a war from 1980 to 1988.

Souter ends confirmation hearing testimony



Souter

WASHINGTON - Supreme Court nominee David H. Souter said Monday at his confirmation hearings that letting states outlaw abortion might cast doubts on other privacy rights. Senators told Souter, testifying on his 51st birthday, that his confirmation was virtually assured.

During a third and final day of Senate Judiciary Committee questioning on controversial issues he would face as a justice, Souter said he opposes a judicial ban on the death penalty.

In a final statement to the committee, Souter said, "You have treated me with such consummate fairness that on whatever court I may sit I hope I will do as well."

Souter was followed to the witness table by an American Bar Association committee which previously announced that it had given him its highest rating -- "well qualified."

More than two dozen other witnesses, including the woman whose challenge to a Texas abortion law led to the Supreme Court decision legalizing abortion, were scheduled to begin testimony today.

Souter continued to dodge questions concerning his views on abortion but did address the privacy-rights issue and said his personal feelings on abortion would not keep him from taking part in Supreme Court decisions on the subject.

Sen. Dennis DeConcini, D-Ariz., told the New Hampshire judge, "I believe you will be confirmed."

Sens. Orrin Hatch, R-Utah, and Charles Grassley, R-Iowa, also voiced confidence about Souter's success. But committee chairman Joseph Biden, D-Del., said some senators, including himself, remain undecided.

The 14-member committee will send its recommendation to the full Senate for a confirmation vote Biden indicated might come "in two or three weeks."

Asked whether he believes the death penalty violates the Constitution's ban on cruel and unusual punishment, Souter said, "I think that would be an insupportable constitutional conclusion. That is an opinion I could not join."

He said a successful attack on Roe vs. Wade "might call into question prior privacy rulings."

Souter also said overturning Roe vs. Wade would make abortion "a matter for legislative judgment" -- as individual states would have to decide whether to outlaw or stringently regulate abortions.

NASA scrubs shuttle launch

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. - A buildup of hydrogen in the engine compartment on Monday caused NASA to cancel a fourth attempt at launching the space shuttle Columbia on a long astronomy mission.

The excess hydrogen began appearing a few minutes after hydrogen began flowing into the tank at a "fast full" rate of 8,400 gallons per minute -- the same point where buildup caused NASA to cancel two previous launches.

Engineers waited a few minutes in case the hydrogen leak stabilized, but then launch director Bob Sieck called a halt to the attempt.

The shuttle was to have been launched at 1:28 a.m. EDT today.

At one point, the buildup was more than triple NASA's limit.

"We still have a leak in the orbiter's aft compartment," said NASA spokeswoman Lisa Malone. "We have concentrations of hydrogen that indicate that."

Engineers continued to seek the cause the problem after the launch attempt was called off.

"The mood in launch control is obviously one of disappointment," Malone said.

Columbia is the oldest ship in the fleet. It has been flying since 1981 and has nine missions on its flight log.

At a briefing earlier in the day, William Lenoir, the head of NASA's space flight program, expressed the hope the leaks had been found and fixed.

"We're going to keep trying until

we get it right," he said. "We again think we're ready to fly."

In past filling operations, NASA said it wouldn't allow fueling to continue if there were more than 600 parts of flammable hydrogen in a million parts of air. The scrub was called on Monday when those concentrations reached 3,300 ppm.

On Sept. 5, when the last filling operation also ended in a scrub, sensors recorded 6,500 ppm, more than 10 times the maximum. On the attempt before that, May 29, hydrogen leaked in two places: from the large pipe that connects the ship with its tank and in the aft compartment where the engines are.

Liquid hydrogen could burst into flame if the concentration is too high.

Aquino: Time has come for U.S. troops to leave

MANILA, Philippines - President Corazon Aquino said Monday it was time to discuss the "orderly withdrawal" of U.S. forces from the Philippines, her first public appeal to phase out the American military bases.

Police clashed with hundreds of demonstrators who demanded that the Americans go home. At least 17 people were arrested and seven people were injured in two anti-bases rallies outside the U.S. Embassy.

U.S. and Philippine negotiators open a second round of talks today on the future of Clark Air Base, Subic Bay naval base and four smaller U.S. installations whose lease expires in September 1991.

The two sides agreed during the opening round in May to continue talks on a new U.S.-Philippine security agreement.

Opposition to the bases is growing among Filipinos who consider them an infringement on national sovereignty.

On the eve of the talks, Aquino said in a nationally televised address that the negotiations will redefine relations between the United States and this former American colony.

"It is now necessary for our government to work with the United

States for arrangements regarding the orderly withdrawal of their forces from our country," she said.

Last Friday, The Washington Post reported that U.S. negotiators will offer to close the bases over 10 years.

Manila newspapers reported last month that the Philippines will propose that Clark Air Base and other facilities be closed next year in return for allowing the Americans to keep Subic for 10 years.

"In a world where the Cold War has ended, and events in Eastern Europe and the Middle East have altered the traditional geopolitical order, the decades-old parameters of the (Philippine-U.S.) relationship no longer hold," Aquino said.

"The old cannot continue; the new must now be born," she added. "This new relationship shall be the subject of the talks that begin tomorrow."

Rafael Alunan, the spokesman of the Philippine panel, said Manila wanted the talks "to restructure our relations to cover a broad range of concerns."

"For us, there is more to life than security matters, and that is what we have to impress upon them," Alunan said.

Walesa says he'll run for president

WARSAW, Poland - Solidarity leader Lech Walesa said Monday he will run for president of Poland, a job now held by the general who once imprisoned him and sought to crush his labor union under martial law.

Walesa said he hoped to speed the nation's transition from communism to democracy.

"Today I made up my mind. I am putting forward for society's approval my readiness to be a candidate for the post of president of the Polish Republic in popular elections," Walesa said in a statement delivered from his desk at Solidarity headquarters in Gdansk.

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