

GULF update

Saddam says he's preparing for U.S. assault on Kuwait

Saddam Hussein said Tuesday that Iraq was making final preparations for war and expected an attack within days by the United States and its allies. A U.S. senator said President Bush's "patience is wearing thin."

In the Persian Gulf, 10 American sailors died when a steam pipe ruptured in the boiler room of the USS Iwo Jima. And in Saudi Arabia, a Marine was killed in an accident while driving in the desert.

Bush discussed possible military action against Iraq in a meeting with congressional leaders on the gulf crisis, but he told them he could not guarantee he would consult them before embarking on hostilities. He refused to comment publicly on a report the United States plans to discuss a timetable with U.S. allies for a military offensive.

Secretary of State James A. Baker III on Saturday will begin a weeklong visit to Arab and European countries to consult on future steps in the gulf, officials said. The visit will include a meeting with Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze.

Asked about the potential for a U.S. military strike, White House spokesman Marlin Fitzwater said: "As these things unfold, of course, there are always scenarios for ac-

tion that have to be considered... but there is no timetable for action."

The United States has more than 200,000 troops in the gulf region and has announced plans to send at least 100,000 more.

Saddam summoned his military commanders to a meeting in Baghdad to complete "preparations for urban warfare and necessary measures to be taken in the event of combat in (Kuwait)," the Iraqi News Agency reported.

"We must be prepared with all that God has given us of potential to thwart perfidious intentions by the United States and its allies to launch an attack in the next few days," the report quoted Saddam as saying.

While he talked of possible hostilities, his foreign minister, Tariq Aziz, struck a more cautious note. Aziz told the Iraqi News Agency that Iraq is prepared to talk with "any Arab or international party" provided it is not "prompted by premeditated hostile designs."

Diplomats in the Middle East, speaking on condition of anonymity, said Saddam was reacting to statements Monday by Baker.

Baker told a gathering in Los Angeles: "Let no one doubt: We will not rule out a possible use of force if Iraq continues to occupy Kuwait."

Despite increase, analysts still predict recession

Economy shows GNP growth

WASHINGTON - The U.S. economy grew at a faster-than-expected 1.8 percent rate in the third quarter, the government said Tuesday, but the report failed to dissuade many analysts who believe the economy is entering a recession.

The Commerce Department report on the gross national product showed that consumers buying cars and other items had continued to drive the longest peacetime economic expansion in U.S. history through September. Whether the expansion reaches its eighth anniversary in November was a matter of debate.

"This release contradicts those who believe we are in a recession or are about to enter one," Commerce Undersecretary Michael R. Darby told reporters. "We expect the economy to continue to expand at a modest pace for the remainder of the year and in 1991."

"I believe we're in a recession," said economist Bruce Steinberg of Merrill Lynch Capital Markets in New York. "I think that most of the things showing strength in the third quarter will be weak in the fourth, particularly consumer spending."

Robert G. Dederick, chief economist for the Northern Trust Co. in Chicago, also believes the economy is declining this quarter. He contended that much of the GNP strength "was concentrated early in the quarter. It is by no means certain that it was growing 1.8 when the quarter ended."

Indeed, Michael Boskin, chairman of Bush's Council of Economic Advisers, said, "While this is pleasant news about the third quarter, we are concerned about a sluggish fourth quarter and the early part of 1991."

He added that he "was certainly

pleased" with the Federal Reserve's action Monday in pushing down a key short-term interest rate, a move that might be expected to boost economic growth.

The Commerce Department had continued bad news about the housing industry Tuesday. It reported that sales of new homes slumped 6 percent in September, the ninth decline in the past 12 months and the worst drop in half a year.

Declining sales suggest continued contraction in the industry since builders often put off new projects when inventories climb.

The gross national product report will be revised twice in the next two months as more information is received. The final revision of the second-quarter GNP showed the economy grew just 0.4 percent rather than the 1.2 percent first reported.

Justices hear family planning case

WASHINGTON - The Supreme Court began scrutinizing a ban on abortion counseling at federally subsidized family planning clinics Tuesday in arguments punctuated by pointed questions from new Justice David H. Souter and fellow members.

Souter voiced doubts about regulations that bar doctors and family planning counselors from discussing abortion even with women whose pregnancies are endangering their health.

"You are telling us the physician cannot perform his usual professional responsibility," Souter told Solicitor General Kenneth Starr, the Bush administration's top courtroom lawyer.

"You are telling us the secretary (of Health and Human Services) in

In the Supreme Court

effect may preclude professional speech."

Starr, conceding the ban "tilts against abortion," defended its validity.

Although fueled by the continuing struggle over abortion, the legal dispute over the regulations centers on

free-speech rights. The court must decide whether the regulations comply with a 1970 federal law and, if so, whether they violate the Constitution.

A decision is expected by July. The argument is over information available to the 5 million low-income women who depend on family planning clinics and similar health care providers.

Last year, some 4,000 family planning clinics nationwide received about \$140 million in federal assistance.

Enforcement of the regulations, issued by the Reagan administration in 1988, has been blocked virtually everywhere by legal challenges.

Police fire on Hindus trying to destroy mosque

AYODHYA, India - Government forces fired on thousands of Hindu fundamentalists who broke through police barricades Tuesday and forced their way into a heavily guarded mosque. Five Hindus were killed and

20 wounded.

At least 26 people were killed in other parts of India as the decades-old dispute between Hindus and Moslems over ownership of the site came to a head.

The controversy has left at least 138 people dead in the past week, brought Prime Minister V.P. Singh's government close to collapse and further strained already tense relations between India's Hindu majority and Moslem minority.

Singh, who opposes the Hindu campaign to replace the 16th-century Moslem mosque, on Tuesday repeated his offer to resign if his party thought it would help contain the sectarian violence.

Hindu fundamentalists had said they would start construction Tuesday on a temple to the god Rama on the site occupied by the mosque. The government said it would block any attempt to destroy the small, one-story shrine and arrested 90,000 supporters of the

fundamentalist World Hindu Council in the past week.

On Tuesday, 10,000 Hindus stormed police barricades outside the disputed shrine. Police first used tear gas and bamboo canes to beat back the crowd.

Then, after several hours of clashes as the crowds pushed closer and closer to the mosque, the police fired rifles.

Reporters saw four bodies, but a government spokesman in New Delhi later said five people were killed. Witnesses said at least 20 people were wounded.

Many Hindus said they were helped by policemen guarding the mosque, which the fundamentalists say stands on the spot where Rama was born. Most of the 20,000 policemen on duty in Ayodhya are Hindus.

While the crowds rushed toward the mosque, Hindu holy men screamed obscenities from rooftops and pelted police with stones. At least four policemen were injured.

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