

U.S. drops food, supplies to Kurds

NICOSIA, Cyprus - U.S. military planes on Sunday began airdropping food and supplies to freezing, starving Kurdish refugees in the snow-covered mountains of northern Iraq, but the refugees' desperation intensified.

Turkey's government-sponsored Anatolia news agency reported that Turkish soldiers opened fire Sunday on a group of refugees who forced their way across the border in search of food, wounding one of them.

The agency gave no other details on the incident, which it said occurred near the Turkish village of Isikveren. The report could not be independently confirmed.

The United States warned Iraq on Sunday not to interfere with the refugee relief, but President Bush repeated the U.S. intention to stay out of Iraq's civil war.

Meanwhile, Iraqi President Saddam Hussein, in a speech a day after Iraq accepted stringent U.N. terms for a permanent cease-fire in the Persian Gulf war, praised his people's "steadfastness" in the war against the allies.

But Saddam did not mention the cease-fire terms, which will strip Iraq

of much of its military might. The speech was carried by Baghdad radio.

Insurgencies broke out in the north and south of Iraq after Saddam's armies were routed by the allies in late February. The flood of refugees was triggered when Saddam's troops moved to crush the rebellions.

Bush expressed hopes that international pressure would persuade Saddam to halt attacks on his own people. But the president insisted anew that the United States would not intervene militarily.

Although he had urged the Iraqi people to overthrow Saddam, Bush insisted he had not misled the rebels into believing the United States would take their side.

"I will reassert I never in any way implied that the United States was going to use force beyond the mandate of the United Nations," Bush said in Houston.

Hundreds of thousands of refugees have fled their homes and are seeking shelter in Iran and Turkey. The International Committee of the Red Cross said Sunday that an estimated 400,000 refugees have already arrived in Iran.

In a statement issued in Geneva,

the Red Cross said the situation of the refugees in Iran was "drastically deteriorating" and promised to step up aid efforts.

Iran made a rare appeal for international help on Sunday, saying it had been overwhelmed by the influx of refugees.

The U.S. airdrop got under way with six C-130 planes flying food and water to refugees inside the Turkish territory and in northern Iraq, said a spokesman at the Incirlik air base in southern Turkey.

White House spokesman Marlin Fitzwater said the planes had dropped 72,000 pounds of supplies, and that the airdrops would continue for about 10 days.

The U.S. aircraft, which returned safely to base, were accompanied by warplanes capable of defending them, the base spokesman said.

Britain, Japan, France, Switzerland and a host of other nations joined the effort to help the refugees.

Iranian President Hashemi Rafsanjani increased his country's aid allocation for the refugees on its borders to \$42 million. But Iran said

Baker warns against Iraq interfering with Kurds' relief

ANKARA, Turkey - Secretary of State James Baker warned Iraq on Sunday not to interfere with an American airdrop of food, blankets and clothing to Kurdish refugees fleeing after the collapse of their rebellion.

Baker flew here from Washington to dramatize U.S. concern for more than 500,000 homeless Kurds, only a fraction of whom would be helped by the Bush administration's relief effort.

Baker also intends to urge President Turgut Ozal to keep the Turkish border open and Monday will visit a refugee camp in southeast

Turkey, a few miles from the border.

"My border is open," Ozal said Sunday on ABC-TV's "This Week With David Brinkley."

Ozal said the United Nations should turn northern Iraq into a sanctuary for the Kurds and that the allies should force Saddam Hussein to accept such an arrangement if he resists.

"I say we have to get these people to a location in Iraq controlled by the United Nations," Ozal said, adding that Turkey would be willing to contribute to a U.N. force.

outside help was needed.

Iran said it had taken in 580,000 Iraqis, mostly from the northern Kurdish provinces. It said 50,000 refugees had fled Saddam's earlier crackdown on Shiite Muslim rebels

in southern Iraq.

Saddam's troops have largely put down the rebellion in the south, but Tehran radio said heavy artillery fired by the Saddam's Republican Guard echoed across the border overnight.

Kuwaiti emir promises democracy, elections

KUWAIT CITY - The emir of Kuwait, in his first public address since the allies ousted Iraqi occupation forces, pledged Sunday to restore parliamentary democracy and hold elections within a year.

Sheik Jaber al-Ahmed al-Sabah, in a nationally broadcast speech, also asked "Kuwait's friends" to keep a presence in the emirate to help protect it. He did not mention any countries by name.

In the 10-minute speech, he also said he would study the possibility of extending political rights to women, who now have no vote. He did not mention the 1962 constitution, which he suspended in 1986 along with dissolving the National Assembly.

The emir's announcement came hours after the main Islamic fundamentalist movement demanded elections within six months. It also urged the emir to commit himself to reform.

A coalition of opposition groups, including the fundamentalist Islamic Constitutional Movement, has demanded elections previously, without proposing a timetable.

The fundamentalist group, in its communiqué Sunday, had said the emir should declare his readiness to re-establish parliament in his national address.

The emir has made an address annually to mark the final 10 days of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan. The government had given no advance indication of what the emir would say this year, in his first major public address since the U.S.-led allies drove Iraqi troops from Kuwait in Feb. 27.

U.S. official had said earlier that the emir was committed to some type of political reform.

The Islamic Constitutional Movement said

the government should restore the 1962 Constitution and choose a new Cabinet "based on competence, honesty in performance, and popularity."

The Cabinet resigned March 19, following intense criticism by many Kuwaitis over difficulties restoring essential services after the Iraqi occupation. Neither the emir nor any other official has indicated when a new government might be named.

The prime minister and at least some ministers are expected to retain their posts when a new Cabinet is announced. But the fundamentalists demanded the ouster of those deemed responsible for the situation that led to Iraq's invasion on Aug. 2.

Their ouster is essential, the communiqué said, "to avoid things getting into a mess and falling into a political chaos as a result of

arrogance."

The communiqué accused the government of failing to carry out political reforms promised in October during a meeting in Saudi Arabia that brought together Kuwaiti opposition leaders and the government-in-exile.

The emir suspended the parliament and imposed censorship on the once free-wheeling Kuwaiti press in 1986 after his family was accused of corruption and nepotism.

Abdullah al-Nebari, a former Parliament member who leads the secular side of the opposition, said before the emir's speech that the ruling family thus far had failed to recruit opposition leaders into the Cabinet.

"They wanted to entice some opposition figures or figures friendly to opposition groups, in order to buy the silence of some groups," al-Nebari said. "They didn't succeed."

Quarters small for diplomats following fire

MOSCOW (AP) - Eleven days after fire badly damaged the U.S. Embassy in the Soviet capital, American diplomats are working in makeshift quarters so cramped that some may be forced to move into a bowling alley.

Some embassy employees are blaming U.S. officials for ignoring their warnings that the building was a fire hazard.

And the embassy is investigating what happened to some diplomatic papers and hundreds of dollars in cash reported to have disappeared during the March 28 blaze.

The fire also adds fuel to the controversy over the eight-story, red-brick office tower that was built to house the new embassy — but was never occupied because it is riddled with Soviet listening devices.

Some diplomats are taking the trouble in stride. The American flag — dirtied and tattered from the firefighters' foam and water — still flies from the mustard-colored embassy building on Tchaikovsky Street.

Although the embassy is hard up for space because of the fire damage, it will "absolutely not" use the unoccupied new building, said Joe Hulings, minister counselor for management.

First space emergency repair made

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. - A shuttle astronaut took a walk outside, shook a balky antenna and freed it Sunday in the first emergency repair ever made in space.

"It's free, it's free, I can see it move, it's free!" shouted a jubilant Jerry Ross as the antenna swung out from a giant scientific observatory.

"Far out, good work," said Jay Apt, his fellow space walker.

It was the first time in more than five years that any Americans had taken a space walk.

The repair job made it possible to plan release of the \$617 million Gamma Ray Observatory into orbit for about

6:30 p.m. EDT, 4 1/2 hours late, from the shuttle Atlantis. The time of release was not critical to the mission, as is the case when a planetary probe is involved.

The observatory will record the high-energy radiations coming from some of the most violent processes in the universe for the next two years and perhaps longer. Gamma rays do not penetrate the atmosphere and cannot be detected on Earth.

Flight directors decided to take advantage of Ross and Apt's unexpected venture into the cargo bay and had them do some experiments that

had been scheduled for a space walk on Monday. There were no changes in those plans.

The astronauts, attached to the shuttle by a tether, practiced moving along a hand rail mounted to the left side of the cargo bay. Ross did somersaults while holding onto the rail and exercises that resembled pushups. He chuckled and laughed while doing his tricks.

They also did small tests to measure how much effort it took, including one in which Ross lifted Apt up and down several times from side to side. The platform he was standing on

recorded the force applied.

The tests were planned to help space station designers. The station, if approved by Congress, will be assembled in space and require considerable hand-on efforts by astronauts in space suits.

The shuttle was 280 miles above the East Indies when the repair was made.

The repair had been estimated to last more than an hour. Instead, the astronauts were in open space for only 17 minutes when Ross worked the antenna loose.

President says free-trade pact to create jobs in U.S., Mexico

HOUSTON - President Bush said Sunday that a free-trade agreement between the United States and Mexico "will create jobs and provide opportunities for citizens in both our countries."

But he conceded after brief talks with Mexican President Carlos Salinas de Gortari that the administration has "a big selling job to do" to persuade congressional skeptics concerned about losing jobs to Mexico's cheap labor market.

Bush promised to work tirelessly to fight for congressional approval

for so-called fast-track authority that would allow the administration to negotiate with Mexico on free trade with a guarantee that Congress would not amend whatever agreement was reached.

Instead, Congress would approve or reject the package as negotiated between the governments.

"The credibility of the United States as a trading partner is on the line here," Bush said during a joint news conference with Salinas.

Salinas sought to put rest envi-

ronmental concerns raised in the United States regarding Mexico's lack of curbs on toxic pollution. Members of Congress and others fear products entering the United States from Mexico would be contaminated and that U.S. industry will head south of the border to evade U.S. regulatory constraints.

"We are committed to the clean environment," Salinas said, pledging that any trade pact would be accompanied by "firm and stringent laws" on environmental protection.

However, he conceded, "we have much to do still."

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