

Turks moving Kurds from their mountain camps

ISIKVEREN, Turkey - Turkey on Monday began moving thousands of ill and starving Iraqi Kurds from this mountainous border settlement to camps farther inside Turkey where they will be closer to relief supplies.

Iraq, meanwhile, claimed that thousands of the refugees had begun to return home. But a Turkish official said the Kurds were still coming across the border and that their number could soon reach 700,000.

Reporters on Iraq's border with Iran and Turkey said that thousands of refugees continued to stream out of the troubled country.

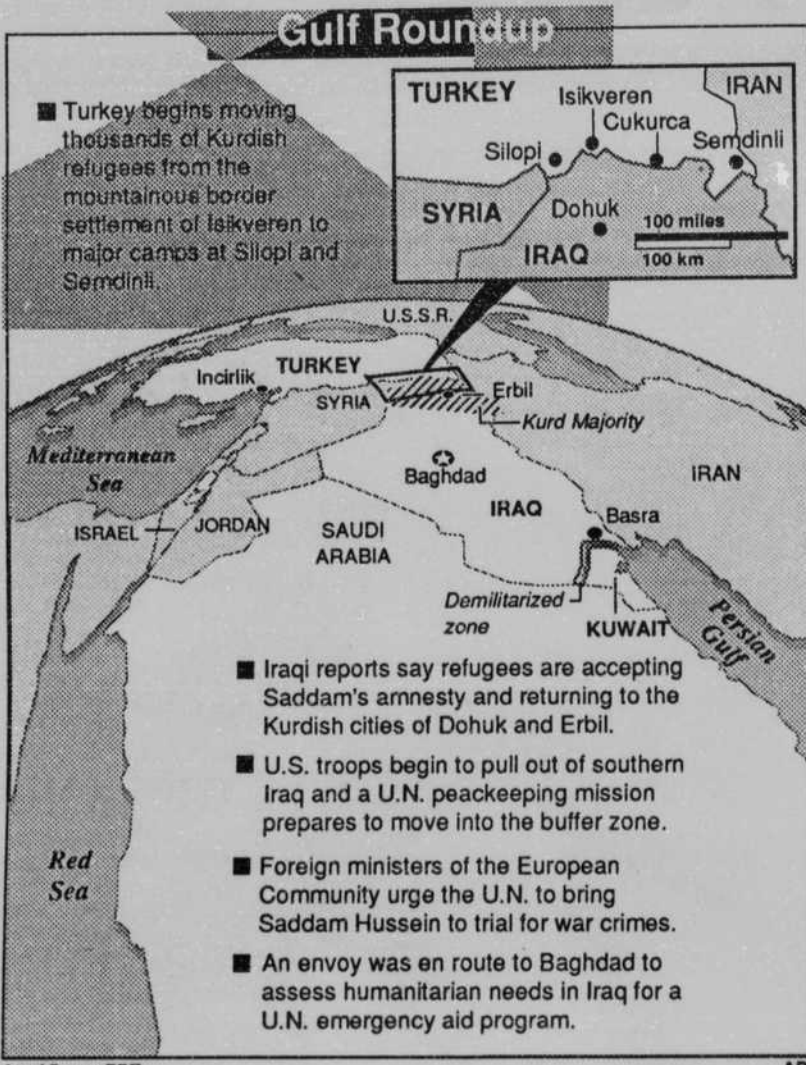
"Iraq is my homeland. I was born there and I want to die there," said Dia Sindi, a 17-year old Kurd in this tent city of 160,000 refugees. "If they kill Saddam I will go back," he said.

Sindi was among 2,100 refugees moved down from this 7,200-foot plateau to a new camp near the township of Silopi, 36 miles inside Turkey. The new camp will have water, electricity and medical supplies. The tent settlement will have a 400-bed hospital, 64 doctors and 129 medical personnel, Health Minister Halil Sivgin said.

The order to move the refugees to new bases represented a major policy shift for President Turgut Ozal's government, which previously had kept the refugees in the mountains, saying it could not deal with the influx.

Turkey has fought attacks by its own restive Kurdish minority and still shelters thousands of Kurds who fled Iraq in 1988.

The Istanbul newspaper Hurriyet said Turkey allowed the refugees deeper into the country after President Bush reportedly assured Ozal that the refugees would return to Iraq



As of 5 p.m. EDT AP

when Saddam Hussein's government collapsed. Turkish officials stressed that the resettlement was temporary. Hayri Kozakcioglu, governor of Turkey's southeastern border region with Iraq, said that the number of refugees may rise to 700,000 in the next few days as Iraqis continue to flee. Officials have said 500,000 refugees are already on the Turkish border.

Iran's official radio, meanwhile, said the country's Red Crescent Society, the equivalent of the Red Cross, was running out of relief supplies for the more than 900,000 of Iraq's 4 million Kurds who have fled to Iran. Hundreds of refugees are believed to have died in the border camps. In other developments Monday, Kurdish rebels renewed a plea to the United Nations for protection from Iraqi loyalist forces inside Iraq.

Kurdish refugees distressed; Iraqi police to handle border

SAFWAN, Iraq - Iraqi police will handle law and order in part of the demilitarized border zone with Kuwait, and refugees said Monday that is tantamount to sending them to prison or worse.

Several serious problems remain unresolved as U.S. troops pull out of southern Iraq and a U.N. peacekeeping mission prepares to move into the buffer zone straddling the Iraq-Kuwait border.

About 300 worried refugees blocked a road Monday with a sit-in outside their dusty tent camp, chanting slogans in English such as "Save The People of Iraq," and "Saddam, Saddam, Same As Hitler."

The U.S. Army is caring for more than 11,000 refugees at an abandoned construction company in Safwan. About 6,000 displaced people, mostly Iraqis, are at a Red Crescent camp about a mile away on the Kuwaiti side of the border.

They are among 40,000 Iraqi refugees in Iraq, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, and some say they will try to prevent the Americans from leaving Safwan.

"We will sleep in front of the American trucks," said Abu Nathal, a history teacher from Nassiriya. "Only the Americans can protect us from Saddam Hussein."

The tens of thousands of U.S. troops still in southern Iraq are being withdrawn rapidly through the desert now that a formal gulf war cease-fire is in place.

Nearly half the 540,000 American troops have left the theater, the U.S. Central Command said, including the 17,000 troops of the 1st Infantry Division of the VII Corps, which this week began rolling from the Euphrates River south toward Saudi Arabia.

Some U.S. soldiers will remain temporarily with the refugees in the

demilitarized zone until the U.N. Iraq-Kuwait Observation Mission, a lightly armed 1,440-person peacekeeping contingent, is in place.

The DMZ stretches six miles into Iraq, and three miles into Kuwait along 120 miles of border.

The head of the mission, Austrian Gen. Gunther Greindl, arrived Saturday in Kuwait, where he met with government officials before traveling to Baghdad, on Monday for similar discussions.

But U.N. peacekeepers are not expected to arrive in Kuwait until later this week, and it would appear their deployment on the border is still one to two weeks away. U.N. officials have refused to give any timetable.

Once in place, the peacekeepers have a strict and limited mandate to observe and "to interfere as little as possible" in the affairs of Iraq and Kuwait, said Joachim Hutter, the U.N. delegation's acting spokesman.

Iraq and Kuwait will not be allowed to send troops into the DMZ, but their governments will handle civil administration in their territory, including police duties.

The Iraqi refugees, who include many fighters against Saddam's rule, say this is intolerable.

"The police will arrest us and kidnap us," said Ali Ali, a teacher from the southern city of Najaf. "Many of us will be executed for opposing Saddam. They will write down our names and kill our families."

The U.N. peacekeepers will carry sidearms which are to be used only in self-defense, said Hutter.

"Given Saddam's track record, these people (refugees) probably have a reason to be scared," said U.S. Maj. Tom Grubbs, of Olney, Md., who helps administer the refugee camp in Safwan.

Rail workers to strike despite pressure

WASHINGTON - President Bush tried to budge deadlocked freight railroads and their unions Monday, saying a nationwide strike threatened for midnight Tuesday could severely disrupt the economy. But no progress was reported at the bargaining table.

Also Monday, as part of the Bush administration's efforts to head off a strike, Transportation Secretary Samuel Skinner met with union leaders to discuss the three-year-old dispute over wages, health care and work rules.

Meanwhile, negotiations wore on toward a midnight Tuesday deadline, when a federally imposed "cooling off" period expires and the nation's 235,000 freight line workers are free

to follow through on their promise to strike.

Bargainers "are all at the table with one eye on the clock," said George Whaley, a spokesman for the Association of American Railroads, which represents the nation's big freight carriers such as Burlington Northern, Conrail and Norfolk Southern.

Though the strike would involve only freight crews and freight yard workers, passenger travel on Amtrak and commuter lines could also be disrupted because most of those trains run on freight-owned tracks.

Wages are a key stumbling block, and the two sides don't even agree on what figures to use when discussing the issue. Management contends rail

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FitzGerald, spokesman for the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers

workers receive an average total compensation package worth about \$56,000 a year and says that's far out of line with other industrial workers. The union says a typical rail worker makes between \$30,000 and \$40,000

a year. Steve FitzGerald, a spokesman for the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers, one of 11 unions involved in the dispute, said the unions are anxious to settle.

"We're not interested in shutting down the nation and inconveniencing the traveling public in any way at all," he said.

Three unions have reached tentative settlement, but the others have not. In the past, if one rail union walks out, all have followed their path in a show of solidarity.

Bush, speaking to a business group at the White House, said a rail strike "could potentially idle hundreds of thousands of workers and would af-

fect virtually all Americans in one way or another."

The president stopped short of indicating that he would ask Congress to intervene and stop a strike, saying, "It is always better for labor and management to resolve their differences and produce an agreement."

Still, the president clearly was seeking to exert pressure on both sides. Bush said a strike "could severely disrupt the economy just as the economy in our view is trying to turn around and get out of this recession."

Neither union leaders nor Skinner would comment on their 90-minute session, but labor sources had said they did not expect anything significant to come of it.

Peace talks possible

Baker returns to Middle East

WASHINGTON - In a quick turnaround, Secretary of State James Baker will return to the Middle East on Thursday hoping to capitalize on the interest Arabs and Israelis have shown in peace talks, the State Department said Monday.

"No one knows how long this opportunity will exist," Margaret Tutwiler, the department spokeswoman, said in announcing Baker's third visit to the troubled region in a little more than six weeks.

He will leave Tuesday night and go first to Luxembourg for talks with European foreign ministers. In all, he will have been home in Washington between trips barely 100 hours.

This time Baker may make a stop in Jordan, thereby completing a re-

versal of U.S. policy — from irritation with King Hussein for condemning the economic and military assault on Iraq to including the Arab kingdom in planning for a Middle East settlement.

U.S. aid to Jordan, which had been tentatively set at \$57 million for the fiscal year that begins Oct. 1, was suspended and President Bush said in February that Jordan had "moved over — way over" to support Iraq.

Hussein, meanwhile, said the war to free Kuwait was "against all Arabs and all Muslims and not against Iraq alone."

Jordan controlled the West Bank, now held by Israel, from 1948 until 1967. Baker last month left Jordan out of his itinerary, but on his trip last

week he held talks in Geneva with Foreign Minister Taher al Masri.

Stopping in Amman, the Jordanian capital, on the new trip would be a diplomatic gesture toward the king.

At the heart of U.S. policy in the Middle East is an effort to persuade Israel to give up all or most of the West Bank. Bush, Baker and other U.S. officials have been intentionally vague, however, on whether the aim is to have Jordan control the territory again.

Baker returned from the region late Friday night, reported to Bush over the weekend, and they concluded "all parties are taking a serious approach to peace in the Middle East," spokeswoman Tutwiler said.

Bush and Baker believe following

up now, directly with the Arabs and the Israelis, is important if progress is to be made, Tutwiler said.

She concluded the brief announcement with the customary caveat that "there is much work to be done, questions to be answered, and a long way to go."

The State Department withheld Baker's schedule, but it was learned he would go to Israel from Luxembourg and then make stops in Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Syria and probably Jordan.

Israeli Foreign Minister David Levy, speaking prior to the public announcement of Baker's return trip, commented in Jerusalem: "This is a good sign. It shows his labor is bearing fruit."

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