

Allied zone expanded; refugees airlifted

ZAKHO, Iraq - In a change of plans, allied forces have more than doubled the size of their security zone for Kurdish refugees in northern Iraq and are scouting a site for a second settlement, U.S. officers said Sunday.

In southern Iraq, meanwhile, the U.S. Army began an airlift to Saudi Arabia of refugees who fear reprisals from Iraqi security forces if they remain. That was seen as a major step toward the U.S. troops' own departure.

In northern Iraq, the initial allied-protected security zone was to have encompassed a 630-square-mile area that stretched 18 miles south and 35 miles east of Zakho. Allied troops were also planning to complete one camp before starting another.

Now, the new zone is envisioned to be about 1,350 square miles and troops will start a second camp before finishing the first.

Army officers said the change of plans came after they realized that

not all the Kurds were willing to come to the camp at Zakho, where about 1,000 tents have been set up for refugees.

In addition, the officers said they hoped that expanding the size of the zone would encourage Kurds to come down from the mountains, where many of them live in appalling conditions but are too afraid of Iraqi retribution to leave.

Soon, U.S. Marines from the 24th Marine Expeditionary Unit will enter Amadiyah, about 75 miles east of Zakho, where a second camp is planned, said U.S. Army Lt. Col. Jim Christophersen, of the 432nd Civil Affairs Company of Green Bay, Wis.

"This will effectively double the size of the security zone," said Christophersen, whose men will manage both camps until the United Nations and humanitarian agencies can take over.

Privately, some officers expressed concern that the expansion, by increasing allied military involvement

in Iraq, could raise the possibility of coalition forces being drawn into a quagmire in Iraq.

"We're hoping to be out of here by the end of May," said Christophersen. But he added: "That may be wishful thinking."

Some refugees have begun to complain that Kurdish resistance fighters, known as Pesh Merga or "those who face death," are stopping refugees who seek to return to their homes.

On a winding road heading to the mountain top refugee camp at Isikveren, on the Turkish side of the border, dozens of Kurdish families complained that the guerrillas were blocking their return.

Dilbar Mohammed, a 30-year-old Kurd, said he sent his wife and two children home to Zakho two weeks ago on the nine-hour walk on foot from Isikveren. Since then, he has been waiting at a Pesh Merga checkpoint for permission to drive the family car into Zakho.

"Before this time, I wanted to

Saddam keeps grip on power; future continues to look good

NICOSIA, Cyprus - With cunning, brute force and sheer luck, Saddam Hussein has kept his grip on power. And he looks likely to keep it for the foreseeable future.

To mark his 54th birthday Sunday, Iraq's government-run newspapers sang the president's praises in banner headlines. The ruling party's newspaper, Al-Thawra, hailed Saddam's "historic and unique leadership traits . . . his struggle in Iraq's glorious march."

The latest step in that "glorious march" — the Persian Gulf war — ended with the most crushing bat-

tlefield defeat any Arab ruler has suffered in nearly 25 years.

Even though battered by the allies, Saddam managed to quell two internal rebellions.

The Central Intelligence Agency conceded in a recent report that Saddam, whose overthrow was publicly urged by President Bush, has reasserted his power in a way that few of his adversaries expected.

"I'd guess Saddam Hussein will be in power after George Bush leaves power," Sen. Malcolm Wallop, R-Wyo., said recently.

believe in Kurdistan," he said. "But now I just want to be with my family."

At the checkpoint, Pesh Merga

guerrillas said they were waiting for orders to let the Kurds return. But Mohammed and others charged that the guerrillas were accepting bribes.

Discovery orbiting on 'Star Wars' mission

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. - The space shuttle Discovery thundered into orbit with seven astronauts Sunday on a "Star Wars" research mission that promises to be one of the most complicated flights in shuttle history.

The spaceship roared from its seaside launch pad at 7:33 a.m. EDT, climbing through a fairly clear sky flushed by the rising sun.

Once Discovery was settled in its 161-mile-high orbit, shuttle commander and veteran spaceman Michael Coats told Mission Control that "everything seems to be going pretty well."

"We've got a bunch of kids in the candy store up here having a ball," Coats said. It is the first trip into space for five of the astronauts.

Project managers were just as thrilled.

"How sweet it is," gushed Michael Harrison, a research official for the Strategic Defense Initiative, better

known as "Star Wars."

The launch, stalled seven weeks because of faulty shuttle parts, was delayed a half-hour at the last minute by yet another problem.

Launch director Bob Sieck held the countdown clock at the nine-minute mark after one of two data recorders aboard Discovery turned on prematurely. There was no safety hazard, but officials wanted to make sure there was nothing wrong with the shuttle's computers.

The countdown resumed after engineers concluded the computers were fine.

Sieck put that problem and others behind once Discovery was safely in space.

"You don't keep score and you don't look back . . . you go to school on lessons learned," Sieck said. "As soon as it's up there and everything is working fine, that's just history."

Most of the eight-day flight will be

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devoted to Star Wars tests aimed at helping scientists develop sensors for tracking and destroying enemy missiles. The astronauts will split 12-hour shifts to obtain as much data as possible.

The toughest experiments will be

Tuesday and Wednesday. That's when a satellite released from Discovery will measure and analyze the shuttle's exhaust plumes. It also will examine chemicals and gases sprayed into space — potential missile camouflage — before being captured for return to Earth.

NASA considers this one of the most complex shuttle flights because of all the tricky, split-second turns required. Discovery's engine nozzles must be pointed right at the spacecraft during the plume observations.

A collection of five scientific instruments will remain in the cargo bay to study natural phenomena, such as the atmosphere and aurora, that could mask a missile's path.

It was the 40th space shuttle launch and the second one this month. Atlantis left April 5 and landed six days later after placing an astronomical observatory in orbit.

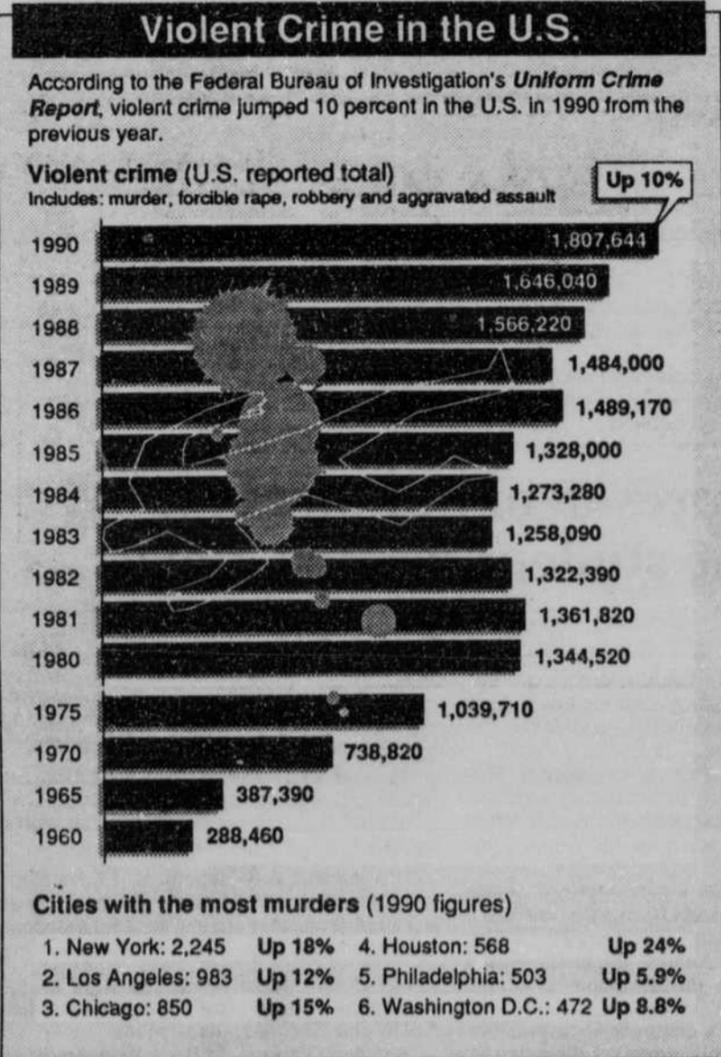
The last time NASA launched two

shuttles in the same month was in January 1986. The second ship to go up was Challenger; it exploded 73 seconds after liftoff, killing all seven aboard.

NASA called off Discovery's launch Tuesday less than six hours before liftoff when a sensor for one of the main engines failed. A new sensor was installed.

The mission already was six weeks late because of cracks on hinge mechanisms that open and close two fuel inlet doors. The mechanisms were replaced, and the doors shut tightly as expected after the external fuel tank dropped away, said flight director Lee Briscoe.

The crew, in addition to Coats, consists of Blaine Hammond Jr., Donald McMonagle, Gregory Harbaugh, Guion Bluford Jr., Richard Hieb and Charles Lacy Veach. Only Coats and Bluford have flown in space before.



FBI reports 7 American cities recorded 25 percent of murders

WASHINGTON - Seven American cities recorded more than one fourth of all murders in the United States, the FBI said Sunday in releasing its annual preliminary crime report.

Six of the seven cities had more murders last year than in 1989. The exception was Detroit, which had 582 murders, 42 fewer than the year before.

Overall, violent crime — murder, rape, robbery and aggravated assault — jumped 10 percent in 1990.

"The growth in violent crimes is larger than I would have thought," said Alfred Blumstein, dean of the School of Urban and Public Affairs at Carnegie-Mellon University in Pittsburgh.

Criminologists, however, don't consider the annual report a reliable indicator of crime trends because it covers only reported crime.

A more accurate barometer, those experts say, is the Justice Department's annual survey of crime victims, which shows the level of violent crime has been fairly stable in the last decade.

The FBI expressed the national picture only in percentages. Applying those percentages to last year's figures, these would be the numbers nationally in a few categories:

- Violent crime up 10 percent, to about 1,810,000.
- Murder up 10 percent, to 23,600.
- Rape up 9 percent, to 103,000.

- Robbery up 11 percent, to 642,000.
- Aggravated assault up 10 percent, to 1,050,000.

In non-violent crimes:

- Burglary down 4 percent, to 3,040,000.
- Larceny theft, unchanged at 7,872,000.
- Motor vehicle theft, up 5 percent to 1,620,000.

"Today's FBI crime figures show that America set new records for murder and rape last year," said Sen. Joseph Biden Jr., D-Del., chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, who has proposed a Democratic alterna-

tive to President Bush's crime bill.

"The president and Congress must pass tough measures to fight crime, ban killer assault guns and combat the epidemic of violence against women before the death toll grows even higher," Biden said.

Attorney General Dick Thornburgh also saw in the statistics a need to pass a crime bill — the one proposed by the Bush administration.

"Never before has the need for the president's tough crime bill been so pressing and the consequences of its absence been so dramatic," Thornburgh said.

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