

## Bush vows to send planes to Mideast

### Forces would provide cover in arms searches, officials say

GRAND CANYON VILLAGE, Ariz. — President Bush declared Wednesday that he would send warplanes to escort U.N. helicopters searching for hidden Iraqi weapons if Saddam Hussein continues to impede the inspectors. Bush said he was "plenty fed up" with Saddam but not looking for a new war.

Bush and other top administration officials sought to cut short any speculation that new fighting was in store. "This is not Desert Storm II," one senior aide said.

The president said of Saddam, "There's just determination . . . that he will comply" with the U.N. mandate for inspection and destruction of Iraq's nuclear and other major weapons facilities.

National Security Adviser Brent Scowcroft said the warplanes would provide air cover for the helicopters should Saddam continue placing restrictions on inspections, but "if he will comply with the U.N. resolutions there won't need to be an 'execute' order."

He said Saudi Arabia had requested and would receive Patriot missiles for

defensive purposes. Presidential spokesman Marlin Fitzwater said later, "We believe Iraq still possesses several hundred Scud missiles of the type used against Saudi Arabia during the gulf war."

Bush, asked about the possibility of renewed military conflict, said, "I don't think Saddam wants that. I'm confident he doesn't."

Bush added, "I'm plenty fed up. I think the man will see we are very serious about this. . . . He knows better than to take on the United States of America."

Bush made the comments during a hike into the Grand Canyon on a trip to promote his environmental policies.

Iraq's ambassador to the United Nations, Abdul Amir Al-Anbari, dismissed the situation as "a tempest in a teacup," but added, "Of course, if the coalition led by the United States wants to commit an aggression against Iraq's people, certainly they are capable of doing that."

Al-Anbari said Iraq had been fully cooperating with the United Nations and was trying to make arrangements

so that the weapons inspectors could do their job without violating Iraq's national sovereignty.

At U.N. headquarters, Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar said he saw no sign that the Iraqis were ready to drop their resistance to weapons inspections.

The senior official traveling with Bush said, "There are some units that will definitely go in (to Saudi Arabia) . . . some within the next day or so." He spoke on condition of anonymity.

Pentagon sources, also speaking privately, said one U.S. air wing had been ordered to prepare to fly to the region. Supporting forces would be included in the package, the sources said.

"We're ready to move if so ordered," but the orders had not yet come down, said a senior Air Force officer. "My feeling is that we won't move," he added.

Other military sources at the Pentagon said the wing put on alert is located at Shaw Air Force Base, S.C. That is the home of the 9th Air Force, commanded by Lt. Gen. Charles Horner, the man in charge of the highly successful air war of Operation Desert Storm.

### Iranian news agency says hostage release imminent

BEIRUT, Lebanon — The official Iranian news agency on Wednesday predicted the imminent release of a Western hostage, and named 77-year-old Briton Jack Mann as most likely to be freed.

The report by the Islamic Republic News Agency heightened speculation that Mann, who was kidnapped May 12, 1989, would become the fourth Western captive to be set free in six weeks. But several hours after IRNA issued its report, there was no word of any release.

U.N. Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar has been working to arrange a deal that would free Western hostages in Lebanon and about 300 Lebanese prisoners held by Israel. The Jewish state seeks an accounting of Israeli soldiers missing in Lebanon.

After Israel freed 51 Arab prisoners last week, the pro-Iranian Revolutionary Justice Organization issued a statement saying Mann — the oldest of the 11 missing Westerners — was alive and well.

The Iranian-backed Hezbollah is believed to be the umbrella group for factions holding most of the missing Westerners. Iran, which has facilitated previous hostage releases, recently has reiterated the importance of learning the fate of four Iranians who disappeared in Lebanon in 1982.

In Tehran, Lebanese Foreign Minister Fares Bweiz said he would urge Lebanese officials to press the search for the four Iranians. The Iranians were kidnapped by Christian militiamen, and reportedly were killed.

The Iranian news agency, in a report datelined Beirut and filed early Wednesday afternoon, said:

"Another Western hostage in Beirut will be released in the next few hours, informed sources said here early Wednesday afternoon."

"The sources added, 'It seems that the retired British pilot Jack Mann stands a better chance of release among other Western hostages.'"

### Yugoslavian truce meets with gunfire

ZAGREB, Yugoslavia — Combatants in Croatia on Wednesday inaugurated the latest cease-fire agreement with gunfire, bombs and shelling, and key mediators expressed pessimism about peace prospects in the secessionist republic.

The European Community-brokered truce, signed Tuesday, was already in tatters moments after the cease-fire deadline passed.

More than 450 people have died in fighting in Croatia since the republic declared its independence on June 25.

Lord Carrington, the European Community mediator who signed the cease-fire agreement Tuesday with the Croatian and Serbian presidents and the federal defense minister, said he would not return to Yugoslavia if it failed.

"I don't think there's anything else if this doesn't work," he said in an interview with the British Broadcasting Corp. "I mean, how can you hold a peace conference when everyone is killing each other?"

On Wednesday, people standing in front of the railway station in downtown Zagreb, the Croatian capital, threw themselves under cars as gunfire and explosions were heard

### Fighting in Croatia

Federal troops launched a major attack on the Croatian capital of Zagreb despite a cease-fire agreement signed Tuesday. Croatian forces have lost about one third of the republic's territory to Serbian and Federal forces since it declared independence on June 25.



nearby. Sniper fire and machine gun blasts rattled the city.

Heavy fighting was reported in Varazdin, northeast of Zagreb; Sibinik, south on the Adriatic coast; and Vukovar in the far eastern part of

Croatia.

Three air-raid alarms sounded in the span of a few hours before and after the truce deadline, sending people in about 20 Croatian towns scurrying for shelters.

### Kerrey establishes panel for campaign

WASHINGTON — Nebraska Sen. Bob Kerrey on Wednesday established a "Kerrey for President" committee and said he would formally announce his 1992 plans in his hometown of Lincoln on Sept. 30.

Kerrey, who also filed a statement of candidacy with federal officials, has been telling Democrats privately that he will seek the Democratic nomination. Two sources close to the senator said Wednesday that he was sure to enter the race.

When Kerrey announced earlier this month that he was considering a White House bid, he said his interest was "based upon the belief that the possibility of a better future 20 years from now will be determined by our actions today."

He said then that the theme of a Kerrey campaign would be to create "a stronger economy and a civilized society."

Documents sent to the Federal Election Commission list Jack Quinn, a Washington lawyer, as the campaign committee's chief counsel and Hugh Westbrook, chairman of a Miami-based hospice management firm, as its treasurer.

"You wouldn't name a committee and you wouldn't name personnel if you weren't running," said one source,

who spoke on condition of anonymity.

The FEC filing allows Kerrey to start raising and spending money for the campaign. Bob Burkett, a Los Angeles-based entertainment industry executive and party fund raiser, said he had already begun sounding out potential contributors.

"We are gearing up to raise money and I am, in that capacity, working as finance chairman," said Burkett.

Three Democrats already have declared their presidential candidacies — Iowa Sen. Tom Harkin, Virginia Gov. L. Douglas Wilder and former Massachusetts Sen. Paul Tsongas.

Arkansas Gov. Bill Clinton is expected to declare his candidacy soon. Others mulling the race include former California Gov. Jerry Brown, Jesse Jackson and Oklahoma Rep. Dave McCurdy.

All the prospects except Wilder and Kerrey were scheduled to speak at a Democratic National Committee meeting Saturday in Los Angeles.

Kerrey spokesman Steve Jarjing said the senator was skipping the meeting because "he's not a candidate yet" and he needs to prepare for his announcement Sept. 30.

### Fed says economy still stagnant

WASHINGTON — The national economy, rather than bouncing strongly out of the recession, is beset with a host of problems from sluggish consumer spending to a virtual standstill in commercial construction, the Federal Reserve reported Wednesday.

The Fed's latest survey of national business conditions said that the recovery "continues to be uneven across the country" with a rebound in manufacturing one of the few bright spots.

Some private economists were more blunt, saying the Fed report depicted a moribund economy that could easily slip back into recession.

Even economists who are not forecasting a so-called "double dip" re-

### Consumer spending, construction sluggish

cession are predicting that the recovery will be one of the weakest on record.

The Commerce Department reported that construction of new homes and apartments edged up only a slight 0.6 percent in August while the number of building permits, considered a good sign of future activity, fell for the first time since February, declining 4.6 percent.

The Fed survey found that fewer than half of the Fed's 12 regions were reporting further increases in housing sales and construction in the late summer after an initial rebound in the

spring. The American Bankers Association said that the percentage of consumer loans at least 30 days past due rose to 2.73 percent in the April-June quarter, the second highest level in more than a decade.

Analysts said this report showed that debt-strapped consumers faced with weak income growth in a recession were having increasing trouble paying bills and were unlikely to be able to begin spending again anytime soon.

In the new report, the Fed found that most regions reported disappointing spending with back-to-school sales described variously as "weak, slower than expected or disappointing."

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FAX NUMBER 472-1761  
The Daily Nebraskan (USPS 144-080) is published by the UNL Publications Board, Nebraska Union 34, 1400 R St., Lincoln, NE. Monday through Friday during the academic year; weekly during summer sessions.  
Readers are encouraged to submit story ideas and comments to the Daily Nebraskan by phoning 472-1763 between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. Monday through Friday. The public also has access to the Publications Board. For information, contact Bill Vobejda, 436-9993.  
Subscription price is \$50 for one year.  
Postmaster: Send address changes to the Daily Nebraskan, Nebraska Union 34, 1400 R St., Lincoln, NE 68588-0448. Second-class postage paid at Lincoln, NE.  
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