

Assault lights up night on Gulf War anniversary

Media witnesses blast closely reminiscent of attack two years ago

BAGHDAD, Iraq — Glowing anti-aircraft shells streaked over Baghdad late Sunday as the United States fired cruise missiles at an alleged Iraqi nuclear weapons site on the outskirts of the capital.

An explosion wrecked the lobby of the Al-Rasheed Hotel, where foreign journalists and visitors stay.

Hotel workers said a woman at the hotel's reception desk died when the roof caved in. Eight to 30 people were injured, workers said.

There was no immediate report from Saddam Hussein's government about damage to the target hit outside Baghdad. American television reports quoted the government as denying the site was engaged in nuclear weapons work.



of damage to the hotel, but he didn't believe it was damaged by a cruise missile. He speculated an Iraqi anti-aircraft shell might have hit the hotel. Twisted furniture and debris littered the lobby. The hotel's power was out.

"I just heard a whoosh, and it just exploded right in front of me," Derek Wilkinson, an NBC tape editor, told CNN. He had been in the hotel room where NBC has its Baghdad office.

"The biggest shock was to see the state of the room I was in," he said. "There was a door on top of me. I think I'm just lucky to be alive."

CNN showed the room, where a window hung off its hinges and camera equipment lay scattered.

Wilkinson said the blast "was so loud, I don't think anti-aircraft could be as loud as that."

The U.S. assault began at 9:30 p.m. in Baghdad (1:30 p.m. EST), much like the night two years ago Sunday when the Gulf War began. U.S. networks provided live coverage.

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-Wilkinson NBC tape editor

It was not immediately known whether the blast at the Al-Rasheed was caused by anti-aircraft fire or an American missile.

An Iraqi army photographer displayed a piece of metal bearing the marking "Jacksonville, Fla."

In Washington, White House spokesman Marlin Fitzwater said he was aware of reports

WORLD WIRE

Bush knew of Iran-Contra secrecy clause

WASHINGTON — George Bush apparently knew in the early days of the Iran-Contra affair that a presidential document stored in John Poindexter's safe contained a secrecy provision that hid the Iran arms sales from Congress, according to Bush's tape-recorded diaries.

The Nov. 15, 1986, diary entry referring to national security adviser Poindexter came 11 days after word of the arms-for-hostages deals first became public in the United States.

At the time, the existence and whereabouts of a "finding," — a document signed by the president which authorized the Iran

arms sales — was a fact known to only a few people inside the Reagan administration.

The Nov. 15 diary entry — among 45 pages of excerpts released Friday by the White House — is the first indication that Bush had this information about that aspect of the Iran initiative.

Bush's diary entry did not specify which of three presidential findings he was referring to. One was from Dec. 5, 1985, ratifying CIA involvement in a shipment of 18 Hawk missiles to Iran the previous month. Two others from January 1986 authorized future arms sales to Iran.

Clinton-Gore caravan kicks off inaugural festivities

WASHINGTON — Bill Clinton and Al Gore rolled into the nation's capital Sunday, kicking off five days of inaugural pageantry.

But the mood of celebration and anticipation was tempered by another military showdown with Iraq. Clinton said he was in frequent contact with the White House, and was briefed by his deputy national security adviser within minutes of arriving in Wash-

ington.

In a symbol-rich journey, he and Gore — and a 15-bus caravan carrying their wives, staff, families and friends — made the 121-mile journey from Jefferson's Monticello to the nation's capital. Thousands of well-wishers stood along the roadway, waving flags and cheering the incoming administration.

Bills, Cowboys persevere en route to Super Bowl

Through injuries and wild cards, through historic comebacks and hostile road games, the Buffalo Bills never flinched. They persevered, and now they're in their third straight Super Bowl.

But Dallas, with its ball-control offense, stands in Buffalo's way. The two will meet Jan. 31 at Pasadena, Calif.

The Bills won the right to try for their first

NFL title with a convincing 29-10 victory over the Miami Dolphins in Sunday's AFC championship game.

Meanwhile, Steve Young and the 49ers couldn't pull another come-from-behind win, as Dallas pulled away in the fourth quarter for a 30-20 victory at soggy Candlestick Park.

Some troops to head home; Somalia enjoys 'quiet day'

MOGADISHU, Somalia — The U.S. Marines will send their first combat troops home Tuesday as the United States moves toward transferring military control of Somalia to a U.N. command, perhaps within two weeks, a spokesman said Sunday.

But the spokesman, Marine Col. Fred Peck, stressed that the Security Council had not yet adopted resolutions necessary for the transfer or decided on a command structure and the rules of engagement. The announcement of the departure of a battalion of 850 Marines, who have already started packing, came on one of the quietest days in Somalia since U.S. troops landed Dec. 9.

For the first time, Peck told the daily briefing: "I don't have anything to announce today (on fighting). It was a very quiet day."

In still another indication of improving security, a convoy of 25 trucks carrying nearly 400 tons of food set out for the first time over 400 treacherous miles to western Somalia.

"The roads have not been used," said Brenda Barton, spokeswoman for the World Food Program. "It's much cheaper if we can manage to move food by road on a regular basis. That means we're going to be able to gradually wind down the airlift operation."

Mohamed Farah Aidid, one of Somalia's most powerful warlords, predicted a 3-day-old cease-fire among the country's warring factions would hold.

"I believe it will be implemented correctly," he said.

Asked if he would hand over his heavy weapons to U.N. forces as required by the cease-fire agreement, he said: "We have already confined these weapons to camps. We will keep them in these camps. We will discuss this. We have decided this should be done gradually."

Bosnians launch biggest attack yet; scores of mutilated bodies found

SARAJEVO, Bosnia-Herzegovina — Yugoslav and Bosnian government forces duled with artillery Sunday in an escalation of Bosnia's civil war, while Bosnian troops fought to cut off rebel Serbs from their Yugoslav allies.

The cross-border shelling marked the first time Yugoslavia has acknowledged intervening in the war since withdrawing its troops seven months ago from this former Yugoslav republic.

A U.N. convoy, meanwhile, reportedly reached a Muslim-held town in eastern Bosnia, where scores of people have died from cold and starvation. The convoy had been cut off by Serb militants for months.

Serb rebels said the offensive by Bosnia's Muslim-led government near the Yugoslav border was the biggest in the region since the war began. The casualty toll was unknown, but it was clearly a bloody battle.

At least 46 Serb fighters and civilians were killed around the village of Skelani in southeastern Bosnia, the official Yugoslav news agency Tanjug reported.

At a cemetery in Bratunac, a town two miles from the front, the cries of Serb women mourning their dead were drowned out by explosions from the fighting, said an AP reporter.

"Damn this war," Darinka Petrovic cried out as she knelt before a cross bearing the name of her son Dragan, 25. The Serb, whose body has not been recovered, was killed in the Bosnian offensive, which is apparently aimed at cutting a corridor linking Serb-held areas with Serbia, the dominant state in what is left of Yugoslavia.

The cemetery was dotted with at least 100 fresh graves. Some of victims were as young as 12.

"I'm a professional warrior, but I have never seen anything like that," said Col. Miladin Prstojevic, commander of Serbs in Bratunac. "I had to hide from my soldiers when I felt sick seeing the mutilated bodies."

Prstojevic said he saw bodies of Serbs cut with knives and fed to pigs and female corpses with breasts cut off. Serbian TV showed bodies lying in the snow with their eyes gouged out.

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