

Clinton's day busy with visitors, meetings and a bombing



President
Bill Clinton

Scott Maurer/DN

WASHINGTON — On his first day in the Oval Office, President Clinton said Thursday his administration would not flinch from military showdowns with Iraq following a fresh challenge. The Senate rushed approval of more of his Cabinet but hundreds of senior positions remained vacant.

After partying into the early hours after his inauguration, Clinton spent all morning greeting thousands of visitors to a White House open house. Well-wishers waited outdoors for hours for a quick handshake and greeting from Clinton.

It was almost 1 p.m. before he paid his first visit to the Oval Office before moving on to a meeting with senior aides.

Clinton told them, "We just have

to be dominated by high standards and clear vision and we ought to have a good time doing it."

His wife, Hillary, was checking out the Oval Office. She will have an office in the West Wing, the first time a first lady has had space there. A spokesman said she would be closely involved in developing Clinton's health-care program.

Day one brought the first break in the military cease-fire extended by Saddam Hussein as a goodwill gesture to the new president.

Pentagon officials said two U.S. warplanes fired on an Iraqi air defense site after it turned its radar on them. It was not clear whether it was a calculated test of Clinton.

The new president said he was sticking with the Bush

administration's policy, which called for instant strikes against belligerent forces and measured responses to violations of "no-fly" zones imposed in Iraq by Gulf War allies.

Later, White House communications chief George Stephanopoulos said, "Everything right now is consistent with the previous practice, and President Clinton supports it."

On Capitol Hill, the Senate confirmed nine of Clinton's Cabinet members and five other top officers. Hundreds of senior positions remained open.

Zoe Baird, Clinton's nominee for attorney general, faced growing public and congressional opposition over her hiring of illegal

aliens for housework. Stephanopoulos said Clinton still believed she would be a good attorney general.

There was an air of confusion as Clinton's new team searched for telephone numbers, directions and a general plan of operation. Reporters were angry about restrictions on access to press offices that were always open in previous administrations.

Clinton will move quickly to revoke the ban on homosexuals in the military, officials said. An executive order is expected within a week.

Clinton also plans to act Friday on executive orders expanding abortion rights.

U.S. fighters retaliate after Iraqis target plane

WASHINGTON — President Clinton warned Iraq on Thursday he will brook no threats to allied aircraft patrolling the no-fly zones. He spoke after two U.S. warplanes fired at an Iraqi radar that had targeted them.

"We're going to stay with our policy," Clinton told reporters as he met with his senior staff on his first full day in office. "It is the American policy and that's what we're going to stay with."

The clash ended a brief respite in hostilities between Washington and Baghdad that began Tuesday when Saddam Hussein ordered a "cease-fire" in honor of Clinton's inauguration.

In Baghdad, the Iraqi News Agency quoted an unidentified official as denying that a radar had been turned on and claimed the U.S. planes' attack set a fertilizer storage area on fire and damaged crops. It also said Iraq is sticking to its cease-fire "despite the behavior of the U.S. plane, which was aggressive and provocative."

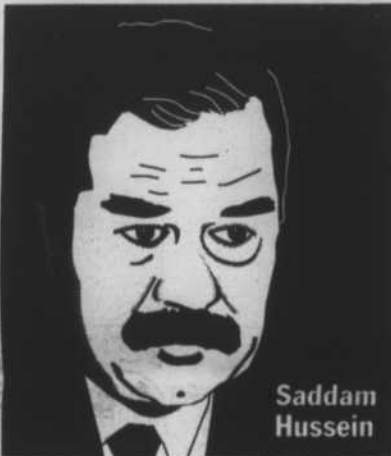
At the Pentagon, spokesman Lt. Cmdr. Joseph Gradisher dismissed the Iraqi claim that no radar had been turned on. "We stand by our report," Gradisher said.

Secretary of State Warren Christopher, in remarks at the State Department, echoed Clinton's resolve.

"The United States intends to protect our pilots in the no-fly zone," Christopher said. "When their radar illuminates our pilots we are going to protect our pilots." The new secretary said the Iraqis "know perfectly well what it takes to comply with the U.N. resolutions and the establishment of the no-fly zones. I think what happened today is a reflection of the determination that the Clinton ad-

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—Christopher
secretary of state



Saddam
Hussein

Scott Maurer/DN

ministration will have in that area."

Clinton's spokesman, George Stephanopoulos, said the new president was following established policy, allowing U.S. pilots to defend themselves when threatened.

"Right now everything we're doing is consistent with past practice. There is no change at this time," he said.

The incident occurred at 5:09 a.m. EST, the military said in a statement.

A U.S. Air Force F-4G "Wild Weasel" and an F-16 "Fighting Falcon" were escorting a French Mirage plane conducting photo reconnaissance in the northern no-fly zone, the statement said.

The two U.S. jets noticed flashes of anti-artillery fire in their direction, but did not respond to the provocation "because the aircraft were out of range of the fire," the statement said.

After the radar "locked on" the aircraft, the F-4G fired an anti-radar HARM missile at the radar and the F-16 dropped two cluster bombs on the site.

The incident occurred about 10 miles south of the town of Mosul. There was no immediate report whether any damage had been done to the missile site, the statement said.

The F-4G and F-16 completed their mission "without further incident," the statement said.

A senior Pentagon official, commenting on condition of anonymity, said "We're back in the cat-and-mouse business again," with Iraq. He said the Pentagon isn't sure whether the incident was the result of directions from Baghdad.

"Either someone didn't get the word, orders weren't obeyed, or all bets are off," the official said.

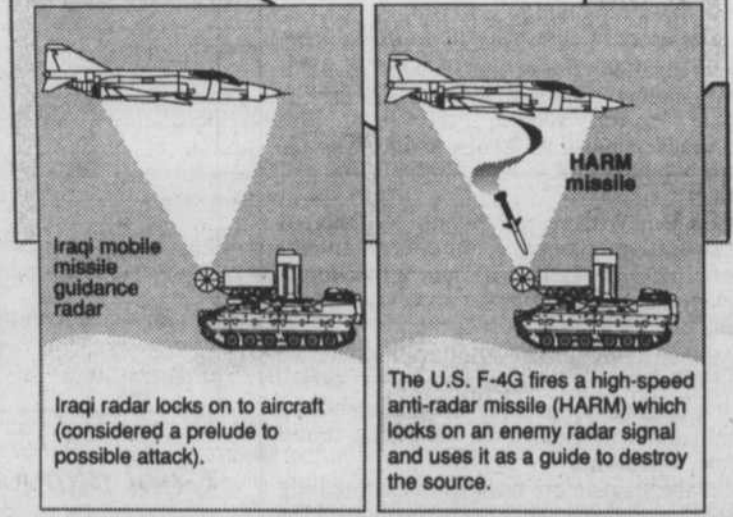
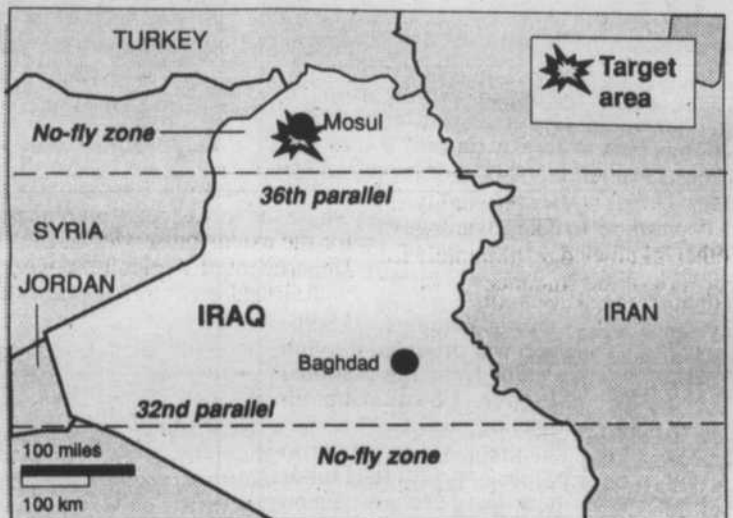
Allied patrols of the northern and southern no-fly zones will continue, despite Saddam's pledge to end provocative activities.

The new hostilities came despite calls from Baghdad for a "new page" in U.S.-Iraqi relations.

It also came as U.N. weapons inspectors landed in Baghdad.

Jets bomb Iraqi radar

At approximately 5:09 a.m. EST a U.S. Air Force F-4G "Wild Weasel" and an F-16 "Fighting Falcon" were targeted by Iraqi radar while escorting a French Mirage plane on a reconnaissance mission. The F-4G fired a HARM missile at the radar and the F-16 dropped cluster bombs on the site.



AP

WORLD WIRE

Troops could remain in Somalia till March

MOGADISHU, Somalia — Some American troops the United States had hoped to pull out of Somalia before or soon after President Clinton's inauguration could remain until as late as March, a U.S. military spokesman said Thursday.

Marine Col. Fred Peck said no timetable could be set until the U.N. Security Council adopted a resolution necessary to transfer the

U.S.-led relief operation to a U.N. force.

The United Nations also must name a commander and determine the rules of engagement. The lawlessness of this nation was demonstrated once again Thursday when a Chinese reporter was seriously wounded and his Somali driver killed by roving gunmen. American troops have fired freely to protect themselves, but U.N. troops usually face restrictions.

Humanitarian group: Serbs using rape often

GENEVA — Serb forces in Bosnia have regularly used rape and harassment as part of their campaign to force Muslims and Croats to flee their homes, Amnesty International said Thursday.

The organization said that in some cases, the violations were

carried out "in an organized or systematic way, with the deliberate detention of women for the purpose of rape and sexual abuse."

Amnesty International said all warring factions were guilty of human rights abuses, but that Serbs carried by far the most blame.

Baird steadfast, ignores calls to quit

WASHINGTON — A combative Zoe Baird rejected calls to withdraw as attorney general-designate on Thursday despite rising public and congressional opposition. The Clinton administration offered her muted support in the furor over hiring illegal aliens.

"Right now, Zoe Baird is his nominee," White House spokesman George Stephanopoulos told reporters as Baird underwent a second day of grilling by

the Senate Judiciary Committee. He also said President Clinton may never have discussed the pivotal issue with his nominee prior to picking her.

Several senators announced their opposition, including two Republicans on the Judiciary Committee, the lone Republican among the Senate's six women, and three moderate Democrats.

A possible swing vote on the committee, Republican Arlen Specter of Pennsylvania, said her prospects for

confirmation are "very much up in the air."

"I think that my overall record gives me the potential to be a great attorney general," Baird testified. "The potential that I have to serve this country ... should override the particular incident."

Baird, 40, a \$500,000-a-year lawyer for the Aetna Life & Casualty Co., has since her nomination paid \$2,900 in fines and roughly \$12,000 in back taxes for employing a Peruvian couple.

Daily Nebraskan

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 Tom Massey, 488-8761. 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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