

Iraq protests U.S. and British airstrikes

■ Saddam Hussein explores ways to protect Iraq from U.S. and British air raids.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

BAGHDAD, Iraq — Thousands of Iraqis marched in the rain Sunday to protest U.S. and British airstrikes, and Iraqi television showed damaged houses and shops in a town where one man was killed when allied missiles hit nearby.

President Saddam Hussein met with his top air defense commander to explore ways of protecting the country from allied attacks in the wake of the raid, which targeted radar and command-and-control sites.

Friday night's strikes around Baghdad — which killed two people and wounded at least 20 — have raised strong condemnations from Arab allies of the United States. And Iraq warned that it raised tensions ahead of key talks with the United Nations.

Iraqi Foreign Minister Mohammed Saeed al-Sahhaf is due to meet U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan for Feb. 26-27 discussions seen as a chance to restart dialogue on resuming weapons inspections and lifting economic sanctions.

In a letter to Annan and the Security Council, al-Sahhaf said the U.N. chief should "condemn the dangerous aggression and the increase of tension" and should take "speedy steps to prevent such attacks from taking place again," the official Iraqi News Agency said Sunday.

On Sunday, Saddam met with Minister of Military Industrialization Abdel-Tawab Mulla Huwaih and Lt. Gen. Shaheen Yassin Mohammed, commander of air defense units, according to Iraqi News Agency.

"The meeting discussed improving means of defending the great Iraq and its steadfastness in order to protect the brave Iraqis from harm," said the agency.

The news agency reported Saturday that Saddam ordered the training of about 300,000 volunteers for what he called the Al-Quds — or Jerusalem — Army aiming to free Jerusalem from Israeli control.

"If little Bush considers his aggression a message to Iraq, then we have the answer, which is the formation of al-Quds Army ...

ready for jihad (holy war) and liberating Palestine," the official Iraqi daily Al-Thawra said in a front-page editorial Sunday.

The United States and Britain said the strikes were needed to thwart Iraq's improving capabilities in targeting allied jets patrolling a southern no-fly zone. They said five military facilities were hit.

Iraq's state-run satellite station repeatedly broadcast footage showing civilian buildings in two towns it said were damaged by the raids.

In the farming village of al-Hafriya, 25 miles south of Baghdad, houses had shattered windows and doors torn off after a missile struck on the outskirts of town.

Two stores, for agricultural supplies and automotive spare parts, suffered similar damage. A 28-year-old man from the town was killed.

"This is an agricultural area and there are no military installations here," Fawzia Ibrahim, a resident of one of the damaged houses, told the television station.

In al-Rashdiya, 12 miles north of the capital, a witness said the missile had landed in a field of mud, softening the explosion.

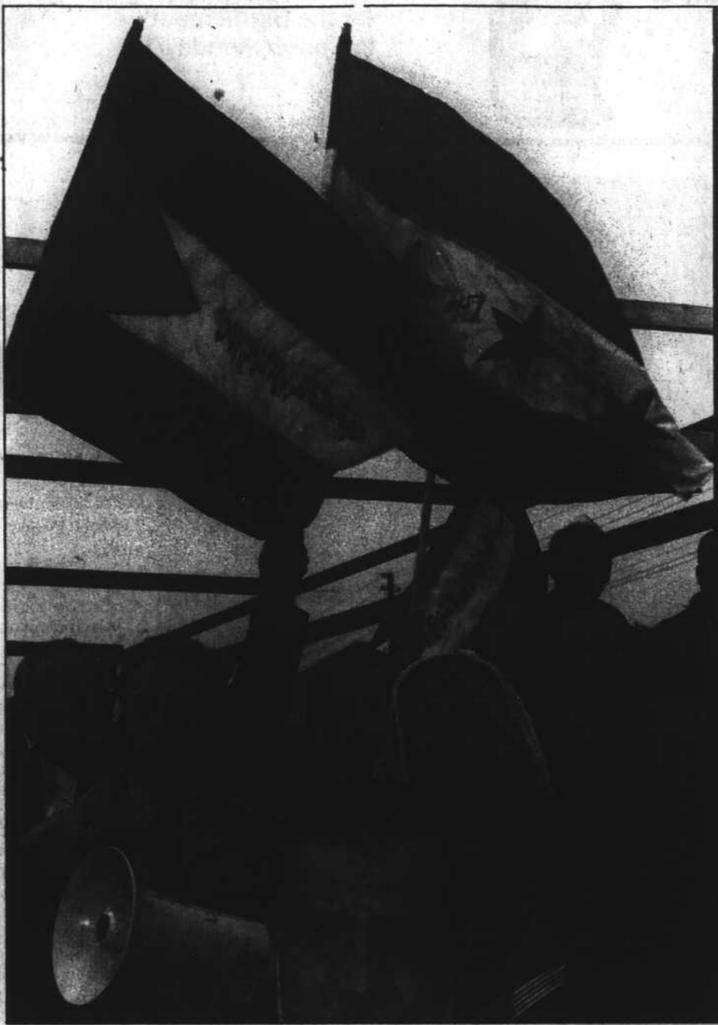
Foreign media have not been allowed access to the bombed sites. It was not known where the strikes' other reported victim — a woman — was from.

More than 2,000 people — including Deputy Foreign Minister Nabil Najim — took part in Sunday's protest in central Baghdad, and at least 1,000 others gathered across the city near the offices of the ruling Baath party.

"This dangerous aggression shows how much the Americans and Britons hate Iraqis and do not respect any international law," Najim told the demonstrators. "This aggression must be condemned."

The demonstration came amid renewed Arab condemnation of the airstrikes. Egypt, a key U.S. ally that rallied behind the drive to oust Iraqi troops from Kuwait 10 years ago, sent Economy Minister Youssef Boutros-Ghali and Public Sector Minister Mokhtar Khattab to Baghdad to show solidarity with Iraq.

"We are here to support the Iraqi people and promote economic and financial relations between our countries," Boutros-Ghali told reporters.



Jordanians protest in front of the Iraqi embassy in Amman on Saturday as they protest U.S. and British attacks on air defense installations on Friday in the Iraqi capital of Baghdad. The air strikes, which were the first of their kind in more than two years, were officially denounced by many Arab nations as well as Russia, China and France.

World/Nation

The Associated Press

■ Wisconsin 10-year-old boy accused of sexual assaulting 4-year-old

MILWAUKEE — Police have arrested a 10-year-old boy accused of sexually assaulting a 4-year-old girl.

The boy was taken into custody Friday. Police said he admitted to having sex with the girl in his house on Feb. 11.

"They're getting younger, but at 10, this one is unique," Police Sgt. Donald Derge said.

Erin Thornley, executive director of the Wisconsin Coalition Against Sexual Assault, said many sexual assaults occur between preteen children, but the cases usually were shrouded in the anonymity of juvenile courts.

"It's more common than what we usually talk about," Thornley said.

The boy is due in juvenile court March 5.

■ Minnesota Two women ski 2,300 miles across Antarctic land mass

MINNEAPOLIS — Two polar explorers who were stranded on an Antarctic ice shelf for two days have been airlifted to McMurdo Station where they were quickly snowed in again.

Ann Bancroft, 45, of Scandia, Minn., and Liv Arnesen, 47, of Oslo, Norway, became the first women to ski 2,300 miles across the Antarctic land mass when they reached the frozen ocean of the Ross Ice Shelf on Sunday. They had hoped to ski and parasail the remaining 470 miles to the station, but poor weather conditions convinced them to call for an airplane rescue instead.

The women and their rescue team arrived at McMurdo Station on Saturday evening but a severe snowstorm delayed their departure via helicopter to a waiting ship bound for Tasmania, Australia, said Charlie Hartwell, president of your expedition.com, the company supporting the trip.

■ Missouri Washington University human sexuality researcher dies

ST. LOUIS — William H. Masters, one of the first and leading researchers in the field of human sexuality, died in a Tucson, Ariz. hospital Friday of complications from Parkinson's disease, a hospital spokeswoman said. He was 85.

Masters gained an interest in sexuality while a medical student in New York in the 1940s. He established himself as a researcher in obstetrics and gynecology and moved on to study human sexuality at Washington University in St. Louis, where he cofounded the Masters and Johnson Institute.

Partnered with Virginia Johnson, his future wife, Masters conducted interviews and observed sex in the act, researching biological responses and monitoring the physiology of sexual arousal.

Based on that research, the pair published "Human Sexual Response" in 1966, which became a best-seller despite its technical language.

■ Florida Wildfire burns out of control, residents evacuated

POLK CITY — An 8,500-acre wildfire burning out of control closed a 10-mile section of Interstate 4 on Sunday and forced the evacuation of dozens of homes.

The wind-driven fire near Polk City in central Florida had grown overnight from 2,000 acres and jumped to the south side of I-4, a heavily traveled route between Orlando and Tampa.

"This is very intense and erratic fire behavior," said Paul Palmiotto, assistant chief of forest protection at the Florida Division of Forestry.

Fire officials were assessing whether to also evacuate the Polk County Correctional Institute. Another 30 homes about a mile away also remained evacuated after residents were told to leave Saturday.

The fire was 20 percent contained and firefighters were digging ditches for a fire line south of the blaze, Polk County emergency

Umbilical cords could be alternate for stem research

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

SAN FRANCISCO — Umbilical cords discarded after birth may offer a vast new source of repair material for fixing brains damaged by strokes and other ills, free of the ethical concerns surrounding the use of fetal tissue, researchers said Sunday.

In animal experiments, at least, cells from umbilical cords appear to greatly speed recovery after strokes. They work with a simple infusion into the blood stream without the need for direct implantation into the brain.

Although many details need to be worked out, Dr. Paul R. Sanberg of the University of South Florida said he hoped to try the approach on stroke victims within the next year or two.

Sanberg described the research at a meeting in San Francisco of the American Association for the

Advancement of Science. It was financed by the state of Florida and Cryo-Cell International Inc. of Clearwater, Fla.

Many experts believe that primitive tissue called stem cells will someday be routinely used to make human spare parts. They might replace tissue damaged by many different diseases, especially such brain ailments as strokes and Alzheimer's disease. These generic cells can be nudged to develop into all sorts of specialized tissue to repopulate every part of the body from head to toe.

Sanberg said his research suggested that umbilical cords could be an excellent source of stem cells without the ethical headaches of fetal tissue. He noted that 4 million babies were born in the United States each year, and 99 percent of their cord blood was tossed away.

He said one or two cords could probably provide enough stem cells to treat one human stroke victim, if the current

approach proves useful. The cells could be frozen for use when needed.

In experiments so far, his team removed stem cells from cords and then used retinoic acid and growth hormones to transform them into immature nerve cells. They then injected 3 million of these cells into the blood streams of rats that had suffered strokes.

In experiments on about 60 rats, the team found that after one month, those given the cells had recovered about 80 percent from their strokes, compared with about 20 percent in untreated rats.

Sanberg said the treatment worked best when given within 24 hours of a stroke but would still help up to a week later. Just how the new cells rewire the damaged parts of the brain is unclear, although the cells can take on the form of distinctly different types of brain tissue, and they also appear to prompt damaged cells to repair themselves.

Relatives demand answers from U.S. Navy in fishing boat accident

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

HONOLULU — Japanese family members examined a videotape of the sunken ship Ehime Maru sitting upright on the ocean floor as a top U.S. Navy official announced a high-level investigation into why a U.S. submarine surfaced directly underneath it, leaving nine of their relatives missing.

The videotape, taken by robot submersibles, shows the exterior of the fishing vessel seemingly in pristine condition, with no signs of the nine men and boys who have been missing since Feb. 9 when the USS Greeneville collided with the ship during an emergency surfacing drill.

Damage to the bottom of the boat was not visible because of the downward angle of the video, taken 2,033 feet below the ocean surface, Coast Guard spokesman Lt. Greg Fondran said Saturday. Relatives have demanded answers as to why the 360-foot nuclear-powered submarine stationed two civilians at key controls during the emergency drill. As the 6,900-ton submarine surfaced, its rudder superstructure knifed through the hull of the 500-ton Ehime Maru, which sank within minutes.

Twenty-six survivors were plucked from the waters near Pearl Harbor. The remaining nine crew and passengers are missing and presumed dead.

"The court of inquiry will provide a full and open accounting for the American and Japanese people," Adm. Thomas

Fargo, commander of the Pacific Fleet, said during a news conference Saturday.

Fargo said the Navy expected to convene the inquiry — the Navy's highest form of administrative investigation — at Pearl Harbor on Thursday.

The hearing could result in a recommendation for courts-martial of the USS Greeneville's officers, Fargo said.

The submarine's commander, executive officer and officer of the deck have been named parties to the inquiry.

Three Navy flag officers will make up the court, Fargo said.

"The seriousness in which I view this tragic accident is reflected in the level of investigation and the seniority of the court members," Fargo said.

The submarine's commander, Cmdr. Scott Waddle, was reassigned to a staff position after the incident. The other two officers named were Lt. Cmdr. Gerald K. Pfeifer and Lt. j.g. Michael J. Coen.

"The families have been a great concern of ours throughout this past week," said Fargo. "I've got a great empathy for the Japanese people and their families and we'll do everything in our power to make sure we have a full accounting on this accident and take care of their needs here in Hawaii."

As for the families' demand for an apology from Waddle, the admiral noted that because Waddle's actions are under investigation "there are legal implications, I think, with respect to that. It will certainly be his judgment."

Clinton defends Marc Rich pardon

■ Clinton denies he gave pardon because Rich's former wife made political contributions.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — Former President Clinton gave his fullest defense yet of the Marc Rich pardon on Sunday, but failed to silence critics who argue that political donations and connections helped the fugitive financier's cause.

"I want every American to know that, while you may disagree with this decision, I made it on the merits as I saw them, and I take full responsibility for it," Clinton wrote in an op-ed column in The New York Times.

"The suggestion that I granted the pardons because Mr. Rich's former wife, Denise, made political contributions and contributed to the Clinton library foundation is utterly false."

Clinton also wrote that three well-known Republican lawyers who once represented Rich "reviewed and advocated" the case for his pardon. All three denied that assertion. "I was astounded," one said.

The former president's last-minute pardon of Rich, who has lived in Switzerland since fleeing a 1983 indictment on tax evasion and other charges, has prompted an investigation by federal prosecutors in New York and congressional hearings.

Investigators want to know if Rich bought his pardon by passing money through his ex-wife, Denise Rich, who has acknowledged making large contributions both to Hillary Rodham Clinton's Senate race and to the presidential library.

Sen. Arlen Specter, R-Pa., a senior member of a Senate Judiciary Committee, which is reviewing the pardon, said there were "a great many questions which the former president has left unanswered."

"He does not say why he did not talk to the prosecuting attorneys. He does not say why he didn't talk to the pardon attorney for the Department of Justice" and didn't follow their regulations, Specter said on NBC's "Meet the Press."

"Nobody's questioning that the president had the power to pardon whomever he wanted to," said Rep. Dan Burton, R-Ind., whose House Government Reform Committee also held hearings on the pardon.

"The American people want to know why one of the most wanted fugitives in the world was granted a pardon," he said on CNN's "Late Edition." "This editorial doesn't explain it."

Clinton cited eight reasons for his decision, five of which he said were directly related to his conclusion that the case was improperly handled when criminal charges were filed in 1983.

He wrote that he pardoned Rich only after concluding that a civil court should have handled the case, and he fashioned the pardon to allow for the pursuit of new civil charges.

Clinton added that many high-ranking Israeli officials and Jewish community leaders urged the pardon because of Rich's contributions to Israeli charities.

The former president also wrote that "the case for the pardons was reviewed and advocated" by former White House counsel Jack Quinn and three Republican attorneys: Lewis Libby, Vice President Dick Cheney's chief of staff; Leonard Garment, a former Nixon White House official; and William Bradford Reynolds, who ran the Justice Department's civil rights division under President Reagan.

The three attorneys denied Clinton's statement.

DailyNebraskan

Weather

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