

White House rebuffs offer to talk to Iraq

By CHRISTOPHER CONNELL
Associated Press Writer

KENNEBUNKPORT, Maine — The White House yesterday rebuffed an offer from Iraq to negotiate, saying "the world is united" in demanding the unconditional withdrawal of Saddam Hussein's army from Kuwait.

White House spokesman Marlin Fitzwater said Western nations are willing to talk to Iraqi officials about the welfare of their citizens held in Iraq and Kuwait.

"But that's not the same as negotiations over a U.N. demand to get out," said the press secretary. He declined to respond to what he called the latest "litany" of criticism of Bush from Saddam.

Iraq's foreign minister, Tariq Aziz, said in Amman, Jordan, yesterday that "we are ready to talk" and "put all the cards on the table" at a U.N. Security Council meeting. Aziz and Saddam, in separate statements, warned that the United States would be defeated and "humiliated" if it went to war against Iraq.

Fitzwater said Iraqi officials have refused to give a U.S. diplomat in Baghdad access to Americans, and he added, "At this point we see very little to talk about when all we get are negative responses."

The White House also announced that Defense Secretary Dick Cheney, returning from a trip through the tense Middle East, and Gen. Colin Powell, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, will fly to Maine today to confer with Bush at his oceanfront vacation home. Among the matters they will discuss are a planned call-up of military reserves.

Fitzwater said Bush will not sign before today the order calling up reserves to fill in the ranks of doctors, cargo handlers and other specialists depleted by the massive deployment of U.S. troops to defend Saudi Arabia.

The number of reservists to be called was still unspecified. One administration official said privately the order may be open-ended.

Chief of Staff John Sununu said it will be a "very surgical, specialized call-up."

Fitzwater said 18 Americans got out of Kuwait yesterday but "there are still 54 Americans missing" — 13 in Kuwait and 41 in Iraq.

"It does appear that citizens of all nations are being moved about in Iraq to unknown destinations," he said.

In Washington, State Department spokesman Richard Boucher said there were "credible reports" that Iraq had forced some Westerners to industrial

installations and said an American in Kuwait was seized in his home and interned in a hotel.

Boucher said the reports had not been confirmed, nor was it known whether Americans were among those taken to plants.

Saddam has threatened to use Westerners as a human shield to dissuade the United States from attack. More than 3,000 Americans are among more than 10,000 foreigners trapped in Iraq and Kuwait.

The buildup of U.S. forces continued in Saudi Arabia.

At the Pentagon, Gen. Hansford T. Johnson, the top official responsible for getting troops and supplies to Saudi Arabia, said security rules prevented him from disclosing the exact number of ground troops there or on the way but that "we've moved in essence" the equivalent of a town the size of Jefferson City, Mo.

Preliminary 1990 census figures put Jefferson City's population at 35,408.

An additional 20,000 or so sailors are deployed on warships in the area.

Fitzwater stressed that it was not the United States alone but "all nations" that were demanding Iraq to end its occupation of Kuwait.

"We demand complete and unconditional withdrawal from Kuwait. That is the position of the United Nations and that's the position of all nations," the spokesman said.

"I'm sure all nations are interested in the welfare of their citizens, interested in talking to Iraq at any point. That's not the same as negotiations over a U.N. demand to get out," he said.

Fitzwater said Joseph Wilson, the U.S. charge d'affaires in Baghdad, met with Iraqi officials Monday demanding access to Americans. His plea was spurned.

Asked if there could be no talks with Iraq until its tanks are out of Kuwait, Fitzwater replied, "The important point here is that the world is united in demanding that Iraq withdraw from Kuwait. That has not changed one iota by these comments this morning."

Bush, back from a day of speeches in which he termed the foreigners in Iraq and Kuwait hostages and attacked Saddam as "a man of evil standing against human life itself," ignored reporters yesterday, saying nothing to them during an early morning jog and on the golf course.

Fitzwater said U.S. warships were still shadowing several ships in the Persian Gulf region to make sure none violated the trade embargo with Iraq.



Waiting to ship out

Soldiers from the 24th Infantry Division relax before boarding a C141 transport yesterday. The soldiers will take part in Operation Desert Shield in Saudi Arabia.

AP LaserPhoto

City says goodbye to local soldiers

By D.W. PAGE
Associated Press Writer

NORFOLK, Va. — The Persian Gulf crisis is more than headlines to those with ties to the world's largest naval base. It means once again, saying goodbye to husbands and wives, sons and daughters, neighbors and friends.

"These are not just news stories, these are our neighbors," said Jack Hornbeck, president of the local Chamber of Commerce. "I live in Virginia Beach. Next door and across the street are naval aviators. A surface warfare officer lives just down the block."

"When they deploy, the neighborhood kind of pulls together to help out the families. We want these people to know we support them."

Deployments are nothing new to the Norfolk area, home to a variety of military posts, including the largest naval base, Norfolk Naval Station. In the past two

weeks, 34,000 have left in ships and planes as part of the deployment of U.S. troops to Saudi Arabia and the Persian Gulf.

Thirty-five ships carrying 28,000 sailors left from the Norfolk Naval Station and nearby Little Creek Amphibious Base since the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. Forty-eight F-15s have flown from Langley Air Force Base, across the James River from Norfolk.

But more than 100,000 sailors and nearly 100 ships remain at the Norfolk Naval Station.

The deployments came on short notice after Iraqi tanks rolled into Kuwait on Aug. 2. The aircraft carrier John F. Kennedy had five days notice. That left little time for anything other than preparations.

"The major challenge for these families was getting ready to leave," Capt. Tom Johnson, Atlantic Fleet chaplain, said yesterday. "Now they are seeing the empty piers and the reality of the separation is setting in."

Cmdr. George Keller, director of the Norfolk Navy Family Services Center said the number of calls for assistance has increased.

"The unknown is the most significant thing. This was on such short notice and that has raised the level of stress. Deployments are something the Navy lives with," he said.

Area leaders say the influence of the military on the area goes beyond the mere numbers. The military brings more than \$5.4 billion to the local economy every year. More than a quarter of the area's 1.3 million people have a direct link to the military.

"It's hard to find anybody in any walk of life in this area that didn't start in the Navy," said Donald Smith, a sociologist at Old Dominion University.

"The Navy is very much a part of us ... part of our community. There is no us or them," Norfolk Mayor Joe Leaf said.

More foreigners, including 2 Americans, escape from Iraq

By JOHN HALABY
Associated Press Writer

AMMAN, Jordan — The exodus from Iraq continued by land and air yesterday when another planeload of foreigners, including two congressmen, arrived here.

George Hansen of Idaho and Thomas Kindness of Ohio were in Iraq with an interpreter under the auspices of Hansen's Free America Foundation. Both were Republican representatives in their states.

They went directly from the Iraqi Airways plane that brought them to the transit lounge, then boarded a Jordanian Airlines Alia flight to New York without talking to reporters.

The U.S. Embassy in Amman said they had no knowledge of their arrival and did not know if they were traveling on diplomatic passports.

Five Australian diplomatic staffers also were on the arriving flight, said airport sources who spoke on condition of anonymity.

Hansen said he and Kindness were examining U.S. policy in the Middle East but provided few details beyond that. He said he and Kindness "went out and tested the water everywhere we could, and we did it substantially alone, and I guess I can't say that it was uncomfortable being there."

The two tried to find out about Americans who had been stranded in Baghdad after Iraq's Aug. 2 invasion of Kuwait but had only mixed success, Hansen told The Associated Press.

"Some of them apparently had made their way home," Hansen said. "Others were still in Iraq but had joined, apparently, some of the others that were also detained there and had been farmed out as quote, guests, end quote, in the

smaller villages around some of the defense installations and that type of thing."

Hansen was a GOP congressman for seven terms. He lost election in 1984 after being convicted of filing false financial disclosure statements to Congress.

Kindness represented western Ohio for 12 years until 1986, when he made an unsuccessful bid to oust Sen. John Glenn. He became a lobbyist in Washington but ran for re-election to Congress, losing in the Republican primary in May.

Meanwhile, as other foreigners, mainly Arab and Asian nationals, continued to flood into Jordan overland from Iraq, 346 Soviets and five Frenchmen caught flights for home shortly after their arrival.

While the crisis sparked by Iraq's Aug. 2 seizure of Kuwait deepened, the U.S. Embassy in Amman called on the estimated 3,000 American

citizens in Jordan to register with it. The State Department Monday called for the departure of all U.S. citizens without essential business.

Soviet and French nationals reached the Ruweishid border post, 204 miles northeast of Amman, late Monday, according to their respective embassies. Officials said all had departed by air for home yesterday.

The Soviets had been working in Kuwaiti oil fields, and were the third Soviet group to leave since the invasion, according to a Soviet Embassy spokesman.

A French Embassy spokeswoman said the five French citizens included the wife of a French diplomat in Baghdad, two other adults and two children.

Iraqi President Saddam Hussein has allowed Soviets to leave freely. The Soviet Union was Saddam's chief arms supplier before Moscow

agreed to cut off weapons shipments after the Kuwait invasion.

France was also a major weapons supplier, but the Iraqis have interned French citizens along with other Westerners.

A total of 560 French were in Iraq and Kuwait at the time of the invasion. Officials in Baghdad said yesterday they would not be allowed to leave if France joins the U.S. in enforcing a U.N. embargo against Iraq.

About 20,000 Egyptians who had crossed into Jordan earlier were gathered at Jordan's Red Sea port of Aqaba waiting for ferries to take them home.

Jordanian officials and an Egyptian embassy spokesman denied reports from Israel that the Egyptians in Aqaba would be repatriated overland by crossing the narrow Israeli strip of territory by the Israeli port of Eilat.

State representative heads for active duty

HARRISBURG (AP) — State Rep. Paul McHale decided to serve Uncle Sam in a different way.

The Lehigh County Democrat, a major in the Marine Corps Reserve, volunteered last week for active duty and is now in Saudi Arabia, according to his wife Katherine and a Marine official.

McHale was serving his two-week, annual reserve stint with the 7th Marine Expeditionary Brigade in Twentynine Palms, Calif., when the infantry brigade received orders to ship out.

The 40-year-old McHale, an infantry officer with training in desert warfare, applied to go overseas with the unit.

Marine Sgt. Marti Gatlin, a public relations officer, said the brigade was deployed to Saudi Arabia last week to bolster Operation Desert Shield. Marine officials would not offer any details on the brigade's mission or how long they would be assigned to the Middle East. McHale is expected to be there for six months, Mrs. McHale said.

"No one who knows Paul is surprised," she said. "He was in a situation where he had something to offer and felt strongly that it was his responsibility."



Paul McHale

Mrs. McHale said she spoke with House Majority Leader William DeWeese and requested an unpaid leave of absence for McHale. DeWeese, a former Marine officer who was in basic training with McHale, was not available for immediate comment.

War fever rising on main street America

By HARRY F. ROSENTHAL
Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON, D.C. — In Alabama, a bookseller finds a run on atlases because "people want to know where it all is."

In Texas, there are runaway sales of moist towels and camouflage-colored muscle shirts. In Georgia, a business hands out little American flags to wave proudly from car antennas.

Main street America prepares for war. Along Interstate 75 in northern Georgia, gray-green trucks rumble taking the 101st Airborne from Fort Campbell, Ky., to Florida ships bound for the Middle East.

The troops are cheered on their way by people on overpasses. Banners read: "Get Their Gas and Kick Their Ass."

Don Gage of Dalton, Ga., supplied a flag, 30 feet by 50 feet. "Gosh," he said, "we had to do something. We want them to know we care. And I'll tell you this: We can't wait to put it on the northbound side to welcome them back."

Fourteen inmates at Cross City Correctional Institution in North Florida announce they want to fight in Saudi Arabia and redeem their honor — and in the process gain their freedom, like the heroes of "The Dirty Dozen."

"We are not just seeking release from prison," the inmates say in a letter.

Bob Macmaster, a spokesman for the Florida Department of Corrections, says the inmates have been watching too many movies.

There were other signs of a country gearing for war in a far off place:

—Bell County, Texas, waives the 24-hour waiting period for marriages of Fort Hood soldiers and issues a record 160 licenses last week.

—Seven comedians of the Stand Up NY Comedy club in New York City performed on the theme of "Iraq-Nophobia."

—Julie Trahan of the Hair Force barber shop outside South Carolina's Shaw Air Force Base gate, figured her customers were headed for a warmer climate when they asked for haircuts "almost to the skin."

—Country music singer Hank Williams Jr. put his feelings about Iraq and its poison gas into a song that suggested: "Stick it in your sassafras."

—Everywhere that soldiers leave for the oven-baked Middle East, there is a rush to buy sunblock cream. Paul E. Burke Sr., president of Native Tan Inc., offers to supply odorless sunblock at cost.

"I'd hate to see 5,000 of our guys advancing across the desert toward the enemy smelling like a coconut," he said. "I think they'd be detected."

T.E. Lawrence, Lawrence of Arabia, would have approved.

Families left behind seek solace.

Eileen Bronko of Naugatuck, Conn., sister of a Saudi-based soldier, led a contingent of 50 people to

tie a ribbon around the town flag pole. She wants Americans to decorate trees with red-white-and-blue ribbons to show they care about the troops and not just about oil prices.

Two Alabama fabric stores — one in Enterprise and another in Dothan — have given away thousands of yards of yellow ribbons since troops from Fort Rucker shipped out last week.

Diana King of Book-Keepers in suburban Birmingham said people curious about the location of the crisis spurred atlas sales at her store and Greg Wilson of Books & News in Birmingham said sales jumped when he set up a special section with books that deal with the troubled region.

"I guess people are concerned," he said, "that if we're going to war we'll be protecting a monarchy."

Dean Richards, program director for the nationwide Satellite Music Network, got a call from a frightened girl he estimated to be 8 to 10 years old. She asked that he play "Right Here Waiting for You" by Richard Marx.

The youngster said "her daddy was in the Marines and she was right here waiting for him to come back," Richards said.

Richards devoted air time all last weekend to 500 messages to GIs along with playing musical requests. The network contacted the Armed Forces Radio network and arranged for a tape of the show to be replayed for troops in the Middle East. It will happen again next weekend.