

Agencies back request to assess rebuilding cost

BY MARTIN CRUTSINGER
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — Two international lending agencies endorsed a U.S. request to send fact-finders to Iraq to assess rebuilding costs as finance officials on Sunday wrapped up meetings dominated by divisions over post-Saddam Iraq.

The Bush administration, wanting to show Iraqis some tangible and immediate economic benefits from President Saddam Hussein's overthrow, had pushed for teams from the World Bank and International Monetary Fund to enter Iraq as soon as it was safe.

That demand was opposed at first by European countries unhappy with what they saw as a threat of U.S. domination of the reconstruction effort.

But World Bank President James Wolfensohn said the weekend talks had resulted in an unambiguous understanding that the mission would go ahead when conditions were safe.

The finance ministers on the policy-setting committees of the IMF and the World Bank "made it very clear that is what they had in mind," Wolfensohn said at a news conference.

To settle the issue, the United States agreed to language in a final statement that endorsed the idea of another U.N. Security Council resolution to govern rebuilding efforts in Iraq.

Finance officials left the precise wording to their U.N. ambassadors.

That effort is certain to mean diplomatic haggling. The Europeans want the United Nations to play the lead role in rebuilding and installing a new government. President Bush has suggested limiting the world body to advising the United States and its

partners in the war.

U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan sent Rafeeuddin Ahmed, his special adviser on postwar Iraq, to Washington for meetings beginning today with Bush administration officials.

U.S. Treasury Secretary John Snow told the World Bank's steering committee on Sunday it was critical that the bank send a team of economists along with the IMF to determine the most pressing needs. The bank is the largest provider of development loans to poor countries.

"The people of Iraq have waited long enough for the promise of aid and assistance from the international community," Snow told finance ministers.

Britain's international development secretary, Clare Short, said countries need to offer a "coherent and comprehensive response" if Iraqis are to succeed "in their efforts to rehabilitate and reconstruct their country."

There was no talk at the meetings about exact amounts of the aid to come from the 184-nation IMF and the World Bank. Nor was there discussion about when the United States might call for an international donor's conference to try to round up contributions from other wealthy nations.

Japanese Finance Minister Masajuro Shiokawa said his country was aware "we have to do what Japan is required to do in the reconstruction of postwar Iraq."

The Japanese have pledged \$100 million in humanitarian aid but not a specific amount for reconstruction. With Japan facing serious economic troubles at home, its contribution would be far smaller than the \$13 billion put up to defray U.S. costs in the 1991 Persian Gulf War.

There are no official estimates

of how much the rebuilding will cost; unofficial estimates are sizable — from \$20 billion annually for the first few years to \$600 billion over a decade.

The United States also wants wealthy countries to forgive part of Iraq's foreign debt burden.

Deputy Defense Secretary Paul D. Wolfowitz said last week that France, Germany and Russia should write-off money they loaned "to the dictator to buy weapons and to build palaces."

U.S. allies agreed only to consider the issue of debt relief as part of the normal deliberations of the Paris Club, an organization of creditor countries that negotiates debt deals with debtor nations.

German Finance Minister Hans Eichel said it was unlikely that his country, which is carrying about \$4 billion in debt to Iraq, and other nations in similar positions would cancel those loans outright. He said the more likely course was that the debt would be rescheduled under more lenient repayment terms.

Russian and French officials also rejected the call for debt forgiveness.

One lawmaker in the Russian Duma said Russia would be willing to cancel Iraq's debts incurred during Saddam's rule if Western nations were willing to write off Russia's Soviet-era debt.

Advocates for anti-poverty groups lamented that the IMF-World Bank discussions were dominated by Iraq, saying this diverted the group from making progress on the millennium development goals of cutting poverty in half and getting all children into school by 2015.

"Rich countries are firing blanks in the war against poverty," said Phil Twyford, advocacy director of Oxfam International.

Allied forces capture top Iraqi officials near Syria

BY MATT KELLEY
ASSOCIATED PRESS WRITER

WASHINGTON — Several top officials of Saddam Hussein's regime in Iraq, including the president's half brother and a former science adviser, have been captured by allied forces.

The Iraqis are being interrogated about Iraq's suspected chemical, biological and nuclear weapons programs, U.S. officials said Sunday. They also are being pressed for details on where Saddam is, if he is alive, as well as the whereabouts of other former Iraqi leaders.

The captured Iraqis include Wabban Ibrahim Hasan, one of Saddam's three half brothers, who once served as Iraq's interior minister. Hasan was the five of spades in the deck of playing cards the U.S. military issued with pictures of wanted Iraqi officials.

The war's commander, Gen. Tommy Franks, said Sunday that the United States was holding several high-ranking Iraqi prisoners in western Iraq. Neither he nor Pentagon officials would say how many leading Iraqis have been captured.

As the fighting in Iraq winds down, American forces are stepping up the search for the chemical and biological weapons the United States accuses Saddam's government of having stashed away. So far, no caches of weapons of mass destruction have been confirmed in Iraq, military officials said Sunday.

U.S. forces have a list of 2,000 to 3,000 sites in Iraq that need to be checked, and weapons teams are checking up to 20 sites a day, Franks said. Iraqis ranging from common people to high-ranking

officials have suggested other possible hiding places to be searched, Franks and other military officials said.

"There are so many sites, we are not able to get to all of them right away," a senior Pentagon official said Sunday, speaking on condition of anonymity. "It's fair to say there are a lot of places U.S. forces are adding to the list."

One former Iraqi official who could provide major help for the hunt is Lt. Gen. Amer al-Saadi, who surrendered to American forces on Saturday. Al-Saadi, the seven of diamonds in the U.S. deck of cards, was Saddam's point man on weapons of mass destruction.

Pentagon officials said Sunday they did not know if al-Saadi was sticking to his prewar assertions that Iraq no longer had any chemical or biological weapons. Shortly before leaving his Baghdad villa Saturday with his German wife, Helga, and surrendering to an American warrant officer, al-Saadi insisted Iraq has no such weapons.

Also unclear was how helpful Hasan, Saddam's captured half brother, could be. Hasan was dismissed as interior minister, the official in charge of Iraq's domestic security, and was shot by Saddam's son Oday in 1995 amid one of the many squabbles within Saddam's family.

Saddam did not trust Hasan and was having him watched, a U.S. official said Sunday. He was captured near Mosul in northern Iraq, apparently as he tried to escape to Syria, the official said.

Another half brother, Barzan Ibrahim Hasan, was targeted by a coalition airstrike Friday on a building in central Iraq. Military

officials said Sunday they had not confirmed Barzan Hasan's fate.

Other top Iraqi officials have escaped to Syria, Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld said. Some have moved on to third countries, he said.

"We certainly are hopeful Syria will not become a haven for war criminals or terrorists," Rumsfeld said.

President Bush also issued a vague warning Sunday to Syrian President Bashar Assad, saying the Syrians should avoid harboring "any people who need to be held to account."

Syria's government and Saddam's regime both belonged to the Arab Baath Socialist Party until a bitter split in 1960. In recent years the two factions seemed to have worked out some of their differences.

A Syrian diplomat who followed Rumsfeld on NBC's "Meet the Press," Imad Moustapha, denied that Syria was giving Iraqis refuge.

American troops also have found scores of vests filled with explosives and metal bearings that could be used by suicide bombers in Iraq, Rumsfeld and Franks said. Documents found at one site suggested 30 of the bomb vests were missing, Rumsfeld said.

Franks said the United States has a DNA sample from Saddam to check against remains found that might be from the Iraqi president. Two Baghdad airstrikes targeted Saddam, but Rumsfeld and Franks said they did not know if Saddam was alive.

"He's either dead or he's running a lot," Franks said on CNN's "Late Edition with Wolf Blitzer."

Pockets of resistance, as well as Fedayeen Saddam "death squads," remain in Iraq, Rumsfeld said.

"The war isn't over. There are still people being killed. We lost some people last night," Rumsfeld said on CBS' "Face the Nation."

Iraq

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licopter downed that day.

"It's just a good way to start off the morning, to have been notified that seven of our fellow Americans are going to be home here pretty soon in the arms of their loved ones," President Bush said in Washington.

Among the former POWs was Shoshana Johnson, 30, of Fort Bliss, Texas, a single mother of a 2-year-old. Johnson, the only woman among them, had been shot in the ankle, and Spc. Edgar

Hernandez, 21, of Mission, Texas, had been shot in the elbow, according to Marines who flew them to safety. The others appeared to be unharmed.

Shortly after their capture, the seven had been shown on Iraq's state-run television, giving a human face to the peril confronting American troops. Nine others of the 507th convoy were killed.

The seven Americans freed Sunday were picked up wearing bedraggled clothing — blue-and-white pajamas, khakis or shorts.

Besides Johnson and Hernandez, the others from the 507th were Sgt. James Riley, 31, Pennsauken, N.J.; Army Spc. Joseph Hudson, 23, Alamogordo,

N.M.; and Army Pfc. Patrick Miller, 23, Park City, Kan.

The other POWs were Chief Warrant Officer Ronald D. Young Jr., 26, and Chief Warrant Officer David S. Williams, 30, of Orlando, Fla.

Back home, in Lithia Springs, Ga., Young's father watched shaky video footage of the soldiers on CNN. "It's him, and I'm just so happy that I could kiss the world!" said Ronald Young Sr. "It's him! It's definitely him."

There were conflicting reports on how the Americans were recovered. Capt. David Romley said Marines marching north toward Tikrit were met by Iraqi soldiers north of Samarra. He said the Iraqis

approached the 3rd Light Armored Reconnaissance Company and had the seven POWs with them.

Another spokesman for the 1st Marine Expeditionary Force, Capt. Neil Murphy, said the Iraqis who brought the Americans had been abandoned by their officers and, "realizing that it was the right thing to do, they brought these guys back."

Gen. Tommy Franks, commander of U.S. forces in Iraq, also said he believed "our guys picked them up on the road."

But Maj. Chris Charleville, who commanded the operation that transported the POWs from outside Samarra to an airfield south of Baghdad, said he was told that

Marines had been searching buildings in Samarra when they stormed a building and found the POWs inside.

Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld said Iraqis told U.S. troops they would find the seven missing soldiers at a location about four or five miles south of Tikrit. "They said, 'You should go get them,' and they did," Rumsfeld said.

During the flight to the airbase near Kut, about 60 miles south of Baghdad, Miller came up to where the pilots were sitting.

"He was just grabbing us, telling us that he loved us and hugging the crew chief," Charleville said.

Once at the airbase, the seven clambered off the helicopters un-

der their own power, and walked or limped to a C-130 transport plane that took them to Kuwait.

Marines at the base patted them on the back. When Marine combat headquarters got news that the POWs had been found, the troops applauded — rare in combat operations, Murphy said.

All seven were released after a medical assessment in Kuwait, said Lt. Col. Ruth Lee, chief nurse at the facility where they were examined. "Their condition is good. I saw nothing that looked abnormal," Lee said.

Spokesman Lt. Col. Larry Cox said the seven would be debriefed in Kuwait, then decisions would be made on a "case-by-case basis" on sending them elsewhere.

STATE

Lieberman, Kerry campaign in S.C.

FLORENCE (AP) — Connecticut Sen. Joe Lieberman says race and religion will not matter in next year's Democratic presidential primary.

Lieberman, who is Jewish, visited Baptist churches in Florence and Mullins, then attended a town hall meeting in Bennettsville yesterday. Massachusetts Sen. John Kerry met supporters in Duncan and Florence. Both are running in the crowded Democratic primary race.

At the New Ebenezer Baptist Church in Florence, Lieberman spoke to some 500 black parishioners about education, the war in Iraq, the importance of voting and civil rights.

Lieberman praised the church's pastor, the Rev. Norman Gamble, for his sermon.

"I'm both inspired and humbled," Lieberman said after singing, clapping, swaying and praying during the two-hour service. He recited a few verses from the Bible and commended the youth choir's singing.

Lieberman said he promotes

values, especially from parent to child, which was the topic of Gamble's preaching.

Little bridge work for black contractors

CHARLESTON (AP) — Charleston's \$531 million Cooper River Bridge project hasn't meant much business for Charleston-area minority-owned contractors.

They've picked up less than \$40,000 — or under 0.01 percent — of the work.

There simply aren't many locally owned black companies large enough or competitive enough to be awarded bridge work, said Bobby Clair, the manager of the bridge project for the state Department of Transportation.

The state has mustered enough minority-owned contractors from other parts of the state and North Carolina and Georgia to avoid federal penalties on the project.

Bridge contractor Palmetto Bridge Constructors awarded \$44.6 million in subcontract work to minority-owned businesses. That exceeds federal and state requirements of 8 percent of the total contract, Clair said.

NATION

New law to enforce medical privacy

WASHINGTON (AP) — File cabinets with medical records are being locked. Callers to hospitals are getting little, if any, information about sick friends and relatives.

Pharmacy customers are being kept back from the desk so pharmacists can privately discuss medication with other patients.

Privacy rules that take effect today for most health plans will cover every health insurance company, hospital, clinic, doctor and pharmacy.

The rules, years in the making, prohibit disclosure, without patient permission, of information for reasons unrelated to health care. Violators face civil and criminal penalties that can mean up to \$250,000 in fines and 10 years in prison.

"This is the biggest thing to hit the health care sector since Medicare," said Dr. Jeffrey N. Hausfeld, an ear, nose and throat doctor in the Washington area who has been advising his peers about the rules.

It is the first federal law that guarantees medical privacy. The rules were first written by the Clinton administration. The

Bush administration allowed them to move ahead with some changes.

AP poll finds public opposes more taxes

WASHINGTON (AP) — Six in 10 Americans say they are against more tax cuts when the country is at war and already faces budget deficits, according to an Associated Press poll. Still, half of all Americans say their taxes are too high.

The poll, taken in the days before Tuesday's tax deadline, found that 61 percent say it would be better to hold off on additional tax cuts right now to avoid making budget deficits worse and ensure there is adequate money to pay for the war.

Half that many, 31 percent, said they think it is more important to pass more tax cuts to give people more money to spend and to stimulate the economy, said the poll conducted for the AP by ICR/International Communications Research of Media, Pa.

"I think they need to figure out how to pay for the war," said Joseph Ames, a 28-year-old cook from Boise, Idaho, who considers himself a political independent.

WORLD

Palestinian leader overhauls Cabinet

JERUSALEM (AP) — The incoming Palestinian prime minister completed a new Cabinet on Sunday in line with a leadership overhaul the United States sought, keeping the key post of security czar for himself and appointing several professionals and reformers.

Once the Cabinet of Mahmoud Abbas is approved by the Palestinian parliament, possibly later this week, President Bush is expected to unveil a "road map" to Palestinian statehood, starting the clock ticking on the three-year plan.

Israel's willingness to go along with the plan remains unclear, although Prime Minister Ariel Sharon did stake out a relatively moderate position in an interview published Sunday.

Sharon reiterated that he has many reservations about the plan, but also believes the Iraq war has created a chance for reaching a peace deal more quickly than anticipated. In the past, Sharon advocated an interim deal, saying a final treaty must be delayed for years because of the gaps in positions.

Sharon also told the Israeli daily Haaretz that Palestinian

statehood is inevitable and suggested he is ready to dismantle some Jewish settlements.

Shootings disrupt Nigerian elections

LAGOS, NIGERIA (AP) — Fighting between tribal and political rivals disrupted legislative elections in Nigeria's oil-producing south for a second day Sunday. At least two dozen people were killed in the voting and hundreds forced to flee their homes, witnesses and election monitors said.

The vote for 469 seats is a key gauge of civil tensions a week ahead of presidential elections and an important test for democracy in the Africa's most populous nation. Military coups have scuttled Nigeria's previous attempts to hold democratic, civilian-run elections.

The voting began on Saturday but was extended to Sunday in several areas where the ballot was marred, particularly the Niger Delta. The oil-rich region has been the scene of numerous clashes in recent weeks between Ijaw militants and government troops over voting districts the Ijaws say favor their ethnic rivals, the Itsekiris.



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