

PERSIAN GULF WAR

Eugene Army captain ordered back to gulf

EUGENE (AP) — An Army captain forced to spend four months at the U.S. Embassy in Kuwait before Iraq released all foreign hostages in December has been ordered back to duty in the Persian Gulf.

William Schultz, 39, of Eugene, was a military liaison assigned to the embassy in Kuwait City when Iraq invaded on Aug. 2.

He tried to escape to Turkey in a car caravan with his wife, Marilyn, and their 12-year-old daughter, Julie, but Iraqi officials allowed only women and children to leave and forced him to return to the embassy.

After Schultz was released in early December with the last of the hostages, he said he supported President Bush and the U.S. military effort in the Persian Gulf.

He received orders to return last month and left Monday, his wife said Tuesday.

"I think he was sort of overwhelmed," Marilyn Schultz said.

She said she was depressed because her worries are beginning again.

"I had a sense of foreboding when I said goodbye to him at the airport," she said. "He will be going over under different circumstances this time."

Hussein says he'll work for peace

NICOSIA, Cyprus (AP) — Iraqi President Saddam Hussein told a Soviet envoy he is prepared to cooperate with the Soviet Union and other nations to end the Persian Gulf war, Baghdad radio reported early Wednesday.

The radio, monitored in Nicosia, said Soviet envoy Yevgeny Primakov gave Saddam a message from Mikhail Gorbachev during talks late Tuesday. The message contained the Soviet president's view of the regional conflict, the radio said, without providing details.

"Iraq is prepared to extend cooperation to the Soviet Union and other nations and agencies in the interest of finding a peaceful, political, equitable and honorable solution to the region's central issues, including the situation in the gulf," the radio quoted Saddam as

saying.

The radio report was perhaps the most forthright indication Iraq was ready to negotiate since the war's Jan. 17 beginning.

In Washington, White House Press Secretary Marlin Fitzwater said U.S. officials do not have details of Saddam's comment, but said, "The deciding factor for us is, what does he say about getting out of Kuwait?"

"Finding a solution would have to start with Iraq getting out of Kuwait and complying with the U.N. resolutions."

The non-aligned movement and Iran also recently offered peace initiatives. Iran's foreign minister, Ali Akbar Velayati, said Tuesday Iran had received an encouraging response from Saddam Hussein. He did not elaborate.

Iraqi Deputy Saadoun Hamadi told Jordanian officials this week that Iraq would be willing to negotiate a peace settlement but without preconditions. In Tunisia, he added that Iraq would not accept U.S. participation in peace talks.

The United States demands an Iraqi commitment to withdraw from Kuwait as a precondition for any talks.

Moscow has expressed concern that allied war plans may exceed the goals set out by U.N. Security Council resolutions, which demand withdrawal of Iraqi forces from Kuwait and restoration of the Kuwaiti government.

But Soviet officials stressed that Primakov, Gorbachev's special envoy, was insisting Hussein pull his troops out of Kuwait.

Iraqi soldiers keep deserting

AT THE KUWAITI BORDER (AP) — Every morning at sunrise, Iraqi soldiers walk across a deadly strip of desert, stand in front of a wall of sand and raise their arms in surrender.

Some cite the relentless allied air attacks and the dwindling supplies of food and fuel. Some blame a decade-long cycle of war that they say has not hardened troops, but worn them down.

"It is very bad. Fighting, fighting, fighting, and for what? Nothing," said Saad Shab, 29, a career tank soldier who says he fought every year of the 1980-1988 war with Iran.

"I'll go back to Iraq when Saddam Hussein is dead," Shab said as he sat on Saudi sand.

Shab was among 10 Iraqi frontline troops who crossed the Kuwaiti border early Tuesday morning and surrendered to an Egyptian armored unit just inside Saudi Arabia.

American, Saudi and Egyptian officers on the front say Iraqi desertions have become a daily ritual for the multinational allied units along the border.

All say the numbers have steadily climbed in the past few days.

Typically, the Iraqi soldiers leave their units in small groups at night and crawl gently through their army's own minefields, estimated to be about 250 yards deep.

At daybreak, they raise their arms and walk toward the man-molded wall of sand that buffers allied positions for much of Kuwait's southern border. Most carry the little leaflets dropped by allied planes that explain how to surrender, and threaten them with death if they refuse.

U.S. officials say 1,000 Iraqis have either deserted or been captured since the war began on Jan. 17, but that number is several days old.

The Iraqis who arrived at the Egyptian post said half the frontline troops have deserted. Many more, they say, are planning to leave.

"Many soldiers don't come because they are afraid for their families," said a 32-year-old soldier who only gave his name as Shahr.

Ground, air forces hit Kuwait

The following gulf war reports were compiled by the Associated Press:

In a foretaste of all-out war, Marine and naval gunners combined their fire with U.S. air strikes Tuesday to pound Iraqi tanks and artillery massed in southern Kuwait.

The U.S. command said the land-sea-and-air barrage that shook southern Kuwait could be described as part of "our training program" — training for the major offensive that may lie over the horizon.

A U.S. official said the combined-forces bombardment was the biggest battlefield action yet initiated by the allied forces.

Pentagon officials said about 50 oil fires — apparently at storage and related facilities — are burning in Kuwait. The Iraqis were believed to have started setting fires soon after the war began, but the officials said some fires may have been ignited by allied bombing.

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Tuesday's air attacks on Baghdad sent fireballs exploding into the sky from two five-story buildings housing Iraqi government offices.

Witnesses said at least six people were killed and 17 wounded in nearby houses damaged in the raids.

Secretary of State James Baker is asking West European countries to contribute to Israel's defense costs while also weighing increased U.S. aid, the State Department said Tuesday.

The amount Baker is soliciting from the European Community was not disclosed, but the administration is believed to be considering \$700 million to \$1 billion in additional U.S. aid.

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