

PERSIAN GULF WAR

Bombed bunker sheltered military, British paper says

LONDON (AP) — A newspaper Friday quoted a senior U.S. military source as saying the shelter in Baghdad was not a command center but was bombed because Iraqi military officers were believed to be sheltering there.

Iraqi officials say about 500 people died when the bunker — which they described as a purely civilian bomb shelter — was hit by two 2,000-pound bombs dropped by U.S. planes early Wednesday.

The London paper *The Independent*, in a dispatch from Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, quoted the U.S. source as contradicting the official U.S. position that the facility was bombed because it was a command and control center.

Reporter Robert Fisk wrote that the source spoke on condition of anonymity. The source was quoted as saying, "There's not a soul who believes that it was a command and control bunker ..."

"I think the official statement on this will change in the coming days. The military did believe it contained soldiers. We thought it was a military personnel bunker."

Lt. Col. Steve Roy, the Pentagon's night duty officer Thurs-

day, denied *The Independent's* report.

"The premise that we bombed the facility because it was a site for Iraqi leadership and not a command and control center is wrong," Roy said. "We bombed it because it was a command and control center."

The Independent also quoted the source as saying the carnage from the bombing had alarmed Saudi military officials, who worry that destruction could destabilize the region in a postwar era.

U.S. officials in Washington have said they did not know why civilians were in the shelter and suggested Iraqi President Saddam Hussein might be using Iraqi civilians as human shields.

Reporters in Baghdad who toured the rubble of the shelter said they saw no sign it had any military use.

Fisk quoted the source as saying of the aftermath of the deaths in Baghdad: "The pilot of the aircraft who did this will know it was him. But it wasn't his fault. Saddam Hussein does put civilians in military bunkers and he is to blame for this irresponsibility. But we were wrong, too."

Council debates U.S. bombing

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — The U.N. Security Council opened debate on the Gulf War Thursday in its first closed-door session in 15 years. Iraq's envoy condemned the bombing deaths of civilians in Baghdad and declared Kuwait a province of Iraq.

China called the reports of civilian casualties and massive destruction caused by allied raids in Iraq "extremely grave" and offered its own plan for achieving a peaceful solution.

The debate was the first on the war by the 15-member council. In November the council authorized the United States and its allies to use military force to drive Iraq from Kuwait after Jan. 15.

The council adjourned Thursday night after three and one-half hours of debate and was to reconvene Friday morning. At least 30 speakers were on the list for a debate that could continue for days.

DHAHRAN, Saudi Arabia (AP) — From the Kuwait coast to central Iraq, U.S. and allied pilots pounded away at fresh targets Thursday, unimpeded

by the international furor over the Baghdad bunker tragedy.

The U.S. command, in response to the death of hundreds of civilians in Wednesday's Baghdad bombing, said it was looking for new ways to limit such casualties — possibly including advance announcements of its targets.

The air war buildup to an armor-and-infantry push into Kuwait appeared to have made major progress. The command said one-third of Iraq's tanks and artillery in the battle zone have now been destroyed.

Strategists are believed to be shooting for 50-percent destruction before ordering the ground assault.

WELLINGTON, New Zealand (AP) — Special spheres of New Zealand wool which can effectively soak up to 40 times their own weight in oil will be used in the cleanup of oil spilled in the Persian Gulf, officials said today.

The manufacturer, Donaghys Textiles Ltd., said tests proved successful on samples encased in two 10-foot mesh booms sent to Sa-

di Arabia.

Donaghys marketing manager Hugh Ross said the company was asked Thursday to immediately send 60 more booms.

Ross said he expects the cleanup to take up to five years.

MANAMA, Bahrain (AP) — U.S. and other Western navy ships will begin escorting oil tankers and other merchant vessels through the Persian Gulf, Lloyd's shipping service said Thursday.

Such escorts were instrumental to keeping the flow of oil through the waterway during the Iran-Iraq war.

Warships are poised to advise merchant vessels entering the gulf of potential hazards and mine threats, according to the London-based agency. It said they also will coordinate escorts on request for vessels headed north of the Saudi Arabian city of Jubail.

Jubail is 40 miles north of Ras Tanura, the main oil shipping port of Saudi Arabia, which is the world's leading oil exporter.

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