

PERSIAN GULF WAR

OFFENSIVE

Continued from Page 1

Army general shot back. "We're going to go around, over, through, on top, underneath and any other way."

Hours after the invasion jumped off about 4 a.m. Sunday (8 p.m. EST Saturday) and Baghdad came under renewed air bombardment, Saddam Hussein went on official Iraqi radio to urge his troops on. "Fight them and show no mercy," the Iraqi president said.

Iraqi military communiques later asserted that the offensive "has so far failed utterly," and claimed to have "wiped out" paratroopers dropped behind Iraqi lines in western Kuwait.

Iraq struck Israel early Monday with its 38th Scud attack on the Jewish state and the first since the ground offensive began. Israel said the missile landed harmlessly in an unsettled area of southern Israel.

President Bush, in a television address late Saturday in Washington, announced he had ordered the ground attack in the "right and just" cause of freeing Kuwait from Iraqi occupation. Bush adviser Brent Scowcroft pushed a further objective Sunday: eliminating Iraq's offensive military power.

The long-expected ground assault came just eight hours after a deadline set by the Desert Storm allies for Iraq to begin a pullout from Kuwait.

The Iraqis had dismissed that ultimatum as "shameful." The Bush administration at the same time rejected a Soviet-sponsored plan for a slower-paced withdrawal.

The offensive climaxed a 7-month-old crisis that began with Iraq's invasion of Kuwait last Aug. 2, intensified with the buildup of more than a half-million troops on each side, and exploded into warfare Jan. 17 when the anti-Iraq coalition launched a devastating air campaign against targets in Kuwait and Iraq.

That air umbrella of fighter-bombers and helicopter gunships fanned out over the smoke-shrouded battlefield Sunday as battalion after battalion of Marines and British tankers, French legionnaires and U.S. Army cavalrymen, Saudi, Egyptian and other Arab troops rolled across the border in a multi-pronged attack that stretched from the Persian Gulf coast far west to the vast sand-and-gravel plains of the desert.

The armored phalanxes headed north stirred up huge dust storms over the desert floor. Offshore, the battleships USS Wisconsin and USS Missouri opened fire with their mighty 16-inch guns on Iraqi coastal positions.

Besides making a direct assault on Kuwait City, strategists apparently intend to sweep up the Iraqis' western flank with U.S. and British armored units, to encircle Iraqi troops in Kuwait and perhaps pin down reserve forces — the vaunted Republican Guard — in southernmost Iraq.

Reports on battle action were sketchy, because the Desert Storm command was issuing only limited information, and dispatches from reporters in news pools at the front were slow in reaching rear areas.

Missiles hit Israel; Arabs react

JERUSALEM (AP) — Iraq fired two Scud missiles at the Jewish state early Monday but both crashed harmlessly in the desert wastes of southern Israel, a military official said.

The Scuds, fired about two hours apart, were the 38th and 39th launched at Israel and the first since the U.S.-led ground war against Iraq began early Sunday. The army did not say if U.S.-made Patriot missiles were fired to intercept them.

In earlier Scud attacks, two Israelis were killed, 230 wounded and thousands of homes damaged.

Army spokesman Brig. Gen. Nahman Shai reported on Israel radio that both missiles were fired toward southern Israel. He said the first hit in an empty area, but gave few immediate details about the second.

Like the earlier missiles, the two fired Monday apparently carried conventional warheads.

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LONDON (AP) — Prime Minister John Major on Sunday warned against runaway optimism for an easy victory over Iraq despite major allied successes on the first day of the ground offensive.

"I think it is right to be cautious. This is a very early stage of the campaign. We must wait and see what happens over a longer period."

Major said outside his official residence at 10 Downing St.

"There may be more difficult days ahead than those we have had yet thus far," he added.

"It will not, I believe, be a long conflict, but it may be a fierce one," Major said. "There is no doubt in my mind that it is an absolutely justifiable conflict and that we will win it."

Defense Secretary Tom King added his own note of caution.

"The first Iraqi forces that have been encountered are arguably their least capable and possibly some of those with the lowest morale," he said. "It would be a mistake to assume that in the rest of the campaign the Iraqi forces will show as little resistance as the allies have encountered."

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NICOSIA, Cyprus (AP) — Arabs sympathetic to Saddam Hussein denounced the allied ground offensive Sunday as a premeditated effort to destroy Iraq, but backers of the coalition said the Iraqi leader alone was to blame.

"It's the saddest day in the world, with all those young soldiers who are now going to die because of one man," said Ali Mohammed, a Chamber of Commerce employee in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

In Jordan, where pro-Saddam sentiment is widespread,

Parliament Speaker Abdul Latif Arabiyat called on all Arab and Muslim nations to unite behind Iraq.

"All believers in Iraq and everywhere will stand united and will challenge the aggression of the allied evil powers," Arabiyat said.

His comments were delivered after Iraqi Foreign Minister Tariq Aziz secretly visited Jordan on his way home from Moscow, according to parliamentary deputies.

In Yemen, thousands of people took to the streets of the capital, San'a, to demonstrate against the United States and its allies. Some pelted the Egyptian and British embassies with stones. Security cordons kept them from attacking the U.S. and Saudi Arabia embassies.

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DETROIT (AP) — More than 200 chanting Iraqi-Americans blasted President Bush as a "butcher" Sunday during a march to denounce the start of the ground war in the Persian Gulf.

About 100 people carrying placards with such slogans as "U.S. Out of the Middle East" marched along a main street through the city's Chaldean neighborhood. Chaldeans are a Christian minority in Iraq.

"Bush is a murderer!" people in the crowd shouted.

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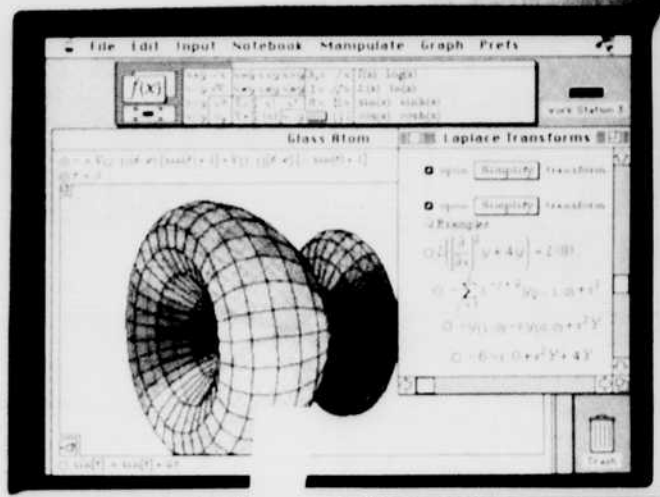
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