

Rising pressure delays Iraq war

Warren P. Strobel
Knight Ridder Newspapers (KRT)

WASHINGTON — Even as U.S. troops and armor pour into the Persian Gulf, President Bush faces rising pressures on multiple fronts to slow down the momentum toward war.

As recently as a few weeks ago, senior Bush administration officials were suggesting that a U.S. invasion to oust Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein might begin soon after a pivotal report from United Nations' weapons inspectors on Jan. 27.

Now, the target date appears to have slipped to late February or early March at the soonest, U.S. officials and analysts say.

In the latest sign of a possible delay, Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld is said to be leaning against a plan to begin a war in Iraq with bombing before all necessary U.S. ground forces are assembled in the Persian Gulf region. Those forces are not expected to be in place before mid-February.

The apparent rejection of that so-called "rolling start" option is just one of the diplomatic, military and domestic developments that could postpone the invasion start beyond the mid-winter date favored by Bush's more hawkish advisers.

Chief U.N. weapons inspector Hans Blix insisted this week that he needed until at least March to assess Iraq's willingness to disarm peacefully. "We have no such timeline on the work we do now," Blix said, when asked about U.S. troop deployments. "I am operating on my own timeline."

Concerned by public opinion hostile to a war, U.S. allies, including close Bush friend Prime Minister Tony Blair of Britain, are counseling patience.

Neither Blix nor the U.S. government has made public a "smoking gun" showing Saddam is hiding banned weapons of mass destruction, which may be needed to galvanize world opinion.

U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan added his voice Tuesday to those urging that more time be given to the weapons inspections.

"I don't think from where I stand we are at that stage yet," Annan replied when asked whether there should be an invasion even if no illicit weapons are found. "I think the inspectors are just getting up to full speed."

U.S. officials, eager to keep their options open, insist publicly that there never was a timetable for war.

Bush went out of his way Tuesday to dispute suggestions that the administration's determination toward

Saddam is weakening.

"I'm sick and tired of games and deception," the president said. "I haven't seen any evidence that he has disarmed. Time is running out on Saddam Hussein. He must disarm."

Rumsfeld signed two major deployment orders over the weekend, to dispatch 62,000 more Marines, Army soldiers and Air Force personnel to the region.

With those deployments, the number of American forces in the region is expected to grow to about 150,000 air, ground and naval forces in the next several weeks. An additional 100,000 are expected in the region by mid- to late February to be ready for a full-scale air and ground assault on Iraq.

Those deployments create a momentum of their own.

Some analysts suggest that American war planners must launch an attack before the end of February in order to conclude operations before the scorching heat of the Persian Gulf summer begins. Summer in Kuwait and Iraq begins in late May and lasts through August. Temperatures have been reported as high as 120 degrees.

But senior U.S. military officers in Kuwait dismiss the idea that U.S.

forces face an arbitrary deadline imposed by the weather. Many of the troops have already spent many months training for summertime temperatures.

More than any other factor, public opinion here and abroad is complicating Bush's military calculations.

A national Knight Ridder poll released Sunday found that only about a third of Americans support a war against Iraq without backing from the United Nations and U.S. allies.

To gain that backing, Bush may need rock-solid proof that Saddam is lying when he says Iraq has no nuclear, chemical or biological weapons programs. So far, no such "smoking gun" has been made public and, on the surface at least, Iraq has cooperated with weapons inspectors.

Leaders in Turkey, Britain and across the Middle East, while not necessarily opposed to ousting Saddam, have citizens who are.

In the United States, tens of thousands of anti-war protesters from 40 states are due to converge on Washington this weekend.

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Prosecutor seeks death for sniper suspect

Tony Pugh
Knight Ridder Newspapers (KRT)

FAIRFAX, Va. — Fingerprints on a high-powered Bushmaster rifle link 17-year-old sniper suspect John Lee Malvo to three fatal attacks and a fourth that left a man critically wounded, a Virginia prosecutor argued Tuesday.

In addition, Malvo contacted police at least four times — twice in notes and twice in phone calls — asking for \$10 million to end the string of attacks that rattled the nation's capital last fall, Virginia Commonwealth's Attorney Robert Horan told the court.

Horan wants Fairfax County Juve-

nile Court Chief Judge Charles Maxfield to declare that Malvo should be tried as an adult. If he's convicted as an adult, Malvo could be put to death.

Malvo and John Allen Muhammad, 42, are accused of shooting 18 people, killing 13 and wounding five in a nationwide spate of attacks, most of them on random victims doing routine tasks like shopping or pumping gas. Ten killings and three woundings were in the Washington area, and the first trials are in the capital's Virginia suburbs.

In Fairfax, Malvo faces capital murder charges in the Oct. 14 death of Linda Franklin, an FBI analyst who

was gunned down outside a Home Depot store in suburban Falls Church, Va.

Her husband, William Franklin, testified Tuesday that he and his wife were trying to put a long shelf into their 1991 Mercury Capri when he heard a loud noise and felt spray hit his face.

"I turned and saw my wife laying on the ground," Franklin said. She'd been hit on the left side of her forehead by a bullet that exited on the right side near her eye, a police witness testified.

Malvo, wearing a green county jail jumpsuit, white sneakers and a

white T-shirt, sat attentively with his attorneys. They asked Franklin and police witnesses whether Malvo had been seen at the crime scene. All answered no.

Malvo could face two counts of capital murder in connection with the Oct. 14 shooting. One permits the death penalty when a person commits more than one murder in a three-year period. The other allows the death penalty under an anti-terrorism statute.

The hearing resumes on Wednesday.

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Directors expand budgets for Erb Memorial Union

The EMU Board of Directors grants budget increases to three groups and approves statements

Roman Gokhman
Campus/City Culture Reporter

The EMU Board of Directors set 2003-04 budgets and approved philosophical statements Monday for three groups, including the board itself.

The Child Care and Development Center, EMU Food Service and the EMU Board were all given larger budgets, mainly because of increases in the minimum wage salaries of their student employees.

CCDC saw its budget increase

from \$843,811 to \$924,927 for the next academic year with a motion that passed 9-0. The added funds also included money for the organization's move to a new facility at East 17th Avenue and Moss Street.

CCDC co-chairwoman Carla DeShaw, a University graduate student and mother of two, supported the increased budget.

"When I take (my kids) to school, that gives me peace of mind," DeShaw said.

Other CCDC supporters said without the program they would not be able to attend the University.

EMU board member Mark Watson questioned CCDC's program in the Moshofsky Sports Center during

home football games.

The not-for-profit program is used primarily by fans who are not University students.

The board and CCDC Coordinator Dennis Reynolds agreed the program could be used to make a profit in the future so the child care center would be more self-sufficient.

CCDC's philosophical statement was passed by a 7-0 vote.

The board set the 2003-04 Food Service budget at \$1,453,870 with a motion that passed 9-0. The previous academic year's budget was not available.

"It's going to be really hard to make a profit," Food Service Director John Costello said.

Board member Brenda Tincher

said she was happy with the use of the phrase "self-sufficient" in Food Service's philosophical statement, which was approved 7-0.

Also, the Board approved the increase of its own budget from \$8,806 to \$14,339 in 2003-04.

Citing increases in work-study pay and the need for better organizational retreats, the motion passed 9-0.

The board's philosophical goals and purpose statement were also approved 9-0.

Finally, the board voted 7-2 to notify all budget managers to appear Friday to discuss budgets.

Contact the reporter at romangokhman@dailymerald.com.

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