

## News brief

### Bush's rebuilding plan met with skepticism

WASHINGTON — The Bush administration says the U.S. won't be faced with a huge bill for reconstruction of post-war Iraq, in large part because Iraq's oil wells can be tapped to help defray the costs.

But some lawmakers and U.S. allies say the administration's plan may be fraught with both logistical

and political pitfalls.

Sen. Chuck Hagel, R-Neb., who sits on the Foreign Relations Committee, said: "To believe the U.S. will be able to pay for reconstruction with oil revenues is a little short-sighted."

"There is a concern that the oil revenues are overstated and that the costs to the American taxpayers are understated," said David Sirota, a spokesman for Rep. David Obey, D-Wis., the top Democrat on the House Appropriations Committee.

Administration officials are trying to

quiet alarm bells in Congress about the potential cost of the war, as lawmakers also struggle with how to right the shaky economy and restrain the ballooning federal deficit.

When Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld went before the House and Senate to lobby for the money last week, he made it clear that he believes the cost of reconstructing Iraq should not fall to the United States. That bill should be paid by allies, Iraq's seized assets and Iraq's oil revenues, he said.

"I don't believe that the United

States has the responsibility for reconstruction," Rumsfeld said.

Soon after Rumsfeld spoke, Sen. Charles Grassley, R-Iowa, hammered home the point.

"I want to make sure the American taxpayers are not saddled with any of the costs of rebuilding Iraq," Grassley, chairman of the Senate Finance Committee, said in a speech on the Senate floor.

Grassley said that under the Hague and Geneva conventions, the U.S. and allies have clear authority "to use and

enjoy the profits of property owned by Iraq" for the benefit of the Iraqi people.

But some lawmakers and American allies fear that not everyone will see it that way.

Nail Al-Jubeir, director of information for the Embassy of Saudi Arabia in Washington, said a move to tap into Iraq's oil could spark a "political backlash" and "undermine" the administration's contention that this war is to liberate the Iraqi people.

— Deirdre Shesgreen, St. Louis Post-Dispatch (KRT)

## War

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last until the end of April, aid officials said the threat of starvation will increase by May if relief supplies from the United Nations, other agencies, and the U.S.- and U.K.-led military forces are unable to reach Baghdad, Basra and other parts of south and central Iraq.

The U.N. Security Council on Friday voted to resume the suspended Oil for Food program and place it under the direction of U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan. But the Iraqi gov-

ernment rejected the United Nations' control, saying only the government could run the program.

Under the prior Oil for Food program, which allowed Iraq to sell oil for humanitarian goods, the Iraqi government itself controlled food distribution in southern and central Iraq, channeling it to citizens through some 44,000 small shop outlets.

Early coalition-sponsored efforts to get food and water to Iraq's 24 million people have been met by either chaos or resistance.

Two trucks of Kuwaiti aid arriving in the border town of Safwan on Fri-

day were overwhelmed by mobs of young Iraqi men shouting pro-Hussein slogans. And the British military's supply ship Sir Galahad, docked at the port of Umm Qasr, still cannot deliver aid to the beleaguered city of Basra because of fighting there.

Morris outlined one of the largest undertakings in U.N. history Monday. In the first month, he said, food would go to Iraqi refugees arriving in surrounding countries; over the next three months, people inside Iraq would be fed. During the final two months, the program would taper off as the Oil for Food program kicked in.

Morris thanked the United States for contributing \$221 million to the emergency appeal and Germany for contributing \$6.5 million. He cautioned that strong demands for aid in Iraq could affect the United Nations' ability to deliver aid to other nations, particularly in Africa, where the United Nations says some 38 million people are starving as a result of AIDS, war and other disasters.

Iraqis will need more than food and water during and after the war. The conflict and deprivation under Hussein have devastated hospitals, schools and sewage and water treat-

ment facilities, according to international aid groups and British officials.

Geoffrey Keele, a spokesman for the U.N. program Unicef, which is seeking to raise \$166 million as part of the emergency appeal, said Iraq's children will need help recovering from war trauma.

"There are reports of children having uncontrollable crying fits, jumping (at small noises) and having nightmares — all the trauma of living in a city like Baghdad under constant bombardment," Keele said.

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## Protest

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spouted, however, when peace activists encountered news cameras and television reporters.

One girl covered the lens of a news camera with the sleeve of her sweat-shirt and started to chant "Fuck the corporate media." It didn't take long for the rest of the protesters to join.

James, a protester who didn't want his last name printed, has been in-

involved in peace marches since the Vietnam War. James said he was angry at the negative attitude media corporations such as ABC or NBC have created and conveyed to the public at large.

"I'm not here to create trouble," he said. "I'm here because I love my country."

Jennifer Laverdure, a member of the Freedom Socialist Party and the Portland Radical Women, has been actively involved with protests since the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks.

Instead of being frustrated with the media's interpretation of war protesters, however, Laverdure said she dislikes the lack of respect from police during protests.

Laverdure said police threatened to take the sign she was carrying before the march started, which read: "Socialism, not endless war."

"It's just intimidation," she said, adding that the police never followed through on the threat.

Other protesters agreed with

Laverdure about what they called inappropriate police procedures during protests.

David, another protester who didn't want his last name used, joked with his friends about the harsh tactics police have been using on protesters.

"Jaywalking is punishable by tear gas or death," he said.

Less than a minute later, police charged a man who ran into the street to announce his anti-war sentiments.

David, who started attending

protests when President George W. Bush proclaimed war on Iraq, said he didn't like the way he was treated because he was a protester. He added that he thought the reason why people showed little respect for war protesters was because of the negative news coverage on television.

"You can only march for peace," he said. "Don't be anti-war, be pro-peace."

Contact the reporter at [alishughnessy@dailymerald.com](mailto:alishughnessy@dailymerald.com).

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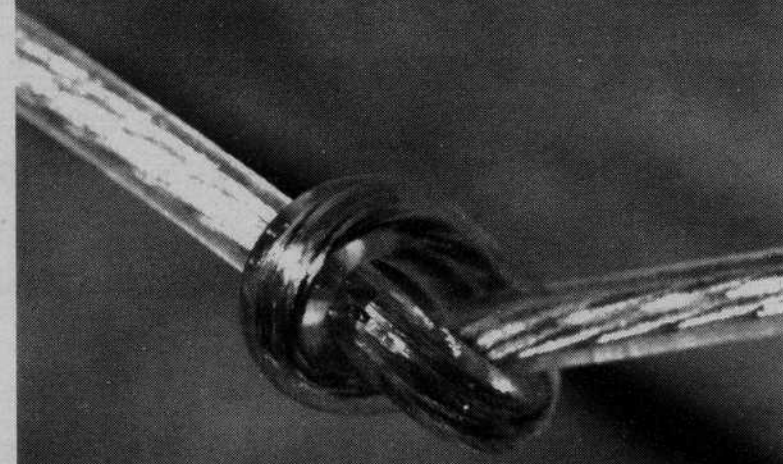
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