

# City prepares for emergencies

Local agencies are building up security and emergency supplies after the national terror level rose to Level Orange

## War hits home

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City/State Politics Reporter

Eugene city officials have recently tightened security measures to help protect citizens in the event of a terrorist attack or other national emergency.

On March 17, President George W. Bush announced a 48-hour deadline for Saddam Hussein and his family to leave Iraq. Following the president's announcement, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, in cooperation with the Homeland Security Council, raised the national terror level from an elevated risk of attack to a high risk of attack — Level Orange. As a result, cities, towns, school districts and other organizations in Oregon and nationwide raised their own security and added to already substantial disaster plans.

This is not the first time the nation has made preparations for emergencies. During the Cold War of the 1950s and 1960s, air raid sirens were placed in public locations throughout towns, homeowners turned basements into bomb shelters and school children were taught "duck-and-cover" exercises, hiding under their desks and covering their heads in simulation of what to do in the event of nuclear attack.

Fear of a terrorist attack has not reached the drastic or personal levels of the Cold War, but national and local legislatures are beefing up protection for border security, transportation, critical infrastructure and public health institutions.

The Lane County Sheriff's Office has made efforts throughout the region to tighten security at public buildings and workplaces.

"While there is no known specific threat in our region at this time, it is prudent to upgrade our security preparations to coincide with the Homeland Security's raised threat level," Lane County Sheriff Jan Clements said. "Preparedness always make sense."

Within Eugene, city officials are working with public organizations and the school districts to update disaster plans.

Chuck Solin, emergency manager for the city, said officials have implemented higher access regulations at the Eugene Airport and have taken other steps to safeguard transportation, but he said the Northwest has not received any actual terrorism threats.

"We're certainly well aware of the warnings, and we're taking every step necessary to be prepared, but until a credible threat is determined, we are holding steady and continuing with normal business," Solin said.

Officials inside the Eugene school district emphasized the need to carry on with business as usual.

"We are doing everything we can to maintain schools as a very routine, safe area for students," Kelly McIver, communication coordinator for the Eugene school district, said. "Students do their best when they feel comfortable and safe in their environments."

McIver said every classroom and office throughout the district keeps a regularly updated emergency manual on

hand, and all schools are equipped with kitchens and emergency supplies, including first aid equipment.

He added district schools are constantly prepared for emergencies, and outside of trying to remain informed of changing terror levels, the district is not forming extensive plans for dealing with attack.

At the University, administrators have been slightly more aggressive in their preparation for emergencies. The Department of Public Safety has been providing primary departments on campus with information about what to do in case of an emergency. University Housing has put together kits containing food and first aid equipment for students living in residence halls.

DPS Interim Director Tom Hicks said students should be protecting themselves by learning about world events, being informed of current situations and staying on top of updates and changes in the political climate.

"We need to be vigilant, but we don't necessarily need to be paranoid," he said.

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## Hero

continued from page 1

2002, Rutman and a few volunteers transported the supplies via cargo ship, and then flew to Guatemala to meet the ship and deliver the goods to the villages.

"Some people have asked me if I think it's wrong to introduce technology to the indigenous people by bringing them computers," Rutman said.

"My response is it's already there, and making it more accessible will help give these people a voice and empower them."

Rutman transferred to the University in 1998 as an environmental studies major and graduated in 2000. As a student, he was heavily involved in the Campus Recycling program as a volunteer, and eventually as an intern. During his internship, he worked with elementary schools to

develop a system for recycling milk boxes. Karyn Kaplan, the director of Campus Recycling, nominated Rutman for the Volvo award.

"Matthew had a vision of making use of as many resources as possible," Kaplan said.

Rutman is currently a graduate student at Pacific University and wants to teach in elementary school. Partners in Solidarity can be contacted at 681-7757. They accept donations of

computers, school and medical supplies, bicycles, clothing and other household items.

"At such a young age, Matthew has already seen the need to make a connection between continents," said Carol Schuler, a representative at Haberman and Associates, the public relations firm responsible for determining the Volvo Award recipients.

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## War

continued from page 1

terrorists, their harboring of terrorists, their harboring of Iraqi leaders, and their development of weapons of mass destruction."

Syrian officials deny they have offered sanctuary to fleeing Iraqi leaders and that they have developed weapons of mass destruction.

The tough talk from Washington has set off alarm bells in the Arab world and left many wondering if Syria is the next target for U.S. invasion.

"There is, without question, a strong element within the administration that actually feels Syria should be

next," said Alon Ben-Meir, a professor of international relations at New York University. "The escalation of this type of rhetoric eventually assumes a life of its own."

But a senior U.S. official, speaking on the condition of anonymity, said there are no plans, even tentative ones, for military action against Syria. Rather, he said, the saber-rattling is intended to convince the Syrians to refuse safe haven to Iraq's fallen leadership and crack down on militant Islamic groups, especially Hezbollah and Islamic Jihad.

The idea here, the official said, is to remove "another excuse" for the Israeli government of Prime Minister Ariel Sharon to not agree to conduct peace

negotiations with the Palestinians.

British officials on Monday ruled out military action against Syria.

"There are no plans whatsoever to invade Syria," Prime Minister Tony Blair told the House of Commons.

Imad Moustapha, Syria's deputy ambassador to the United States, accused U.S. officials of trying to divert attention from looting and other problems in Iraq.

"The human catastrophes that are taking place in Iraq today are really embarrassing lots of people in this administration. And the only way to deal with them is to divert attention," he said on NBC's "Meet the Press." "They will keep on doing this and accusing Syria of

things that Syria is not doing, just to divert attention."

The Bush administration's drumbeat against Syria started in late March, when Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld accused Syria of sending night-vision goggles and other war material to Iraq. Rumsfeld expanded his list of grievances on Monday, saying Syria has been testing chemical weapons over the past 12 to 15 months, as well as permitting attacks on U.S. forces in Iraq.

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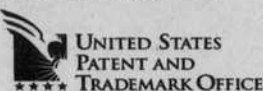
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