

# Army runs tests on suspect chemicals

**John Sullivan and Matt Stearns**  
Knight Ridder Newspapers (KRT)

NEAR BALJI, Iraq — Dozens of Army chemical weapons experts descended on a munitions site Sunday to conduct more tests on barrels of suspected nerve and blister agents amid mounting evidence that the site could be the first confirmed chemical weapons cache in Iraq.

Further tests should determine in one to three days whether the barrels contain the chemicals needed for weapons of mass destruction.

Elsewhere, U.S. officials detained the self-proclaimed mayor of Baghdad, issued a proclamation reminding Iraqis the military command was in charge, and scheduled a meeting for Monday among prospective Iraqi leaders of an interim government. All were part of a continuing effort to ensure that disparate, feuding interest groups do not push the war-torn country into ungovernable chaos.

Spurts of violence continued to

erupt. Four American soldiers were wounded in Baghdad. With Saddam Hussein's birthday Monday, the threat of more violence was ever-present. In Tikrit, Saddam's hometown, U.S. soldiers killed one person while attempting to disperse a pro-Saddam demonstration of about 50 people.

Also on Sunday, U.S. military officials said that coalition forces captured another of Iraq's most-wanted men: General Hussam Mohammad Amin, the regime's National Monitoring Director, responsible for keeping track of Iraq's arms.

Amin was a key figure in Iraq's negotiations with United Nations weapons inspectors, and repeatedly said Iraq did not have weapons of mass destruction.

Much U.S. focus remained on the suspected chemical weapons site first found Friday after a tip from a local villager. Suspicions that previous sites harbored the illicit

weapons were proved unfounded, but Army officials at the site near Baiji said the initial inspections and tests were promising.

Samples from two of the 14 barrels at the site were taken Sunday and sent to labs in Iraq, Germany and Maryland to undergo more conclusive testing. It should take just a few days to determine whether the samples are chemical weapons, or simply pesticides or rocket fuel, Army officials at the site said.

The samples were sent to three different sites for testing to meet the required international standard for proof of chemical weapons in international courts, said Lt. Col. Valentin Novikov.

The Bush Administration used the specter of weapons of mass destruction to justify the Iraqi invasion. Now that the military victory has been won, the administration is under increasing international pressure to prove that Iraq had such weapons.

Besides the barrels, the Army found mobile laboratories and a large yellow warehouse containing hundreds of gas masks and 36 partially assembled SA-2 rockets capable of delivering chemical agents.

Meanwhile, U.S. operatives in Baghdad moved to prevent what had been a somewhat surreal sideshow from becoming a serious threat to the coalition's attempts to bring stability to Iraq with the arrest of Mohammed Mohsen al-Zubaidi on Sunday.

Al-Zubaidi had proclaimed himself "Mayor of Baghdad," saying that about 300 community leaders elected him the head of the city nearly two weeks ago. He quickly formed an administration, naming a deputy mayor and traveling with a retinue of aides. At his headquarters in the Palestine Hotel, he held meetings throughout the day with businessmen. He also tried to convince the reformed police force that they should report to him, not to

coalition forces, and told Iraqis not to go back to work at water, power, sewage and bank facilities unless he approved it.

The U.S. was quick to dismiss his legitimacy, saying only coalition members were administering the country. Officials often said the "mayor" was running the city "as much as Saddam Hussein is."

But Al-Zubaidi was apparently becoming enough of a distraction that U.S. officials decided to take action against him Sunday. They invited the unsuspecting putative potentate to a meeting at the Sheraton Hotel, but said that he should not bring any guards. There, al-Zubaidi was escorted out of the hotel around 5 p.m., and left in a civilian car.

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# Congress returns to tax-cut struggle

**James Kuhnhen**  
Knight Ridder Newspapers (KRT)

WASHINGTON — Congress returns to work this week under pressure from President Bush to pass a tax cut that even a handful of senators from his own party won't support.

After a two-week Easter recess, lawmakers will find a new environment in Washington and a president less preoccupied with Iraq and more focused on pushing his economic agenda.

Once marginalized by the war, Congress will now be back on center stage as tax writers in the House and Senate draft legislation for at least \$350 billion in tax cuts over the next 10 years.

But Republicans, who control both the House and the Senate, will have a hard time finding common ground on the tax cut by Memorial Day, their goal for sending a tax-cutting bill to the president.

Bush is calling for at least \$550

billion in tax cuts. Conservative Republicans want more. But Sen. Charles Grassley of Iowa, the Republican chairman of the tax-writing Finance Committee in the Senate, has vowed to limit the cut to no more than \$350 billion in order to secure support from two renegade Republicans — Olympia Snowe of Maine and George Voinovich of Ohio.

That deal, cut on April 11 with the blessing of Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist of Tennessee, infuriated conservatives and House Republican leaders, who accused Frist and Grassley of betrayal. Frist was forced to apologize for mishandling the deal, and said he would work to increase the size of the tax cut package.

On CBS' "Face the Nation" Sunday, Republican Sen. Lindsey Graham of South Carolina, a cheerleader for larger tax cuts, hinted he would vote against a tax cut of \$350 billion because it was too small.

"I want a tax cut with a purpose,"

Graham said. "Now's the time to put money back into the economy with a purpose, and that's to create jobs."

Grassley, speaking on Fox News Sunday, said he would stick to his promise unless Bush can convince Snowe and Voinovich to accept a larger tax cut. He said the final tax cut number could grow to about \$425 billion by eliminating corporate tax loopholes and using that offsetting revenue for more individual tax cuts.

Bush's plan would accelerate reductions in income tax rates that Congress approved in 2001 but were not scheduled to take effect until 2006. It also would increase tax credits for parents, ease the so-called marriage penalty for couples and assist small businesses. It's biggest element, however, is phasing out the tax individuals pay on corporate dividends.

Democrats say the dividend tax cut will benefit the wealthy and a few Republicans say the tax cuts are too big and will increase federal

budget deficits.

Last week, Bush visited Ohio, Voinovich's home state, to apply direct pressure. Voinovich showed he could stand the heat, though, and said he remains convinced that a larger cut would create bigger, harmful budget deficits.

On Sunday in NBC's "Meet the Press" show, Voinovich described the \$350 billion in tax cuts as "a good package" and Bush's proposal as "fiscally irresponsible" given the higher spending produced by rebuilding Iraq.

In addition to Voinovich and Snowe, Republican Sens. John McCain of Arizona and Lincoln Chafee of Rhode Island have said they will oppose any tax cut. To get the votes, Bush may have to turn to moderate Democrats such as Bill Nelson of Nebraska and consummate dealmaker John Breaux of Louisiana.

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## News brief

### Tacoma police chief shoots wife, self

SEATTLE — Tacoma Police Chief David Brame died Saturday after he shot his 35-year-old estranged wife and himself in a strip-mall parking lot in Gig Harbor, Wash.

Brame, 44, was taken to St. Joseph Medical Center in Tacoma where he died shortly before 6 p.m. Saturday.


His wife, Crystal, was flown to Harborview Medical Center in Seattle where she was in extremely critical condition Saturday night with a bullet wound in the head.

Brame and his wife were in the parking lot to exchange the children. The couple had been going through a contentious divorce, with allegations of abuse from both sides. After putting the children in his car, Brame returned to his wife's car, got in the passenger seat, then fired his gun twice.

Brame was found in the passenger seat with a fatal head wound. His wife had climbed out of the car before collapsing on the pavement.

— Seattle Times Staff, The Seattle Times (KRT)

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