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NEWS ARCHIVE

Iraq claims U.S. tampered with report

December 11, 2002

BY CHARLES J. HANLEY

BAGHDAD, Iraq--The Iraqi government accused Washington on Tuesday of taking control of a UN master copy of Baghdad's arms declaration in order to tamper with it and create a pretext for war.

The White House dismissed Iraq's accusation that it altered the documents. Specialists at the CIA and other U.S. agencies began poring over the 12,000-page declaration, in which Baghdad is supposed to "tell all" about its chemical, biological and nuclear programs. American officials said much of the material appeared to be recycled versions of earlier documents.

Bush administration officials said they hoped to share its preliminary findings with the chief UN weapons inspector, Hans Blix, by Friday, but cautioned that a full evaluation of the material--some of it in Arabic--could take weeks.

Refusal to comply won't be tolerated, U.S. warns

BY SCOTT LINDLAW

WASHINGTON--War plans in hand, Bush administration officials on Sunday promised "zero tolerance" if Saddam Hussein refuses to comply with international calls to disarm.

A new United Nations Security Council resolution demands that Iraq eliminate its weapons of mass destruction and open up to inspectors or face "serious consequences," and top White House aides said they are watching closely to ensure Saddam cooperates.

"We do not need to waste the world's time with another game of cat and mouse," national security adviser Condoleezza Rice said.

Under the resolution, the Security Council would assess any violations and decide how to respond.

But several administration officials made plain that the United States reserved the right to invade Iraq with or without UN approval.

Meanwhile, the Bush administration delivered full copies of the material to UN Security Council's other four permanent members--Britain, France, Russia and China--and said an edited version would be provided to the council's 10 other members as soon as possible.

UN inspectors have said Iraq's earlier declarations were incomplete.

Inspectors stepped up their search Tuesday, fanning across Iraq on surprise missions to 13 sites--the largest number of inspections since the UN operation resumed two weeks ago. One team moved in on a uranium mining site 250 miles west of Baghdad.

President Saddam Hussein, meanwhile, spoke of war and sacrifice in a meeting with top



"We have the authority by the president's desire to protect and defend the United States of America," White House chief of staff Andrews Card said. "The UN can meet and discuss, but we don't need their permission."

Said Secretary of State Colin Powell: If we find that debate is going nowhere, if the UN chooses not to act, we have not given up our authority to act with like-minded nations who might wish to join us in such an action."

The administration received some support Sunday when Arab foreign ministers urged Saddam to accept the terms of the resolution.

Rice, meantime, dismissed as "ludicrous" the call by the Iraqi president for his parliament to hold an emergency session on the resolution.

"Saddam Hussein is an absolute dictator and tyrant, and the idea that somehow he expects the Iraqi parliament to debate this--they've never debated anything else," Rice said. "I'm surprised he's even bothering to go through this ploy."

Administration officials faced questions on reports published Sunday on President Bush's approval of a battle plan should Iraq fail to comply with the resolution. The leaks appeared to be an effort to send Saddam a message about how serious the United States is.

AP

lieutenants, men U.S. strategists hope will abandon the Iraqi strongman in the event of war. "Your heads will remain high with honor, God willing, and your enemy will be defeated," he was shown on state television telling defense officials, including Defense Minister Lt. Gen. Sultan Hashim Ahmed.

U.S.-Iraqi tensions flared again in the southern no-fly zone Tuesday, when the U.S. command said its warplanes bombed an Iraqi anti-aircraft missile site 165 miles southeast of Baghdad. Just across Iraq's southeastern border in Kuwait, U.S. Army units were conducting desert exercises.

Iraq insists it no longer has weapons of mass destruction or programs to make them. The Bush administration says it's sure Baghdad does and has threatened war if, in the U.S. view, Saddam's government doesn't comply with UN disarmament demands.

Secretary of State Colin Powell denounced Saddam's claims, saying, "He's a liar."

"We'll see now whether he decides that the cost of lying is too great. The cost of lying now might result in his regime being destroyed by the armed forces of the international community," he said during an interview Thursday with the French television station France 2. The State Department released the transcript Tuesday.

White House spokesman Ari Fleischer said the U.S. analysis of Iraq's declaration would be "deliberative" and "careful" in order to "understand what it is that Iraq is purporting to declare, as well as what they have failed to declare."

The UN monitoring operation received reinforcements Tuesday when 28 new inspectors flew in, expanding the staff to 70. Blix says he expects to have 100 in place by the end of the year.

The inspectors visited a variety of sites Tuesday, including chemical and explosives facilities, and veterinary medicine institutes, whose vaccine-making processes were applied in the past to biological weapons-making.

The uranium mining operations at al-Qaim, also known as Akashat, in the desert near the Syrian border, were scrutinized by UN nuclear inspectors in the 1990s. Its phosphate deposits were exploited in the 1980s for their uranium content as well as for fertilizer, producing some 100 tons of uranium over six years. AP

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