



# 4 DEAD IN WAKE OF MASSIVE STORM

EXTENSIVE COVERAGE INSIDE — PAGES 16-20A

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# THE DENVER POST

Voice of the Rocky Mountain Empire

# Strike on Iraq

## Cruise-missile attack targets Iraqi leaders

By Kevin Simpson and Michael Booth  
Denver Post Staff Writers



Associated Press / Patrick Baz

An explosion erupts in Baghdad during U.S. airstrikes launched against the Iraqi capital today. The U.S. aims to remove President Saddam Hussein from power and disarm Iraq.

Dawn brought the flash of explosions and anti-aircraft fire across Baghdad today, signaling the start of the U.S.-led campaign to remove Saddam Hussein from power.

A wave of Tomahawk cruise missiles and bombs dropped from F-117A Nighthawk stealth jets marked what one U.S. official called a surgical strike against a "target of opportunity" — Iraqi leaders that intelligence revealed to be in the area.

There was no immediate word on which leaders were targeted or whether the strike — called a "decapitation attack" by a Pentagon official — was successful. But images of Hussein broadcast hours after the attack appeared to show the Iraqi leader condemning the American aggression.

Although no attack planes were immediately visible from the ground, air-raid sirens wailed and flashes of yellow and white Iraqi tracer fire ignited the sky less than two hours after President Bush's deadline for Hussein to leave the country.

Just minutes after the U.S. launched the attack, Bush told Americans in a televised address that coalition forces had begun striking selective targets, the first part of a "broad and concerted campaign."

"And I assure you," the president said, "this will not be a campaign of half measures, and we will accept no outcome but victory."

Bush added that the U.S.-led coalition faces an enemy "who has no regard for rules of morality" and uses women and children as shields. He said coalition forces will make "every effort" to spare civilians and stressed that the war is not against the Iraqi people.

"We come to Iraq with respect for its citizens and the religion they practice," Bush said.

The president said that although the U.S. enters the conflict reluctantly, "we will not live at the mercy of an outlaw regime."

A Colorado-based anti-war group, Priority Peace, issued a statement disputing Bush's claim that war with Iraq will make America safer from terrorism.

"Americans are going to be less safe at home and abroad — not more — as a result of this costly invasion and multi-year occupation of Iraq," the group said. "One certainty from this unnecessary and illegal war will be a wave of anti-Americanism around the globe like we've never seen before. We shouldn't be surprised to see 10 new al-Qaedas arise as a result of the Bush administration's conquest of Iraq."

Earlier, Bush had given Congress formal notice that diplomatic means alone would not contain the Iraqi leader's threat. That notification fulfilled terms of last year's resolution authorizing military force.

The president also offered new justification for the war — namely, that Iraq's defeat could supply new information about terrorists operating in the U.S.

In Denver's University Park enclave, neighbors gathered for a chili dinner after spending the afternoon shoveling snow from their driveways. The party broke up quickly after the announcement that war had begun.

"I hope it's short and sweet," said Skip Siemers, a real estate broker. "I don't think they can hold a candle to our military. Now that we're at war, everyone should be

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### ANALYSIS

## Assault on officials designed to save lives

By John Walcott and Tom Infield  
Knight Ridder Newspapers

WASHINGTON — America's pre-dawn attack on what Pentagon officials called "leadership targets" in Baghdad was a bold and unexpected beginning to President Bush's even bolder campaign to disarm Iraq and install democracy in place of Saddam Hussein's brutal dictatorship.

After months of preparing America, Iraq and the world for a devastating air and ground blitzkrieg, Bush switched signals at the last minute and attempted to kill Hussein, his sons and his most trusted aides in an effort to spare thousands of other lives, American, allied and Iraqi.

Whether the attempt succeeded is another matter. Intelligence officials had predicted that even if Hussein were dead, Iraqi officials would try to conceal the fact from their countrymen and the world. Hussein apparently made an appearance on Iraqi television this morning to condemn the attack.

And although clandestine American teams have been eavesdropping on Iraqi communications and prowling around Iraq for more than a month, intelligence officials concede that sighting Hussein isn't easy, in part because he employs body doubles and rarely sleeps in the same place two nights in a row.

Nevertheless, the president and his top aides concluded in an Oval

Office meeting Wednesday afternoon that killing the Iraqi leader, and perhaps also his sons Uday and Qusay and the top members of his Revolutionary Command Council, was worth a try.

If they succeeded, said a senior administration official, the entire Iraqi military — not just its ill-equipped and demoralized conscript army — might fold without a fight.

That would spare American troops the danger of facing chemical and biological weapons and the unpleasant prospect of house-to-house fighting in Baghdad and other Iraqi cities.

Just as important, Bush and his aides decided, it might spare Iraq thousands of civilian casualties, deaths that Muslim radicals could use to recruit new terrorists.

It also might avoid a spasm of revenge killings, untold economic and environmental damage, and civil wars that could tear the country apart and unnerve its neighbors.

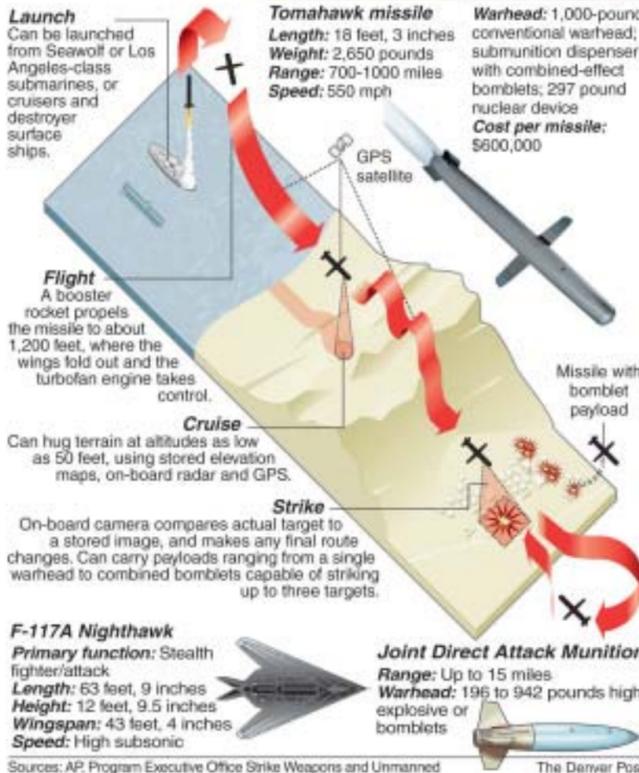
"It might be the most brilliant war plan that has ever been devised," said retired Adm. Leighton Smith, a former commander of U.S. naval forces in Europe and former commander of NATO forces in southern Europe.

He said that if the quick attempt to decimate the regime failed, the United States could go back to the "shock-and-awe" approach.

"Wouldn't it be wonderful if all of this came to a conclusion without a massive strike? ... I don't know if it can."

### Attack from the Mediterranean

The U.S. Navy launched Tomahawk cruise missiles from the Persian Gulf and Red Sea at targets in Baghdad today. Attacks were also launched from F-117 Stealth fighters dropping Joint Direct attack munitions.



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