

WAR

Missiles, bombs hit Baghdad – U.S. aims at Iraqi leaders



PATRICK BAZ / Agence France-Presse

An explosion glows in Baghdad's early morning as the United States initiated war on Iraq with air strikes on the capital. The assault involved more than 40 Tomahawk cruise missiles fired by Navy ships.

STRATEGY: U.S. tries to avoid house-by-house battle for Baghdad

By Edward Epstein
CHRONICLE WASHINGTON BUREAU

WASHINGTON — Saddam Hussein, a fervent admirer of the brutal Soviet dictator Joseph Stalin, has vowed to turn Baghdad into Stalingrad on the Euphrates, a hellish mire of street fighting that will kill thousands of Americans. Trying to end such a battle before it could begin, the first American air strikes today were aimed at decapitating Hussein's regime quickly. F-117 stealth bombers and a handful of cruise missiles were launched against Hussein and the Iraqi leadership, a military official said. The attack appeared to be aimed at a residence in southern Baghdad where intelligence reports had pinpointed

Hussein, officials said. U.S. officials declined to say whether the attack was successful. Regardless, analysts doubted that Hussein could transform the Iraqi capital of about 5 million people into a fortress and tie down American and British forces. However, they warn, Hussein's last stand could well be brutal, albeit short. The battle for Baghdad, if the Americans are lured into a fight city block by city block, is likely to be the toughest challenge for the U.S. military, analysts say. "If most of the Republican Guards, the (Republican Guards special forces) and the special security forces all fight hard within Baghdad, we'll be looking at a very, very messy fight," cautioned



STEPHEN CROWLEY / New York Times

President Bush addresses Americans saying coalition forces were in the first stages "of military operations to disarm Iraq."

Michael O'Hanlon, military analyst at the Brookings Institution in Washington. "This could lead to a couple of thousand dead coalition soldiers and tens of thousands of dead Iraqis, including many civilians," he added.

Showing that he is prepared to make a stand in the capital, Hussein named his younger son, Qusai, the chief of Baghdad's defenses. What the 37-year-old lacks in military expertise he makes up for in absolute loyalty to his father

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MEASURED STRIKE: Bush tells nation the campaign must end in victory

By Mark Abel
CHRONICLE STAFF WRITER

The United States attacked Baghdad early this morning, launching its long-promised war on Iraq with a bomb and missile strike aimed at decapitating the country's top political leadership. But the pinpoint operation apparently failed to kill President Saddam Hussein, who appeared on television about three hours later to declare that "the criminal little Bush has committed a crime against Iraq and humanity" and to urge Iraqis to "go draw your sword" against the Americans. A short time after the attack, a solemn President Bush addressed the nation, telling Americans: "On my order, coalition forces have be-

gun targeting selected targets of military importance to undermine Saddam Hussein's ability to wage war. These are the opening stages of what will be a broad and concerted campaign." Bush said that "the only way to limit (the war's) duration is to apply decisive force. We will accept no outcome but victory." The initial U.S. attack came about an hour and a half after the expiration of Bush's deadline for Hussein and his two sons to leave the country — a demand that was scorned throughout Wednesday by the Baghdad regime. Soon after the attack, which came at 5:33 a.m. local time, the Iraqis reiterated their defiance, vowing on the state-run television

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WAR ON IRAQ

SFGate.com

See SFGate (sfgate.com) for a complete overview of the conflict, including:

- A history of the dispute and a look at principal players.
- An interactive map of the region.
- Up-to-date weather reports on the war zone.
- A roundup of protests in the Bay Area and around the world.
- A guide to Web-based resources and news sites all over the globe.

The scene in Baghdad

Residents of the city, who kept their windows open throughout the night, knew something was coming. Then the first missile hit, and the air raid sirens began. **Page W10**

'Battle rattle'

A Chronicle reporter takes a wild and bumpy ride across the Kuwaiti desert with four members of Charlie Company in a 25-ton Bradley fighting vehicle. **Page W10**

Bay Area alert

Law enforcement officers patrolled freeways, waterways, bridges and oil refineries — and then somebody climbed onto the edge of the Golden Gate Bridge. **Page W3**

Mood of the nation

From San Francisco to New York City, Americans stood still to listen to President Bush say that the war had begun — and then they went about their business. **Page W5**

Democracy in Iraq?

Citing postwar Japan and Germany as historical precedents, President Bush often argues that a reborn Iraq can serve as a catalyst for democracy and peace in the Middle East. **Page W4**

Rob Morse's view

A beautiful spot overlooking San Francisco Bay is the scene of the final march of thousands of warriors — a march of white marble up a hillside. **Page W2**

Tim Goodman watches

Long-awaited flashes of light on their screens gave TV viewers a release from the nerve-wracking anticipation of the onset of war. **Page W2**

Kurds flee Hussein

Residents of Irbil, the capital of the Kurdish semi-state in northern Iraq, fled their home town, fearing it would become a target for a chemical counter-attack by Saddam Hussein. **Page W9**

Time comparison

