

World and Nation

Chemical warfare on rise in Middle East

From Associated Press reports

NICOSIA, Cyprus — The slaughter of Kurdish civilians in Iraqi poison gas attacks and Iranian warnings of retaliation underscore the growth of the chemical warfare arsenals of major Middle East powers.

Despite efforts to curb such weapons, their spread has added a dangerous new dimension to conflicts in the Middle East. Their use, but not their production, is banned under a 1925 Geneva agreement.

Tehran charges that Iraqi warplanes have dropped chemical bombs on several villages in northwestern Iraq after Iranian forces overran the Kurdish area in a ground offensive.

Western correspondents in Iraq have reported evidence to substantiate Iranian claims that 5,000 Iraqi

Kurds were killed and another 5,000 injured when Iraqi warplanes dropped chemical bombs on towns captured by the Iranians in northeast Iraq last week.

Nicholas Beeston of The Times of London reported from Halabja, one of the towns, that "hundreds and possibly thousands" of the Kurds, who have been rebelling against Baghdad for years, were killed.

Hashemi Rafsanjani, speaker of Iran's Parliament and Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini's representative on the Supreme Defense Council, warned Thursday that Iran will be forced to use chemical weapons in retaliation if the Iraqi attacks continue.

The intensity of Tehran's accusations against Iraq in recent days has

heightened fears that the Iranians may be seeking to justify using chemical weapons of their own.

U.S. State Department spokesman Charles Redman said Wednesday there was evidence Iran may already have fired chemical artillery shells into Iraq. He declined to elaborate.

Iraq, a signatory to the 1925 agreement, has been condemned by the United Nations four times since 1984 for using chemical weapons. The Iranians claim the Iraqis have launched around 100 chemical attacks in that period, mainly against Iranian troops.

Iranian-backed Kurdish guerrillas fighting the Baghdad regime for autonomy have claimed scores of such attacks on their villages in the last year. But last week's bombing

appears to have been the worst chemical attack in the Persian Gulf conflict.

Iraq has the biggest chemical weapons armory in the region, with sizable stocks of poison and nerve gases produced at three top-secret plants, Western military analysts told The Associated Press.

The sources, speaking on condition of anonymity, said Iraq is now producing Sarin, a highly lethal nerve gas that can kill in less than 10 minutes.

They said there are indications that the Iraqis are also working on germ warfare weapons.

The Syrians also have developed their own chemical weapons industry over the last few years, intelligence and diplomatic sources said.

Opposition leader ends exile, vows to 'get rid of Noriega'

From Associated Press reports

PANAMA CITY, Panama — A leading opposition figure returned from exile Thursday and rejoined an increasingly desperate struggle to topple Gen. Manuel Noriega.

"We have but one objective: to get rid of Noriega and build reconciliation and democracy in Panama," said Ricardo Arias Calderon, the president of the Christian Democratic Party, in an address to a chanting, cheering crowd of about 300 people who greeted his flight from Costa Rica.

The return of Arias Calderon, considered a presidential aspirant in elections scheduled for May 1989, came on the fourth day of a nationwide strike aimed at ousting Noriega, who is the head of the 15,000-member Defense Forces and is the power behind the civilian government.

Members of the Defense Forces are due to be paid Friday, and opposition leaders said their loyalty to Noriega could be tested if they don't get their paychecks.

West Bank violence continues

HEBRON, Occupied West Bank — Soldiers shot two Palestinians dead in street battles Thursday after a night of Israeli

News in Brief

raids in which Arabs were arrested and taken to schools converted into detention centers.

Thursday's deaths brought the number of Palestinians killed to 109 since the Arab rebellion began Dec. 8 in the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip, according to U.N. figures. One Israeli soldier has been killed.

Monsignor Michel Sabbah, Roman Catholic patriarch of Jerusalem, canceled the traditional Palm Sunday procession from the biblical Mount of Olives to Jerusalem's Old City because of continuing violence.

"And a Big Mac to go . . . far"

BELGRADE, Yugoslavia — Communism suffered its first Big Mac attack Thursday as McDonald's opened a restaurant in Yugoslavia, and police were called in to keep customers from getting too unruly under the golden arches.

"I just wanted to taste genuine American hamburgers," said Milica Nikolic, a high school student who waited for three hours to taste her first Big Mac.

North, Poindexter plead innocent to charges

From Associated Press reports

WASHINGTON — Former national security aides Oliver North and John Poindexter and two businessmen pleaded innocent Thursday to charges they ran the Iran-contra affair as a vast criminal conspiracy and defrauded the government of \$17 million.

One by one, the defendants were called before U.S. District Judge Gerhard Gesell at their arraignment, and were asked by courtroom clerk Barbara Montgomery, "How do you wish to plead?"

"Not guilty," replied Poindexter, President Ronald Reagan's former national security adviser, as did North, a top assistant to Poindexter.

"Not guilty, your honor," responded retired Air Force Maj. Gen. Richard Secord and Albert

Hakim, who controlled the money and procured the arms for the once-secret Iran-contra operation.

All four defendants were released on their personal recognizance and instructed to report weekly by telephone to a pre-trial agency. Although criminal defendants are often asked to surrender their passports, Gesell said he would not impose that condition.

Dressed in conservative business suits, the four men made their first appearance in court since a federal grand jury convened by Independent Counsel Lawrence Walsh 14 months ago handed down a 23-count indictment March 16.

North, retiring as a Marine lieutenant colonel May 1, and Poindexter, a retired Navy rear admiral, embraced before the judge entered the

crowded courtroom.

The defendants are charged with conspiring to defraud the United States "by deceitfully . . . organizing, directing and concealing" a program of support for the Nicaraguan contra rebels at a time such assistance was banned.

The indictment also said the defendants "knowingly did embezzle, steal and convert to their own use" part of the proceeds generated by the

sale of weapons to Iran.

Although no exact figure was specified in the theft count, it was reported elsewhere in the indictment that the arms sales generated proceeds of some \$30 million while the government was paid only \$12.2 million for the weapons.

Gesell set no trial date but said he would hold an early hearing to determine whether evidence gathered by Walsh is free of taint and therefore admissible.

Contras, Sandinistas sign cease-fire pact

From Associated Press reports

MANAGUA, Nicaragua — Nicaraguans reacted Thursday with hope tempered by memories of war to an agreement between the government and contra rebels that may bring peace for the first time since 1981.

During three days of negotiations in Sapoa, a border town that resulted in an agreement Wednesday night, both sides had said it was the last chance for peace in Nicaragua. The formal cease-fire is to begin April 1.

Leaders of the Sandinistas and the U.S.-sponsored contras stood side-by-side on a makeshift dais Wednesday

night in Sapoa, sang the national anthem together and signed the cease-fire.

During the three days, both sides retreated from hard positions, especially the Sandinistas, who stand to gain the most from an agreement that would virtually end the insurgency.

Under the cease-fire, the contras agreed not to accept military aid and to receive non-lethal supplies exclusively from neutral organizations. The Reagan administration, which has financed the rebels since they began fighting in late 1981, has been seeking congressional approval of

more funds.

Provisions of the agreement meet requirements of the regional peace plan signed Aug. 7 by all five Central American presidents — ending the fighting, granting political amnesty and restoring democratic freedoms.

Beginning Monday, also in Sapoa, negotiators will draw the lines of areas to which rebels will go during the first two weeks of the official cease-fire.

Nothing is said in the agreement about the contras laying down their weapons, so that may be another subject taken up in next week's

meeting. In past negotiations, the rebels insisted on keeping their weapons until provisions of any accord were carried out.

Also not mentioned is a reduction of the 80,000-member regular armed forces, the largest in Central America. The government said it has 300,000 people under arms, including army, reserves and civilian militia.

Gradual amnesty is provided for Nicaragua's 3,300 political prisoners, beginning Sunday. The deal also guarantees "unrestricted freedom of expression," demanded by the rebels, and permits all exiles to return home.

MOVIES AT THE UNION

STEVE MARTIN DARYL HANNAH
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7:00, 9:30 & 12:00
on Friday, March 25
\$1.50 (from Union Desk)

SUNDAY MATINEE

WILLY WONKA
THE CHOCOLATE FACTORY

Sunday, March 27
2:00 & 4:00

MICHAEL CAINE • JULIE WALTERS
Educating Rita

7:00 & 9:30
Saturday, March 26
(co-sponsored with Carolina Symposium)

Sunday, March 27

MAN FACING SOUTHEAST

7:00 & 9:30

Quit smoking.

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American Heart Association

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A special course of Intensive Spanish will be offered in the first summer term. Spanish 1 (4 credits), May 16-June 1, and Spanish 2 (4 credits), June 2-June 21. UNC students should pre-register for Spanish 1, Section 10 and Spanish 2, Section 10. Non-UNC students should contact the Office of the Summer Session, Peabody Hall.

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For the Record

"Police Roundup" on March 22 incorrectly reported that Donald Drew Frederick was a suspect in an automobile vandalism incident. He is not a suspect. Frederick reported the crime to Chapel Hill police. Police said Tuesday that they had no suspects in the incident.

The Daily Tar Heel regrets the error.

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