

World and Nation

Use of poison gas alarms officials

From Associated Press reports

WASHINGTON — Iraq's use of poison gas against its Kurdish minority is prompting concern that other nations bogged down in armed conflict might resort to the "silent killer" in violation of a universally accepted ban against the use of chemical weapons.

According to U.S. officials, there is little question that Iraq's use of mustard gas against Iranian forces influenced Iran's decision to end their 8-year-old Persian Gulf war last month.

Almost immediately after the cease-fire took effect, Iraq launched an offensive against its Kurdish minority as suspected collaborators

with Iran. Tens of thousands of Kurds were forced to flee to southern Turkey.

Last week, about nine days after the first reports of Iraqi chemical warfare began to circulate, Secretary of State George Shultz said he was convinced the allegations were true.

Shultz accused the Iraqis of "unjustifiable and abhorrent" behavior. The Senate then unanimously approved stringent economic sanctions against Iraq.

Iraq's minister of state for foreign affairs, Saddoun Hammadi, met with Shultz on Thursday and called the charges "absolutely baseless."

But well before the latest Iraqi

assault on the Kurds, a number of United Nations investigations concluded that Iraq — and, to a lesser extent, Iran — had engaged in chemical warfare since 1984.

The State Department has sharply criticized Iraq from time to time and unanimous U.N. Security Council resolutions have done the same. But the international reaction generally has been muted and unsustained, possibly reflecting the lack of global sympathy for Iran's fundamentalist Islamic regime.

In May, Iran complained that the absence of punitive measures against Iraq was having a disastrous effect. Indeed, a U.N. report issued two months later said use of chemical

weapons against Iran was intensifying and had become more frequent.

The 1925 Geneva Convention ban of the use of chemical weapons, which was signed by 105 nations, was seen as a major step toward humanizing armed conflict and assuring that the horrors of poison and nerve gas attacks in World War I would never be repeated.

That optimistic view has been changed by the Persian Gulf war and its ghastly aftermath, foreign affairs analysts say. They are now concerned that other war-weary nations may conclude that the benefits of using chemical weapons may outweigh the costs.

Space shuttle may not lift off on first try, program head says

From Associated Press reports

WASHINGTON — The head of the nation's space flight program cautioned Sunday that NASA might not be able to launch the space shuttle Discovery on the first attempt later this month.

"I think that when we do get to do a launch date on the latter part of this month, it wouldn't surprise me at all if it took us two or three times to get airborne," said Rear Adm. Richard Truly, the head of the shuttle program.

Truly, who is NASA associate administrator for space flight, said that if two recent successful simulations of crew and launch systems had been the real thing, a launch would not have taken place because of weather and winds.

Soldiers injured in crash

SCHWABISCH HALL, West Germany — A U.S. Army helicopter struck high tension wires and crashed into a field, injuring the two pilots and four soldiers on the ground, a military statement issued Sunday said.

The statement from Officials at the 5th Corps headquarters in Schwabisch Hall said the helicopter crashed Saturday afternoon near Bad Mergentheim, 95 miles southeast of Frankfurt.

The pilots, from the 3rd Cavalry Regiment stationed in Fort Bliss,

News in Brief

Texas, were seriously injured, the statement said.

Four U.S. soldiers on the ground were injured when they tried to rescue the pilots from the wreckage, the statement continued. The four men suffered minor burns from power lines dragged down by the helicopter.

Olympic flame reaches Korea

UNIFICATION OBSERVATORY, South Korea — The Olympic flame reached the doorstep of North Korea on Sunday and was lighted atop the Unification Observatory, a monument that overlooks the demilitarized zone, as it made its way toward Seoul.

White-clad runners, including an American, splashed along a coastal highway in a steady rain and transferred the blaze from torch to torch before Olympic officials conducted the noisy ceremony near the frontier of the communist nation that is leading the boycott of the summer Games.

Despite the downpour, thousands of people lined the parade route, which took the flame down the main streets of dozens of fishing villages in northeastern South Korea.

Fires continue to rage in Yellowstone

From Associated Press reports

YELLOWSTONE NATIONAL PARK, Wyo. — Buffalo graze nonchalantly near flaming trees, but people are not reacting so coolly, and residents once worried about losing business to forest fires now fear losing their homes.

Fire has destroyed buildings around the geyser, Old Faithful, and has threatened tourist towns on the

periphery of the country's first national park.

The Montana towns of Cooke City and Silver Gate, located outside the park's northeast entrance, were evacuated twice last week. Jardine, Mont., near the northern gate, was evacuated Saturday.

Firefighters saved Cooke City and Silver Gate only by burning thousands of acres of forest to remove fuel

from the fire's path. The so-called backfires left the once-picturesque towns flanked by black, skeletal trees.

"All we can do... is herd it around improvements and structures — and don't get anybody killed," said Bob Martinez, a structure protection officer in Cooke City.

The 2.2 million-acre park, dedicated in 1872, attracts more than two million visitors a year who marvel at

geysers, hot springs, mountain scenery and wild animals.

But tourists have stayed away in droves this summer, and residents of tourism-dependent towns around the park have complained bitterly about the Park Service's initial reluctance to respond to the fires.

"A guy gets really bitter when it keeps dragging on and on and on," said David Klatt of Cooke City, who spent three days in a motel room outside of town last week, during an evacuation.

In this summer of heat and drought, Yellowstone is suffering the worst fires in at least 200 years.

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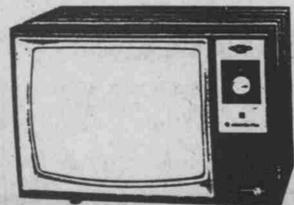
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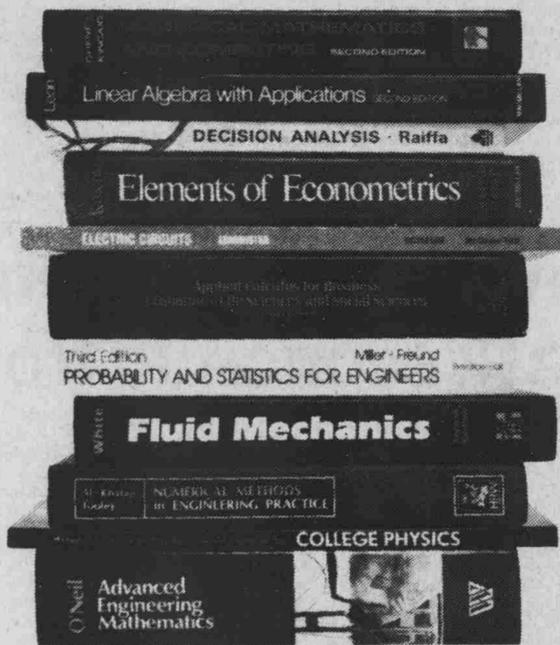
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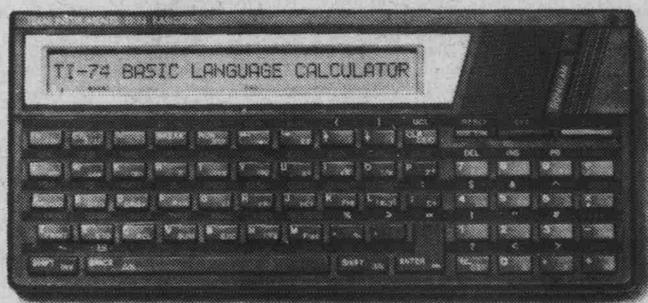
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