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U.S. Marines occupy Saddam Hussein's presidential palace in Tikrit. The troops captured a key Tigris River bridge there. **REUTERS**

## Tikrit falls amid little resistance

Hussein's hometown is last to succumb; 'major combat' appears over

'Just one Iraqi nation'

Troops continue search for evidence of weapons of mass destruction

### More inside

**101st Airborne:** On the alert amid welcomes. [Page 11A]

**Reconstruction:** A retired U.S. general takes charge of rebuilding Iraq. [Page 13A]

### On SunSpot

For Iraq developments throughout the day, go to [www.sunspot.net](http://www.sunspot.net)

FROM WIREREPORTS

TIKRIT, Iraq — Saddam Hussein's hometown of Tikrit fell yesterday with unexpectedly light resistance, the last Iraqi city to succumb to overpowering U.S.-led ground and air forces.

In Washington, a senior Pentagon general said "major combat engagements" probably are over in the 26-day-old war, while the Bush administration had harsh words for Syria, warning Iraq's neighbor not to harbor fleeing members of Hussein's regime.

The situation was calm in the center of Tikrit yesterday morning, with few people on the streets outside of Hussein's sprawling presidential palace. But in the afternoon, three Cobra attack helicopters fired machine guns at targets in the city, and four loud explosions were heard in the distance.

The Marines attacked Sunday with a force of several thousand troops, backed by more than 300 light-armed vehicles to support rapid movement. Their objective was to wipe out what is believed to be one of the last large concentrations of forces loyal to the government.

"There was less resistance than we anticipated," Brig. Gen. Vincent Brooks told reporters, as American ground troops moved into the city after days of punishing airstrikes.

American forces captured a key Tigris River bridge in the heart of town and seized the presidential palace without a fight as they rolled past abandoned Iraqi military equipment.

They set up checkpoints to keep prominent regime figures from leaving, and a line of armored vehicles was parked in front of a bazaar inside the city.

"We have had engagements, and we have defeated the enemy in every one of those engagements," said Capt. Frank Thorp, a spokesman [See War, 10A]

## U.S. forces wind down operations in Iraq war

2 carriers ordered home, airstrikes cut as focus shifts to reconstruction

By TOM BOWMAN  
SUN NATIONAL STAFF

WASHINGTON — Combat operations in Iraq began winding down yesterday as the Pentagon ordered two aircraft carrier battle groups home, reduced the number of airstrikes and began the transition from battlefield action to stabilization and reconstruction of the war-torn country, officials said.

With President Saddam Hussein's forces routed, a different mix of troops is on the way, officials said, from military police and civil affairs units to engineers who will help rebuild the country.

Maj. Gen. Stanley McChrystal, vice director of operations for the Joint Chiefs of Staff, told reporters at a Pentagon briefing that while there still will be some "smaller, but sharp fights" throughout the country, "I would anticipate that the major combat operations are over."

Similarly, in Doha, Qatar, headquarters of the U.S. Central Command, Brig. Gen. Vincent Brooks said: "It's an important transition point that we're at, but we still have much more work to do."

McChrystal said U.S.-led forces are moving toward a new stage of operations, providing a safe and secure environment throughout Iraq, though he said Gen. Tommy R. Franks, the overall military commander, is not ready to proclaim a post-combat phase.

"The anticipation is that that would occur in a rolling nature... probably at a different point in each part of the country, based upon conditions there," he said.

With the war in its fourth week, the Pentagon announced that two of the five U.S. carriers that took part in airstrikes over Iraq, along with their supporting warships, would be returning to their bases. And the number of precision airstrikes yesterday dropped to fewer than 200, said McChrystal, a fraction of what they were a week ago.

Deployment of the 1st Cavalry Division has been put on hold, officials said. The tank-heavy unit from Fort Hood, Texas, was expected [See Military, 10A]

## Skilled Iraqis line up for work restoring services in Baghdad

Doctors, teachers, police, many part of old regime, are among those sought

By JOHN MURPHY  
SUN FOREIGN STAFF

BAGHDAD, Iraq — Pressed against prickly coils of razor wire outside the Palestine Hotel in central Baghdad yesterday, Kassim Madlool waved his Iraqi identification card like a drowning man calling for help.

But what the university-trained mechanical engineer really wanted was to throw his war-ravaged country a lifeline.

Madlool, 35, was one of hundreds of doctors, teachers, accountants, police officers, engineers, bureaucrats, television producers, translators and other professionals — many of whom were part of President Saddam Hussein's regime — who answered the call by the U.S. mili-



Iraqis crowd the U.S. Marines' compound at the Palestine Hotel in Baghdad in search of jobs in the new Iraq. A Kurd wrote his plea. **JOHN MAKELY: SUN STAFF**

tary for skilled workers to help restore water, electricity, telephone service, medical care and order to this chaotic city of nearly 5 million people.

They crushed together out-

## White House warns Syria its acts risk sanctions

'Rogue nation' accused of harboring Iraqi officials

By PETER HERMANN  
SUN FOREIGN STAFF

AMMAN, Jordan — The Bush administration sharply criticized Syria for a second consecutive day yesterday, accusing its leaders of giving refuge to senior Iraqi officials and possessing chemical weapons — allegations that Syria denied.

U.S. Secretary of State Colin L. Powell for the first time raised the possibility of imposing sanctions on Syria, noting the "new environment" created by the fall of Iraq and advising that Syria's leaders "should review their actions and their behavior."

White House press secretary Ari Fleischer was even more critical, calling Syria "a rogue nation" and warning that it needs to adapt its actions to the region's radically changed environment.

"I think that what's next is Syria needs to seriously ponder the implications of their actions in terms of harboring Iraqis who need not and should not be harbored," Fleischer said. "They should think [See Syria, 13A]

### INSIDE

#### Williams leaves Kan. to coach Tar Heels

Roy Williams, who took the Kansas Jayhawks to the past 14 NCAA tournaments including this year's title game, leaves to coach North Carolina. [Page 1D]



#### Today

**Cirque du Soleil** performs its magic through May 4 under the *Grand Chapiteau* in Fells Point. [Page 1E]

#### Weather

**Sunny.** High, 78; low, 54. Yesterday's city high, 67; low, 48. [Page 10B]

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#### SunSpot

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The Sun's 167th Year: No. 105



## To help heart, jog instead of walking, study suggests

Heavy exercise only kind found to lower death risk

ASSOCIATED PRESS

A half-hour brisk walk every day may make you feel better, but it is not enough to ward off premature death from heart trouble, new research suggests.

A study published this week in the medical journal *Heart* found that only vigorous exercise — such as jogging, hiking, climbing stairs, racket sports and swimming — seems to help lower the risk of early death from heart disease. Other research has shown that moderate exercise helps.

Official government recommendations in the United States and elsewhere say 30 minutes of moderate activity every day, such as brisk walking, is sufficient for heart health. A major World Health Organization consensus report published last month reached the same conclusion.

However, the latest study, conducted by scientists at Queen's University in Belfast, Northern Ire- [See Heart, 5A]

side the wire barriers leading to this high-rise hotel where the U.S. Marines are based, waiting for a chance to get an interview with military officials.

"I worked in the oil fields," Madlool said as he jostled to keep his place in line. "I know my country's resources."

Until a month ago, Madlool had worked on an oil tanker near Basra for the state-run industry. Two days before the U.S. invasion of Iraq, he fled with co-workers. He has no idea whether he has a job to return to, but hopes the U.S. government will find a place for him in the new Iraq. [See Baghdad, 12A]

## Bearing a child, beating the odds

**Pregnancy:** Though many teen parents in the U.S. drop out of school, a city mom defies the trend, seeking her diploma.

By SARA NEUFELD  
SUN STAFF

She was 17 when she got pregnant.

Her boyfriend had already dropped out of high school. Her troubled mother had sent her to live with her grandmother five years earlier. She was attending a school where some juniors and seniors struggle to read.

Statistically speaking, Channel Maye was doomed.

Nationally, more than two-thirds of teen-agers who start families before 18 do not graduate from high school. And with more than 2,000 babies a year born to girls and women under 20, Baltimore has the country's highest rate of births to teen



Senior Channel Maye (center) feeds her daughter, Dayona Barnes, at Southwestern High School's day care center. **AMY DAVIS: SUN STAFF**

moms and is bucking a trend of declining teen pregnancies.

Channel could have easily become just another number. She didn't.

Today, she is 19 and less than two months away from a di-

ploma at Southwestern High School. She is getting ready to start cosmetology school. And she is making ends meet for her and her 11-month-old daughter, Dayona Barnes, styling hair in her spare time. [See Teen, 6A]