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U.S. turns up heat on Syria

'Rogue nation' warned sanctions are possible if it harbors former Iraqi leaders.

BY PETER HERMANN
BALTIMORE SUN

AMMAN, Jordan — The Bush administration sharply criticized Syria for a second consecutive day Monday, accusing its leaders of giving refuge to

■ Israel wants U.S. to pressure Syria/6A

senior Iraqi officials and possessing chemical weapons — allegations Syria denied.

U.S. Secretary of State Colin 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, call-

ing Syria "a rogue nation" and warning that it needed 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 seriously about their program to develop and to have chemical weapons. I think it's time to think through where they want their

place to be in the world."

U.S. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld told reporters that "we have intelligence that indicates that some Iraqi people have been allowed into Syria, in some cases to stay, in some cases to transit."

He said U.S. intelligence officials also "have seen the chemical weapons tests in Syria over the past 12, 15 months."

Syrian officials vehemently have denied they have given refuge to Saddam's deputies or possess weapons of

mass destruction.

"Syria has no chemical weapons," Syrian Foreign Ministry spokesman Buthania Shaaban said in Damascus, the capital. "The only chemical, biological and nuclear weapons in the region are in Israel."

Asked about the possibility of military action against Syria, a White House official said, "We don't rule anything out, but nobody is talking about that right now."

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Comfort's hero comes home



JERRY LARA/STAFF

The funeral procession for Army Spc. James M. Kiehl, 22, makes its way through Center Point. Kiehl, who was killed in an attack in Iraq, was buried Monday at the Center Point Community Cemetery.

'REAL, RURAL AMERICA PATRIOTISM'

Young and old pay their respects

BY ZEKE MACCORMACK
EXPRESS-NEWS STAFF WRITER

CENTER POINT — As most of America rejoiced in the rescue of U.S. prisoners of war, some Hill Country residents commemorated a fallen local soldier Monday with respect, gratitude and patriotism.

Veterans at the services for Army Spc. James M. Kiehl, 22, said they'd never seen a military funeral conducted with such passion and precision. "This is real, rural America patriotism," said Leonard Stegman, 85, state chaplain for the Military Order of the Purple Heart, Chapter No. 1836 of San Antonio, as an honor guard fired rifle volleys at a graveside ceremony at Center Point Community Cemetery. A crowd estimated at more than 1,000 attended.

Kiehl, of Comfort, was killed after his unit, the 507th Maintenance Company, was attacked near Nasiriyah, Iraq, on March 23.

The last two miles of roads leading to the cemetery were lined by nearly 500 students who held

See COMFORT/9A



KIEHL



GLORIA FERNIZ/STAFF

Jill Kiehl watches as members of an Army honor guard fold the flag that had draped the casket of her husband, James M. Kiehl.

THE LAST STRONGHOLD

Major combat operations are declared over in Iraq

BY JONATHAN S. LANDAY,
SARA OLKON AND MARTIN MERZER
KNIGHT RIDDER

TIKRIT, Iraq — The Pentagon declared the end of significant fighting Monday as Marines stormed this city, the last stronghold of Saddam Hussein.

"The major combat operations are over," Maj. Gen. Stanley McChrystal said after more than 3,000 Marines fought their way to the center of Saddam's ancestral hometown.

As fighting wound down, Pentagon officials disclosed plans to pull two aircraft carriers from the Persian Gulf, and U.S. officials looked forward to a meeting today near Nasiriyah, where they hoped to begin forging an interim government for post-Saddam Iraq.

The military action, however, focused on the Marines' success in securing Tikrit.

They seized an opulent presidential palace and rolled their armored vehicles along the city's broad boulevards.

They watched white flags flutter from taxis, cement homes and mud huts.

They accepted roses from a few grateful residents — and stayed alert for suicide attacks by the remnants of pro-Saddam militias.

They suffered no casualties as they easily overwhelmed small pockets of resistance from Saddam's militiamen during the push into the city from the west.

"There were small groups of three to 10 guys," said Lt. Greg Starace of Paramus, N.J., whose 1st Light Armored Reconnaissance unit of grime-covered armored personnel carriers sat on a bridge spanning the Tigris River.

"They'd pop some mortars and

See U.S./7A



■ 3rd Infantry Division shifts focus to peacekeeping operations/7A
■ A meeting today will start mapping Iraq's future/8A
■ POWs say they feared for their lives/9A

INSIDE TODAY'S PAPER



Phone fight

Verizon set to battle SBC for Alamo City phone directory customers, advertisers.

Business/1E

Tax time

Tax returns, extensions must be postmarked by midnight tonight.

Metro/1B

Labor pains

Lack of collective bargaining deal forces WNBA to cancel draft.

Sports/1C

Bill against gay marriages gets early OK



LEGISLATURE

Final Senate vote on bill sponsored by S.A. lawmaker is expected today.

BY RACHEL STONE
EXPRESS-NEWS AUSTIN BUREAU

AUSTIN — The Texas Senate gave preliminary approval Monday to a San Antonio lawmaker's proposal to keep Texas from recognizing same-sex marriages or civil unions.

The measure passed easily on an un-

recorded voice vote, and final approval is expected today.

A similar measure is headed for the House after clearing a committee vote.

Same-sex marriages aren't legal in any state, but Vermont allows for civil unions, which give same-sex couples legal privileges similar to those of married couples.

Senate Bill 7, written by Republican Sen. Jeff Wentworth and signed by 21 other senators, would nullify the state's



WENTWORTH

constitutional obligation to recognize unions that are legal in other states.

"It states that a marriage between persons of the same sex or a civil union is contrary to the public policy of Texas and is void," Wentworth told the Senate during floor debate. "I believe Texas should adopt as its public policy the traditional marriage between one man and one woman."

Some senators called the measure unnecessary, though none spoke in favor of granting people the right to enter into same-sex unions.

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Today's Weather
Windy
High 80, Low 62
Full weather report, Page 10C

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