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Top General Sees Plan to Shock Iraq Into Surrendering

By ERIC SCHMITT and ELISABETH BUMILLER

WASHINGTON, March 4 — The nation's top military officer said today that the Pentagon's war plan for Iraq entailed shocking the Iraqi leadership into submission quickly with an attack "much, much, much different" from the 43-day Persian Gulf war in 1991.

Gen. Richard B. Myers, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, declined to give details. But other military officials have said the plan calls for unleashing 3,000 precision-guided bombs and missiles in the first 48 hours of a short air campaign, to be followed quickly by ground operations.

"If asked to go into conflict in Iraq, what you'd like to do is have it be a short conflict," General Myers told reporters at a breakfast meeting. "The best way to do that would be to have such a shock on the system that the Iraqi regime would have to assume early on the end was inevitable."

General Myers gave a stark warning that the American attack would result in Iraqi civilian casualties despite the military's best efforts to prevent them.

He said disarming Iraq would define victory, not capturing or killing President Saddam Hussein. He also added that American forces would open a second front from the north against Iraq, with or without Turkey's help. "It'll be tougher without Turkey, but nevertheless it'll happen," he said.

With 200,000 American military personnel in the Persian Gulf and 60,000 more on their way, General Myers declined to give a timetable for war other than to say that the military was ready to attack on President Bush's order.

But several diplomatic and military issues remained to be resolved, including the possibility of a second resolution on Iraq from the United Nations Security Council. Officials said the United States was likely to call for a vote next week.

Secretary of State Colin L. Powell said today that he was "increasingly optimistic" about securing a majority of nine or more votes on the Council. "We don't know whether we have nine votes or 10 votes, or more," he said.

The White House was also trying to keep pressure on Turkey, saying that Turkey would not receive \$15 billion in grants and loans now that its Parliament had turned down a request for tens of thousands of American troops to use the country as a base to attack Iraq.

"The particular package that we've been talking to them about was predicated on assistance and cooperation in any plan for the use of force against Iraq," said Ari Fleischer, the White House spokesman. He said the White House was not willing to increase the amount of the grants and loans to try again to secure Turkish approval.

With the northern-front issue unsettled and one leading alternative — deploying the 101st Airborne Division from Kuwait — still one to two weeks from being in place, some military officials said any attack could be delayed until late March.

That could fit with emerging diplomatic and military timetables. A vote late next week in the Security Council would roughly coincide with the arrival in Kuwait of many of the 101st Airborne's helicopters. Other units in Kuwait could deploy north sooner, if needed.

Administration officials said a vote on the Council resolution effectively authorizing an American-led attack on Iraq could come next week, after Hans Blix and Dr. Mohamed ElBaradei, the chief United Nations weapons inspectors, report to the Council on Friday on Iraq's compliance with United Nations demands that Iraq disarm.

Mr. Fleischer said today that the administration planned to call for a vote "shortly after" the inspectors' report. Administration officials say Mr. Bush could order an attack soon after a United Nations vote. But President Bush has repeatedly said that he will disarm Iraq with a "coalition of the willing" even without Security Council approval.

"The choice is Saddam Hussein's to make," Mr. Bush said again today.

Western diplomats said Russia was considering whether to offer its own resolution, perhaps in an effort to break the deadlock between France and Germany and the United States.

The intervention of President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia could raise the diplomatic ante for President Bush as he seeks Security Council endorsement for war while also trying to avoid a divisive split among allies and post-cold-war partners.

The Russian foreign minister, Igor S. Ivanov, said in London that Russia probably would not abstain from a Security Council vote, which diplomats interpreted as a warning to Washington that it had to compromise and give the inspectors more time.

A veto from any of the permanent members of the Council would kill a second resolution. Along with the United States, they are Britain, Russia, France and China.

So far, France, China, Germany, Syria and Russia are opposed. The administration counts on four Security Council votes, its own and those of Britain, Spain and Bulgaria. Six nations — Pakistan, Chile, Mexico, Angola, Guinea and Cameroon — remain undecided.

Mr. Fleischer and Mr. Powell also left open the possibility that the administration would not call for a vote if it did not have 9 votes among the 15 members.

"Early next week, we'll make a judgment on what we have heard, make a judgment on whether it's time to put the resolution up to a vote," Mr. Powell told RTL television of Germany, part of a series of interviews with European networks.

The White House also announced today that Mr. Bush would meet on Wednesday with Pio Laghi, a retired cardinal sent by Pope John Paul II to Mr. Bush to make "every effort" to avoid war.

As the diplomatic maneuvering intensified, Gen. Tommy R. Franks, the commander of American forces in the Persian Gulf, arrived here for briefings with Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld and Mr. Bush over the next two days.

Turkey is a main topic of discussions. There are now 30 Navy cargo ships in the eastern Mediterranean, waiting for Turkish approval to unload tanks and other heavy equipment for the Fourth Infantry Division. Some ships have had to refuel in other foreign ports.

"There are several options on the table," General Myers said. "Some are easier to execute. As in most wars, logistics plays a very big role. It helps define what the art of the possible is. The equation changes dramatically whether or not you have support from Turkey or you have to find support some other way."

The options include dispatching the 101st Airborne Division and its fleet of helicopters north from Kuwait to attack targets in northern Iraq. Another alternative would be to fly or parachute troopers to secure air bases in northern Iraq. Tanks and other heavy equipment could be flown in later.

In addition to the heavy use of precision-guided bombs and missiles, the war planning includes missions by allied Special Operations forces in and around Baghdad, attacking leadership, command and control and storage sites for weapons of mass destruction.

"If your template is Desert Storm, you have to imagine something much, much, much different," General Myers said, issuing a warning to journalists who plan to cover any war from Baghdad. "I would just be very, very careful about how you do your business." In 1991, allied aircraft conducted a 39-day bombing campaign before ground troops moved into Kuwait. Commanders this time plan a nearly simultaneous attack by land, air and sea.

General Myers said that throughout the campaign, the American military would go to "extraordinary lengths" to avoid civilian casualties.

"But we can't forget that war is inherently violent," he said. "People are going to die. As hard as we try to limit civilian casualties, it will occur. We need to condition people that that is war. People get the idea this is going to be antiseptic. Well, it's not going to be."