

Handout #2 – Articles from *The Riyadh Daily*, April 3
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US Launches Final Push
Just 50km Away from Baghdad
Republican Guard Units Destroyed

Baghdad/Karbala [Agencies]

US troops were just 30 miles (50 kilometers) from Baghdad late Wednesday after a major ground offensive dealt heavy losses to Iraq's elite Republican Guard during a "final push" on the capital from the south. After two weeks of fighting, the US forces are now pointing a "dagger" at the heart of the Iraqi regime, US Brigadier General Vincent Brooks told a press briefing in Qatar. "We've moved to within 30 miles of Baghdad, but there remains tough fighting ahead," Major General Stanley McChrystal, Joint Staff vice director of operations, told a Pentagon news conference.

US Army and Marine divisions punched their way north in a major two-pronged offensive, securing key routes to Baghdad and putting infantry units within striking distance of President Saddam Hussein's seat of power. There were also fears however that Saddam may have drawn a "trigger line" in the sand as US troops close in on Baghdad which, once crossed, would be the cue for chemical or biological attacks, officers said. The double-headed attack saw US troops passing through a tight strip of desert southwest of Baghdad at the holy city of Karbala, while Marines crossed the Tigris river to the southeast, crushing sections of the elite Republican Guard. "The final push to Baghdad is now on," a senior US Marines officer said.

Bombing Continues

As the ground forces fought from the south the aerial bombing in and around Baghdad continued. Powerful explosions lit up the sky around the capital late Wednesday and warplanes roared overhead in new air attacks, following a day of relentless bombardment that left a plume of black smoke over Saddam's main Republican Palace compound, a potent symbol of his 24-year grip on power. A spokesman with the Central Command in Qatar said the Baghdad, Medina and Nebuchadnezzar divisions of the Republican Guard were being engaged by US troops south of the capital, while the Adnan division was being attacked from the air to the north. The Baghdad and Medina divisions are "no longer credible forces" but have been reinforced with regular Iraqi army troops, McChrystal said.

CLUSTER BOMBS

US forces also dropped a new version of a cluster bomb "for the first time in combat history" on an Iraqi tank column in the center of the country. The bomb adapts to wind and weather to hit targets more accurately, US Central Command said. Human rights groups have long protested the use of cluster bombs, which they say cause undue risks to civilians. However, a defiant Saddam vowed that the US and British forces would be repelled if they tried to take Baghdad, state television reported. "Many thousands of soldiers are defending the homeland... and they will not allow them (allied forces) to go into Baghdad without defeating and repelling them," Saddam said in response to a message of support from one of his nieces, the television said.

Iraqi state television later showed Saddam chairing a meeting which paid tribute to the "heroic resistance" of the Iraqi fighters. US army Divisional commander Colonel Will Grimsley said his troops had met only "disorganised" resistance in the attack near Karbala, adding that Iraqi soldiers were "voting with their feet" and fleeing as the US troops advanced. In Basra, seen as key to controlling the southeast, British troops were still waiting before making a final push to take the city.

JORDAN KING CALLS INVASION

Meanwhile Jordan's King Abdullah II joined the Arab chorus of opposition to the US-led war describing the attacks on neighboring Iraq as an "invasion". Abdullah, in an interview with the official Petra news agency, also expressed his "pain and sadness" over civilian war casualties in Iraq, whom he described as "martyrs". "Frankly speaking, we were asked to open our airspace to military aircraft but we steadfastly refused," the king told the director of Petra who was asking him to comment on reports that US and British planes used Jordan to attack Iraq.

MATERNITY CLINIC ATTACKED

One person was killed and a dozen people were wounded when allied bombing targeting the site of Baghdad's annual trade fair blasted a Red Crescent maternity clinic Wednesday, witnesses said. The clinic was empty at the moment of the strike at about (700 GMT) in a central district of Baghdad but around 15 women were waiting at the entrance to undergo tests, Dr. Mohammad Ibrahim, an obstetrician, told AFP. He said a dozen people, mostly women, were wounded. One woman had a miscarriage as a result of the shock. The occupant of a Mercedes smashed by the blast died on the spot, a policeman at the site said. The driver of a red Toyota, which was also destroyed by the bombing, was seriously wounded.

NO NEED FOR SECURITY COUNCIL SESSION ON IRAQ: US

US ambassador to the United Nations John Negroponte said Wednesday he saw no need for a UN General Assembly session on Iraq. "We do not think that it is either necessary or desirable," he told journalists. "We noticed some talks among delegations, perhaps Arab delegations, and from the non-aligned organization. We see no reason, no reason whatsoever, to transport this issue to the General Assembly," Negroponte said.

Iraqi TV off the air

Iraqi state television went off the air late Wednesday following a day of intensive bombardment around the capital Baghdad, an AFP correspondent in the city said. Domestic television went silent around 11:50 pm (2050 GMT), but satellite television was still being received abroad. US airstrikes have repeatedly targeted state television buildings and the information ministry, with military planners believing Saddam Hussein's propaganda apparatus is a key element securing his control over the country.

Treated in Germany

A wounded 19-year-old US female soldier, Jessica Lynch rescued in an overnight operation in Iraq was expected to be flown in to a US military hospital in Germany late Wednesday, a US spokesman said. The spokesman for Ramstein air base in southwest Germany said Army Private First Class Lynch was to be taken straight for treatment at the nearby US military hospital at Landstuhl. Lynch, whose unit in the 507th Maintenance Company was captured by Iraqi forces after getting lost in the desert, was snatched from a hospital in the southern town of Nasiriyah in a special forces operation after being held for more than a week.

Article #2 - also from *Riyadh Daily*

Psychological Warfare

US Spreads Doubts Whether Saddam Is Still Alive

Washington

The Bush administration has intensified a campaign -- using radio broadcasts and other communications with Iraqi military leaders -- to sow doubts about whether President Saddam Hussein is still alive and in control of the country, senior administration and military officials said Thursday. American officials say they have still reached no firm conclusions about whether Saddam Hussein survived an attack two weeks ago. But they are trying to turn that uncertainty to battlefield advantage, attempting to raise questions in the minds of Iraqi military commanders about whether they should fight for a leader who may be dead or incapacitated. "From what our intelligence is picking up, some of the Iraqi commanders themselves have not heard from him," said one senior US official. "And we don't know ourselves. So you could call this psychological warfare, or you could call it exploitation of the biggest mystery out there."

The administration's effort to raise doubts about Saddam comes after American military officials have reported to the Pentagon that most Iraqis encountered by American forces believe that Saddam is still alive. President Bush himself has discussed the issue in at least one meeting this week and is "deeply intrigued" about Saddam's fate, according to a participant. "The consensus was that the mystery about Saddam is growing, and that could be useful to us as we head into Baghdad," said one participant. If Saddam is alive, officials said, the administration's decision to question why he has not appeared in public may help flush him out -- or give clues to his whereabouts.

In briefings, the White House spokesman, Ari Fleischer, and Defense Secretary Donald H Rumsfeld have repeatedly noted that Saddam, who in recent years has rarely appeared in public, has not done so since before the war started two weeks ago. They have questioned whether tapes of Saddam, shown on Iraqi television, were pre-recorded. The Fleischer and Rumsfeld briefings, translated into Arabic, are now being broadcast into Iraq by American forces on various frequencies. Some captured Iraqis have told American forces that rumors that Saddam's family is fleeing are spreading fast - and administration officials said the United States is doing everything it can to fuel that speculation.

Other officials have expressed concern that until recent days many ordinary Iraqis have had little reason to question whether Saddam remains in power. Regional Baath Party offices - symbols of Saddam's rule - were largely unscathed until last weekend. Iraqi paramilitary troops and the secret police have been active, convincing many Iraqis that the Saddam government is still intact, American intelligence officials said. In cities across the south, Baath Party headquarters have now been attacked by allied bombing and raids by special operations forces. One official noted that when Shiites revolted in Basra in 1991, one of their first targets was the Baath Party headquarters in Basra. "If we underestimated anything, it was Saddam's ability to project the perception that he is still in charge," one intelligence official said. "We haven't seen a massive uprising, and we think that is because most of the people are still convinced he is alive."

American intelligence officials said today that they have not yet heard Saddam or either of his two sons issuing orders since the initial raid on his bunker that started the war on the evening of March 19, Washington time. American intelligence is convinced that he was in the bunker at the time of the raid, but do not know whether he survived. Intelligence officials say that the United States has not been able to identify any members of Saddam's inner circle who are trying to coordinate Iraqi forces in the field, or who is in overall command. The questions about Saddam resumed Thursday when he did not appear on television, but the Iraqi government issued another statement in his name. (WP)