

# International Intelligence

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## ***Kuwaiti regime gags 'dissident' official***

Kuwaiti officials shut down a press conference in Kuwait City on March 7, at which a Kuwaiti military attaché accused his government of ignoring his repeated warnings last July that Iraq was planning an imminent invasion of Kuwait.

Army Col. Said Matar was silenced by Kuwait's planning minister and several Army officers, in the midst of a briefing in which he recounted how his cables predicting the Aug. 2 invasion were not acted upon by the Kuwaiti government. Planning Minister Sulaiman Mutawa told reporters to leave, saying the briefing was "finished."

Colonel Matar, who was based in the Kuwaiti consulate in Basra, Iraq, said that as early as April, he began sending "many reports" to the Kuwaiti Foreign and Defense Ministries warning of an Iraqi military operation against Kuwait. On July 25, he said, "I told the Kuwaiti government Iraq would invade Kuwait, and I warned them and even gave them the time"—Aug. 2.

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## ***Between Scylla and Charybdis***

"Have the allies beaten Charybdis to win Scylla?" asked the editorialist for France's *Le Figaro* newspaper, Franz-Olivier Giesbert, in a commentary on March 5. Up until now, Giesbert has been an enthusiastic supporter of the Bush-Thatcher war in the Persian Gulf.

Under the headline "Lebanonization," Giesbert quoted the adage: "You begin a war when you want; you end it when you can." It seemed at first that the U.S.-led coalition would defy this adage, with its military-operational victory, but "there is one small exception which changes everything." Now the "secondary effects" of the war "are being revealed, and they may upset, from top to bottom, the political geography" of the region.

Now, the territorial integrity of Iraq is in question, with a trend toward "civil war and partition." This is nothing to be thankful about, he wrote, recalling "the old oriental proverb: He who spits on a wasp's nest should not be surprised if he gets stung." This will apply to the coalition countries, if they let Iraq sink into the darkness of fundamentalism.

According to Giesbert, "everything is in place for the great settling of accounts" inside Iraq. Five million Iraqi Kurds, a portion of the 25 million Kurds in the region, are moving into action. A force of 10,000 Iraqi prisoners-of-war in Iran is being mobilized to move into Iraq. Iran could soon become the greatest danger in the region, if a government "friendly to Iran" is installed in Baghdad. If the coalition partners have, indeed, "beaten Charybdis to win Scylla," the result will be a Muslim fundamentalist backlash unforeseen in the past.

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## ***German President in overture to India***

German President Richard von Weizsäcker, during talks in New Delhi at the beginning of March, called for special efforts to prevent the outbreak of North-South conflicts. He called on India to take a major part in this, in the context of a reinvigorated Non-Aligned Movement in which India would resume its former leading role.

In a speech at the German-Indian Chamber of Commerce on March 5, Von Weizsäcker said:

"Under all circumstances, it is necessary to prevent the conflict in the Gulf region from mounting into long-term tension between the North and the South. On the contrary, the détente in East-West relations must be utilized to finally concentrate our potential on the encouragement of economic progress in the southern hemisphere."

Von Weizsäcker called for intensive cooperation and joint ventures between the industries of India and Germany, with special emphasis on eastern Germany. The German

Minister of Third World Affairs, Carl-Dieter Spranger, who accompanied the President on his visit, gave public assurances to Indian President Ramaswami Venkataraman that his country would remain "the number one address in German development aid to the Third World, as in previous years."

The German President called for closer German-Indian consultations—for example at the United Nations—and encouraged the Indians to develop their "traditionally good relations with the Soviet Union," with the perspective of strengthening the international role of the Soviets in respect to the "future shaping of the relations between North and South." In his view, the Soviet Union played a positive role in the crisis in the Persian Gulf.

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## ***Walesa calls for new Polish elections***

Polish President Lech Walesa on March 7 called for parliament to dissolve itself and make way for immediate elections. "It is high time that all the elected authorities of the republic originate from the free choice of its citizens," Walesa said. "I am convinced that Poland today needs instant elections. It is necessary to put an end to the growing disillusion and mistrust of political institutions, including parliament."

Walesa called for the scrapping of the deal Solidarnosc made with the Communist Party in 1989, according to which two-thirds of the 460 seats in the Assembly are reserved for Communists and their allies. "It's time to reject the outdated contract," he said. "It used to be useful, but today it ties up the nation's energy and demoralizes public life."

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## ***War was 'an offense against the human spirit'***

The Gulf war was "not historic, nor just, nor necessary," but only elevated "the cult of the brutal soldier," the London *Guardian's* Edward Pearce wrote on March 6. The reali-

ty of the war mainly consisted in "burning enemies to death as a purely recreational activity, fulfilling no needs except psychological ones better not discussed."

The war was a "soiled and degrading war," Pearce wrote. "Soldiers have been asked to do things, like the slaughter of the retreat, which offend against the name of soldiery and against the human spirit."

Calling the pro-war commentaries in most of the British press "soul-curdling," Pearce added that he has received many letters of support for the stance he has taken in his commentaries in the *Guardian* against the slaughter in the Persian Gulf.

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## Germany takes a step into Bush's new order

German Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher, in an interview with Reuters on March 5, said that he wants German troops to participate in future U.N.-sanctioned military action. Genscher said that the end of the Cold War and the unification of Germany last year gave the country a greater role to play in the world, which meant it should now be ready to take part in U.N. initiatives.

"We want to contribute our weight in the European Community, the West European Union, and in NATO," he said.

In a related development, it was announced on March 6 that five German minesweepers, with a crew of 430, will be sent to the Persian Gulf, upon a special request by the United States, to help clear Iraqi sea mines. The German minesweepers are rated to have the best technology on a world scale, and two supply ships have been stationed in the eastern Mediterranean near Crete for most of the Gulf crisis.

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## Mossad foresees new crisis in Syria

While world attention is focused on the internal situation in Iraq, the Israeli intelligence service, the Mossad, is looking at an-

other likely flashpoint—and target: Syria.

According to a Mossad-linked source, "The real crisis is shifting to Syria. [President Hafez] al-Assad is in more trouble than people think. His Alawites are only 6% of the population. Wait till the Sunni Muslims start something, then the Shiites, and the Kurds—which has him very nervous—and the communists. He's frantically looking for backing from the outside, both money and political support. Egypt and Saudi Arabia are backing him, but they are not keen that Assad become an equal force; it's a qualified backing.

"From Israel's point of view, it's simple. Syria has more missiles than Iraq, it has a more sophisticated army, it has been building up chemical weapons, and it's closer to Israel. And Assad is only slightly less bad than Saddam."

Both Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir and Housing Minister Ariel Sharon have criticized Assad recently.

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## Red Cross covers up for Colombian narcos

The Colombian daily *El Espectador* reported March 5 that the International Committee of the Red Cross will be visiting the detention centers of Colombia's National Police and Department of Administrative Security (DAS) throughout the country, in order to prepare a confidential report on whether the human rights of drug traffickers who have "surrendered" under the Gaviria government's plea-bargain offer have been violated.

Red Cross demands, which the government reportedly acceded to, include free access to every detention center, private interviews with all prisoners, and guarantees to be able to return anywhere and anytime they choose for followup visits with the prisoners.

*El Espectador* does not say whether the color televisions, video equipment, private kitchen rights, and other "five-star" treatment being afforded the prisoners will earn the Gaviria government extra points with the international human rights lobby.

● **ISRAEL** has been holding Taher Shriteh, correspondent for Reuters and other press agencies, since Jan. 28. The human rights group Middle East Watch charges that he is being subjected to solitary confinement, denial of food, and being tied to a chair with a hood on his head for as long as 12 hours at a time. The authorities picked him up on suspicion of possessing an unregistered fax machine and using it to send out a leaflet from an illegal Palestinian organization.

● **VACLAV HAVEL**, the President of Czechoslovakia, told a radio audience on March 9 that "breakup of the state is an alternative we must seriously think about. . . . If the Slovak nation prefers such a solution, it has a legitimate right to it, but . . . it must happen in a constitutional manner."

● **CANADIAN** External Affairs Minister Joe Clark said on March 4 that Canada "could live and work with an Iraq in which Saddam Hussein remains. I'm not putting a price tag on Saddam Hussein's head." Clark was in Washington for a meeting with U.N. Secretary General Javier Pérez de Cuellar, at the start of a tour that will take him to Britain, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Israel, and Syria.

● **ELIAS HRAWI**, the Syrian-backed President of Lebanon, warned Palestinians living in the Israeli Occupied Territories that they will be blamed for the continuing Israeli attacks on southern Lebanon. During the first week in March, Israeli war planes conducted bombing raids on Palestinian strongholds in Lebanon.

● **POLISH** politicians from the Solidarnosc movement have formed a new party, the Center Agreement Party, with the backing of President Lech Walesa and the Catholic bishops conference. The party is modeled on the German Christian Democratic Union.