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U.S. SEES SIGNS OF IRAQ PULLBACK, SAYS CRISIS IS NOT OVER; MIDEAST: CLINTON EXPRESSES OPTIMISM, BUT OFFICIALS NOTE THAT THE DESTINATION OF HUSSEIN'S SOLDIERS IS NOT YET CLEAR. THE PENTAGON PUTS 155,000 MORE TROOPS ON ALERT.

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By ART PINE
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Iraq began withdrawing some of its forces from the Kuwaiti border area Tuesday in response to the U.S. military buildup. But the Pentagon placed 155,000 more U.S. ground **troops** on alert in case additional force is needed to meet the Iraqi threat.

After a day of uncertainty about **Iraq's** response, U.S. officials said that intelligence reports had shown signs of "broad movement" by most of the 80,000 Iraqi **troops** in the border area, with many units loading their equipment onto railroad cars for shipment out of the area.

President **Clinton** expressed guarded optimism that **Iraq** was pulling back from the brink of a military showdown. "I'm hopeful," he told reporters at an impromptu news conference. "It's a little early yet to reach a final conclusion. We're watching it very closely."

But Gen. John M. Shalikashvili, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, cautioned that, despite the encouraging signs, there was no indication yet just where the Iraqi **troops** would be going. He said that Washington will continue to treat the situation as potentially dangerous.

"I'm not at all prepared to say the crisis is over in any way," he told reporters at the Pentagon later.

Shalikashvili also disclosed that 113,000 soldiers and 42,000 Marines will be placed on alert for possible deployment to the area. Those are in addition to the 36,145 U.S. ground **troops** already being sent to the Persian Gulf.

He said that the option to send additional **troops** is needed to ensure that U.S. commanders will have enough ground **troops** not only to deter an Iraqi attack but to push the Iraqi army back if it does not move on its own.

U.S. officials said **Clinton** also is considering a proposal to call up some National Guard and reserve **troops**. Precise figures were not available Tuesday, but authorities said the bulk of any call-up likely would be combat support units.

The Administration also began exploring the possibility of creating a large exclusion zone on the Iraqi side of the Kuwaiti border and prohibiting **Iraq** from sending certain kinds of **troops** and equipment into the area.

The Administration also reportedly is considering a preemptive strike against the Iraqi **troops**, policy-makers said. However, senior U.S. officials said that such action is unlikely unless **Iraq** appears to reposition itself to invade Kuwait, because the Administration does not want **Iraq** to invade Kuwait to save face.

"For the next several hours, we're going to watch and see what **Iraq** is going to do," one official said. "Meanwhile, we are getting ourselves prepared in case the worst comes to pass."

Strategists said that, even if **Iraq** withdraws its **troops**, Washington still might keep large numbers of

aircraft and ground **troops** in the area to make sure that Iraqi **troops** do not push south again.

Pentagon officials said that the 155,000 ground **troops** placed on alert will include units of the 101st Airborne Division at Ft. Campbell, Ky., and the 1st Air Cavalry Division of Ft. Hood, Tex.

Two other units, the 24th Mechanized Infantry Division of Ft. Stewart, Ga., and the 1st Marine Expeditionary Force of Camp Pendleton, already are poised for deployment.

On Monday, **Clinton** ordered an additional 350 combat aircraft to the Persian Gulf region and decided to continue plans to place about 36,000 ground **troops** in the area by the end of the week.

Administration strategists began preliminary consultations on the exclusion-zone plan with U.S. allies at the United Nations on Tuesday. And officials said that Madeleine Albright, the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, is expected to brief the Security Council today.

For all the statements by Administration officials, there still were other major questions unanswered on Tuesday, including how far back the United States would insist that Iraqi **troops** withdraw.

Administration officials are considering asking U.S. allies in Europe, Asia and the Persian Gulf for financial support for the current deployment, which is expected to cost billions of dollars even if a shooting war is averted.

The 1991 Persian Gulf War, which cost an estimated \$70 billion, was financed by donations from Saudi Arabia, Japan, the Gulf states and dozens of other countries.

Secretary of State Warren Christopher is expected to raise the subject of money when he meets today in Kuwait City with the foreign ministers of the six oil-rich nations of the Gulf Cooperation Council. But officials said that Washington still has not begun soliciting donations.

Separately, the Pentagon announced that Defense Secretary William J. Perry will leave for the Middle East today to confer with leaders in Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Egypt. He then will continue on a previously scheduled visit to Beijing.

In addition to U.S. efforts, Britain announced Tuesday that it is **deploying** 800 more marine commandos to the area and sending six more Tornado warplanes to Kuwait.

And Russian President Boris N. Yeltsin sent two diplomats to **Iraq** and Kuwait to try to defuse the crisis.

Russia has been pressing the U.N. Security Council to ease the sanctions against **Iraq** because it wants to resume more normal commercial relations with Baghdad.

But a White House official said Yeltsin and **Clinton** agreed that Hussein's provocation must be met firmly and that talk of lifting sanctions must await full compliance with U.N. guidelines. "We think they're going to be helpful on this," he said.

Meanwhile, at the United Nations, **Iraq** suffered another setback in the Security Council on Tuesday as the head of the commission charged with ensuring that **Iraq** eliminates its weapons of mass destruction urged that the United Nations not lift its economic sanctions on **Iraq** immediately.

Rolf Ekeus, the Swedish diplomat who chairs the commission, said that while Baghdad had been cooperative in helping his panel establish procedures for monitoring and verifying the weapons destruction, it is unclear how the Iraqis will react once the system is in operation.

Iraq has been pressing the Security Council to lift the sanctions but has run into opposition from the United States and Britain, which say it still is not complying with that and other demands that the allies made after the Gulf War.

The council is expected to take up the sanctions issue again a month from now. Most analysts believe that Baghdad's recent provocation near the Kuwaiti border is likely to dash any prospects that the U.N. body will grant **Iraq** any relief.

"There is no doubt in my mind that (Iraqi President) **Saddam** Hussein blew it big at the U.N.," Albright told NBC-TV's "Today" show Tuesday morning.

Times staff writer John M. Broder contributed to this report. A Swifter Dispatch of U.S. Forces

By storing supplies in or near the Middle East, the United States has saved weeks of loading and shipping time. "That's the kind of inherent flexibility in a heavy division that is new to us," says Lt. Gen. Paul E. Blackwell, deputy chief of the Army for operations.

The first wave of 80,000 Iraqis stopped just north of the Kuwaiti border. Officials claimed Monday that the force would move north to Basra. But skeptical U.S. officials are continuing to **build up troops**.

NEW WAY OF **DEPLOYING** A DIVISION

- 1) **Troops** from the 24th Mechanized Infantry Division are flown in to link up with equipment stationed permanently in Kuwait.
- 2) Other **troops** fly in to meet up with equipment stationed on ships.
- 3) The remainder of the 24th Division travels with their equipment aboard fast sea-lift ships.

KEEPING WEAPONS HANDY

A. By land: About 40 tanks and 40 Bradleys as well as some artillery batteries and combat support are stored permanently in Kuwait.

B. By sea: Armor for sustaining U.S. forces is steaming toward the Gulf from the Indian and Pacific oceans aboard 12 large ships the Army keeps loaded and positioned overseas. The ships are to arrive by the weekend.

WHAT U.S. IS SENDING

	Already Planned	On	
Ground forces	in area	deployment alert	
Army	1,661	17,124	113,000
Marines	1,977	19,021	42,000
Aircraft			
Combat aircraft	101	291	126
Support aircraft	91	176	70
Ships*			
Aircraft carrier	1	0	0
Ships carrying	4	0	0
cruise missiles			

* Support ships not listed

Sources: Lt. Gen. Paul E. Blackwell, Associated Press, Defense Department

Chart, COLOR, A Swifter Dispatch of U.S. Forces / Los Angeles Times; Map, COLOR, A Swifter Dispatch of U.S. Forces / Los Angeles Times; Table, COLOR, A Swifter Dispatch of U.S. Forces / Los Angeles Times; Photo, COLOR, Near Kuwait City, vehicles of the 24th Mechanized Infantry Division from Ft. Stewart, Ga., head for border. Associated Press

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