



The Old Ironsides Report

Friday, November 28, 2003

Commander in Chief shares Thanksgiving meal with troops in BIAP

By Terence Hunt, AP White House Correspondent
BAGHDAD, Iraq -- President Bush made a surprise Thanksgiving visit to American troops in Baghdad Thursday, flying secretly to violence-scarred Iraq to thank U.S. forces for serving there. It was the first trip ever by an American president to Iraq -- a mission tense with concern about his safety.

"You are defending the American people from danger and we are grateful," Bush told some 600 soldiers who were stunned and delighted by his appearance.

The president's plane -- its lights darkened and windows closed to minimize chances of making it a target -- landed under a crescent moon at Baghdad International Airport.

Bush flew in on the plane he most often uses, and White House officials went to extraordinary lengths to keep the trip a secret, fearing its disclosure would prompt terrorist attempts to kill him.

With the president out of sight, L. Paul Bremer, the chief U.S. civilian administrator, told the soldiers it was time to read the president's Thanksgiving proclamation and that it was a task for the most senior official present.

"Is there anybody back there more senior than us?" he asked. That was the cue for Bush, who promptly stepped forward from behind a curtain, setting off pandemonium among the troops.

"I was just looking for a warm meal somewhere," he joked. "Thanks for inviting me."

The news of Bush's trip was not released until he was in the air on the way back to the United States.

While here, Bush spoke with soldiers from the 1st Armored Division and the 82nd Airborne Division at an airport mess hall. "You are defeating the terrorists here in Iraq," he said, "so we don't have to face them in our own country."

Terrorists are testing America's resolve, Bush said, and "they hope we will run."

"We did not charge hundreds of miles into the heart of Iraq, pay a bitter cost of casualties, defeat a ruthless dictator and liberate 25 million people only to retreat before a band of thugs and assassins," the president said, prompting a standing ovation and cheers.

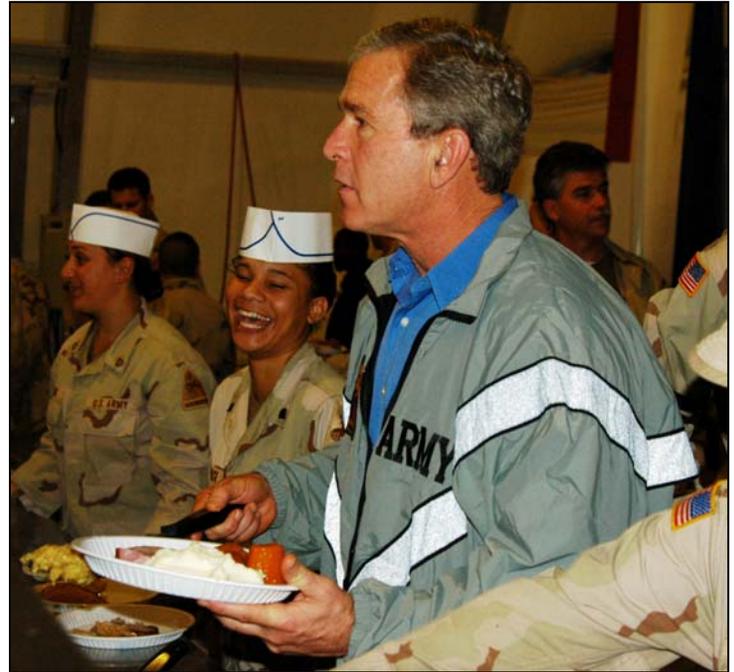
Wearing an exercise jacket with a 1st Armored Division patch, Bush stood in a chow line and dished out sweet potatoes and corn for Thanksgiving dinner and posed with a platter of a fresh-baked turkey.

Plans for the trip were tightly held among a handful of senior aides. First lady Laura Bush, preparing a Thanksgiving Day dinner, was not told until Tuesday or Wednesday.

As for Bush taking the risk of a trip to Baghdad, Bartlett said it was appropriate for the president to visit troops on Thanksgiving.

"It is also appropriate that the president travel in a way that his safety and security will not be compromised," he said.

The president had slipped away from his Texas ranch in an unmarked vehicle and was driven to a nearby airport, where he climbed aboard Air Force One on the back stairs rather than the front.



President George W. Bush serves Thanksgiving meals to Task Force 1st Armored Division soldiers during a "surprise" visit to Baghdad International Air Port. Photo by Spec. Andy Meissner, 1 AD PAO.

The plane stopped at Andrews Air Force Base, Md., outside Washington, to pick up a few aides and four reporters and a camera crew sworn to secrecy. Five photographers and another reporter accompanied him from Texas after being summoned just hours before his departure.

Bush spent about two and a half hours on the ground, limiting his visit to the airport dinner with U.S. forces. The troops had been told that the VIP guests would be L. Paul Bremer, the U.S. administrator in Iraq, and Lt. Gen. Ricardo Sanchez, commander of coalition forces in Iraq.

In a ruse staged in the name of security, the White House had put out word that Bush would be spending Thanksgiving at his ranch in Crawford with Mrs. Bush and his parents and other family members. Even the dinner menu was announced.

Instead, Bush slipped away from his home without notice. Within the White House only a handful of senior aides knew about the trip, officials said.

Since operations began, nearly 300 U.S. service members have died of hostile action, including 183 since May 1 when Bush declared an end to major fighting.

Bush's father visited U.S. troops at a desert outpost in Saudi Arabia on Thanksgiving Day 1990. The first President Bush had been the first U.S. president to visit a war zone since President Nixon went to Vietnam in 1969. Dwight David Eisenhower, as president-elect, visited Korean battle fronts in December 1952 and President Lyndon Johnson made two wartime trips to Vietnam.

News

Iraq Insurgents Attack Italian Embassy

BAGHDAD, Iraq (AP) - In another blow at U.S. allies in the occupation, insurgents fired a rocket-propelled grenade at the Italian mission before dawn Thursday, causing damage but no injuries. The attack came as key Shiite Muslim leaders criticized the U.S. plan to transfer power to Iraqis, saying elections should be held sooner than planned. A U.S. military convoy was attacked Thursday on the main highway west of Baghdad near the town of Abu Ghraib, witnesses said. An Associated Press Television News cameraman filmed two abandoned military trucks with their cabs burning fiercely as dozens of townspeople looted tires and other vehicle parts. The military had no immediate information.

Sen. Clinton: U.S. Will Stand With Afghans

KABUL, Afghanistan (AP) - Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton promised Thursday that America will stand with Afghanistan as it tries to rebuild after a quarter-century of conflict and warned Taliban rebels that they "are fighting a losing battle." But the New York Democrat also said more troops are needed in the multinational military coalition providing security. She told The Associated Press it was for others to decide whether those troops should come from the United States or other countries.

Boston Cancels Tall Ships Extravaganza

BOSTON (AP) - Sail Boston, the visit by tall ships that has drawn millions of spectators in the past, has been scuttled for next year so the city can focus on the Democratic National Convention. The event's board acceded to a request from Mayor Thomas Menino, who was concerned the event, planned for July 10-15, would be a drain on city services so close to the convention, set for July 26-29.

Man Arrested for Boarding Jackson Jet

SANTA BARBARA, Calif. (AP) - A man who identified himself as a news and photo agency reporter was arrested after allegedly climbing aboard Michael Jackson's private jet while the pop star surrendered to authorities on a child-molestation warrant, police said. The revelation Wednesday followed news that Jackson and his attorney were secretly videotaped aboard the plane, triggering an FBI investigation and a lawsuit by Jackson against the charter jet company.

160 Bodies Recovered in Congo Ferry Crash

KINSHASA, Congo (AP) - Search teams have recovered the bodies of 160 people killed when two ferries collided in a storm and were searching Thursday for more than 100 others still missing, authorities said. The disaster occurred Tuesday evening on Mai-Ndombe lake near the town of Inongo in northeastern Congo. News reached the riverside capital, Kinshasa, 300 miles away, only late Wednesday.

In other news...

Parades, Turkeys, Races Mark Thanksgiving

NEW YORK (AP) - This year's Thanksgiving Day parade delivered a little more New York sass. The annual balloon-filled romp through Manhattan stepped off Thursday morning with an enormous turkey, a frog, a big bird and a fat, lazy cat. The mix also included a Mrs. Santa portrayed by a man.

Turkeys May Not Be Stupid After All

PORTLAND, Ore. (AP) -- An Oregon State University poultry scientist thinks turkeys are getting a bum rap.

While they may not be the sharpest arrows in the quiver, Tom Savage, a professor of Animal Science, said the big birds aren't really dumb.

"I've always viewed turkeys as smart animals with personality and character, and keen awareness of their surroundings," Savage said. "The 'dumb' tag simply doesn't fit."

Stories abound of how turkeys are so stupid that they sometimes look up while it's raining and keep staring skyward until they drown.

Savage said turkeys sometimes do cock their heads and hold that position for a minute or more. It's a genetically caused nervous disorder that Savage identified in the early 1990s.

"It's an example of how a misunderstood animal behavior becomes identified as proof that the animal is extremely lacking in intelligence," Savage said.

And he noted that wild turkeys are cunning enough to leave hunters frustrated and cursing.

Savage said he knows it's an uphill fight to reshape the fowls' image as anything but a big, dumb bird. But he said he'll keep trying.

"I'm an advocate for turkeys," Savage said, "except on Thanksgiving."

Chaplain's thought for the day

We Are Family

Keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. —
Ephesians 4:3

Teammates of the late Willie Stargell called him "Pops" because of his leadership both on and off the baseball field. In 1979, when Stargell led the Pittsburgh Pirates to their second World Series title, the team was nicknamed "The Family" because of their close relationship.

"We won, we lived, and we enjoyed as one," Stargell said. "We molded together dozens of different individuals into one working force. We were products of different races, were raised in different income brackets, but in the clubhouse and on the field we were one."

Does that describe us? Are we bound together? Are we one force? Are we an Army of One?

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myafn.net TV SCHEDULES: FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 28, 2003				As of: Thursday, November 27, 2003 8:42:05 PM		
Start Time	SPORTS	ATLANTIC	SPECTRUM	PACIFIC	NEWS	Start Time
00:00		NFL - MIAMI DOLPHINS @ DALLAS COWBOYS		NFL - MIAMI DOLPHINS @ DALLAS COWBOYS		00:00
00:30					HEADLINE NEWS	00:30
01:00			MASTERPIECE THEATER : - A RESPECTABLE TRADE (PT. 1)		LESTER HOLT LIVE	01:00
02:00	REAL SPORTS WITH BRYANT GUMBEL				HEADLINE NEWS	02:00
02:30					NBC NIGHTLY NEWS	02:30
03:00	NBA TIPOFF '03 - LV 30 MIN	ESPNEWS	RUGRATS : - SHARE AND SHARE A SPIKE/TOMMY FOR MAYOR	ESPNEWS	ABC WORLD NEWS TONIGHT	03:00
03:30	NBA - NY KNICKS @ INDIANA PACERS	COLLEGE FOOTBALL - MISSISSIPPI @ MISSISSIPPI STATE	SPONGEBOB SQUAREPANTS : - FOOLS IN APRIL / NEPTUNE'S SPATULA	WHEEL OF FORTUNE	HEADLINE NEWS	03:30
04:00			THE SIMPSONS : - TREEHOUSE OF HORROR XI	THE DR. PHIL SHOW	THE NEWSHOUR	04:00
04:30			HOME IMPROVEMENT : - WHITEWATER			04:30
05:00			CHARMED : - SAM I AM	THE OPRAH WINFREY SHOW : - BACHELOR BOB & HIS NEW LOVE	HANNITY & COLMES	05:00
06:00	NBA - NEW JERSEY NETS @ LOS ANGELES CLIPPERS		THE X-FILES : - CONDUIT	NBC NIGHTLY NEWS	THE NEWS WITH BRIAN WILLIAMS	06:00
06:30		ESPNEWS		JUDGE JUDY		06:30
07:00		HEADLINE NEWS	THE JEFF CORWIN EXPERIENCE : - SPECIAL: CAUGHT IN THE ACT	ACCESS HOLLYWOOD	BET NIGHTLY NEWS	07:00
07:25				GUIDING LIGHT		07:25
07:30		ESPNEWS			NIGHTLY BUSINESS REPORT	07:30
08:00		HEADLINE NEWS	TRACKING DEADLY VIPERS		LARRY KING LIVE	08:00
08:13				GENERAL HOSPITAL		08:13
08:30	INSIDE THE NBA	HEADLINE NEWS				08:30
09:00		SESAME STREET	BUFFY THE VAMPIRE SLAYER : - NO PLACE LIKE HOME	CALILOU : - IMAGINE	NEWSNIGHT WITH AARON BROWN	09:00
09:30	AIR FORCE FOOTBALL			THE WEEKENDERS : - MY PUNKY VALENTINE/ BRAIN ENVY		09:30
10:00	SPORTSCENTER	TELETUBBIES : - LEVEL CROSSING	IRON CHEF : - SHANGHAI CRAB/CHEN VS TADASHI SUGITA	AS TOLD BY GINGER	PAULA ZAHN NOW	10:00
10:30		WHEEL OF FORTUNE		CHALK ZONE : - FRENCH FRY FALLS! AMAZIN' RIVER! ESCUCHA MI CORAZON! GIFT ADRIFT		10:30
11:00	COLLEGE BASKETBALL - GREAT ALASKA SHOOTOUT: PACIFIC VS DUKE	THE OPRAH WINFREY SHOW : - BACHELOR BOB & HIS NEW LOVE	RUGRATS : - SHARE AND SHARE A SPIKE/TOMMY FOR MAYOR	JEOPARDY!	NIGHTLINE	11:00
11:30			SPONGEBOB SQUAREPANTS : - FOOLS IN APRIL / NEPTUNE'S SPATULA	HEADLINE NEWS	HEADLINE NEWS	11:30
12:00		ACCESS HOLLYWOOD	THE SIMPSONS : - TREEHOUSE OF HORROR XI	ESPNEWS	HARDBALL WITH CHRIS MATTHEWS	12:00
12:25		GUIDING LIGHT				12:25
12:30			HOME IMPROVEMENT : - WHITEWATER	HEADLINE NEWS		12:30
13:00	SPORTSCENTER		CHARMED : - SAM I AM	KING OF THE HILL : - THE MISEDUCATION OF BOBBY HILL	THE O'REILLY FACTOR	13:00
13:13		GENERAL HOSPITAL				13:13
13:30				THAT 70'S SHOW : - OVER THE HILLS AND FAR AWAY		13:30
14:00	INSIDE THE NFL	HEADLINE NEWS	THE X-FILES : - CONDUIT	SURVIVOR: PEARL ISLANDS	PRIMETIME	14:00
14:30		JUDGE JUDY				14:30
15:00	COLLEGE FOOTBALL - MISSISSIPPI @ MISSISSIPPI STATE	TODAY	THE JEFF CORWIN EXPERIENCE : - SPECIAL: CAUGHT IN THE ACT	24 : - DAY 2: 2:00 P.M.- 3:00 P.M	GOOD MORNING AMERICA	15:00
16:00			TRACKING DEADLY VIPERS	HEADLINE NEWS		16:00
16:30				TONIGHT SHOW WITH JAY LENO		16:30
17:00	SPORTSCENTER	CALILOU : - IMAGINE	BUFFY THE VAMPIRE SLAYER : - NO PLACE LIKE HOME		HEADLINE NEWS	17:00
17:30		THE WEEKENDERS : - MY PUNKY VALENTINE/ BRAIN ENVY		THE LATE SHOW WITH DAVID LETTERMAN	CHANNEL ONE	17:30
17:45					WORLD NEWS THIS MORNING	17:45
18:00	REAL SPORTS WITH BRYANT GUMBEL	AS TOLD BY GINGER	IRON CHEF : - SHANGHAI CRAB/CHEN VS TADASHI SUGITA		THE EARLY SHOW	18:00
18:30		CHALK ZONE : - FRENCH FRY FALLS! AMAZIN' RIVER! ESCUCHA MI CORAZON! GIFT ADRIFT		ACCESS HOLLYWOOD		18:30
19:00	SPORTSCENTER	JEOPARDY!	RUGRATS : - SHARE AND SHARE A SPIKE/TOMMY FOR MAYOR	FATHER OF THE BRIDE		19:00
19:30		HEADLINE NEWS	SPONGEBOB SQUAREPANTS : - FOOLS IN APRIL / NEPTUNE'S SPATULA			19:30
20:00	COLLEGE FOOTBALL - BIG XII: NEBRASKA @ COLORADO	ESPNEWS	THE SIMPSONS : - TREEHOUSE OF HORROR XI		FOX NEWS LIVE	20:00
20:30		HEADLINE NEWS	HOME IMPROVEMENT : - WHITEWATER			20:30
21:00		KING OF THE HILL : - THE MISEDUCATION OF BOBBY HILL	CHARMED : - SAM I AM	SHOOT TO KILL	PRIMETIME	21:00
21:30		THAT 70'S SHOW : - OVER THE HILLS AND FAR AWAY				21:30
22:00		SURVIVOR: PEARL ISLANDS	THE X-FILES : - CONDUIT		FOX NEWS LIVE	22:00
23:00		24 : - DAY 2: 2:00 P.M.- 3:00 P.M	THE JEFF CORWIN EXPERIENCE : - SPECIAL: CAUGHT IN THE ACT	TODAY	HEADLINE NEWS	23:00
23:30	COLLEGE FOOTBALL - BIG XII: TEXAS @ TEXAS A&M				INSIDE POLITICS	23:30