

Lieberman, Dodd, Simmons have different opinions on a timeframe for Iraq to disarm

By GEORGINA GUSTIN
Day Staff Writer

After Bush administration officials said this week that a proposed deadline for Saddam Hussein to disarm could be pushed back, Connecticut lawmakers still differed on a timeframe for disarming Iraq.

The March 17 deadline could be moved by a few days, but the Bush administration is still pushing for a United Nations Security Council vote by the end of this week. A month-long delay being sought by several Security Council members wasn't an option, according to the local congressional delegation.

For Democratic Sen. Joseph Lieberman, who has long called for a military invasion of Iraq, the issue of the new deadline remains virtually moot.

"We gave Saddam a deadline 12 years ago and he's failed to abide by this deadline we've given him," said Adam Kovacevich, a spokesman for Lieberman. "His view is that we've given Saddam more than a decade, and interestingly, right after the Gulf War, the U.S. Security Council passed a resolution; in that resolution we gave Iraq 15 days to disarm. This has been the longest 15 days in history."

Lieberman would prefer the backing of the Security Council but has said that the United States should be pre-

pared to attack Iraq without its support. On the issue of the deadline — and whether he supports a delay — Kovacevich would only say that Lieberman believes the final decision to invade rests with President Bush.

Sen. Christopher Dodd, however, believes U.N. members should come up with a date that brings all the players on board and couple that with a list of actions that need to be taken by Iraq. Dodd, also a Democrat, would support additional days, weeks or months if that would bring unanimity to the Security Council on disarming Saddam.

"The Bush administration has yet to make that determination or a persuasive case that the U.N. effort to disarm Iraq has been exhausted," Dodd said in a statement on



Sen. Chris Dodd



Sen. Joseph Lieberman



U.S. Rep. Rob Simmons

the floor of the Senate last week. "Or conversely, that matters are so urgent that we must go to war now, particularly without the support of other members of the U.N. Security Council."

U.S. Rep. Rob Simmons, R-2nd District, said Wednesday that he's supportive of immediate action, though he would prefer the support of the U.N.

"I think Saddam Hussein has made his decision that he was not going to cooperate with the U.N. ... and that he was going to use lucrative oil contracts with the French, Germans and others to manipulate those countries — to bribe those countries with oil — and that he was going to be successful in dividing the United States from some of its friends."

Simmons would not say whether he would support the extension of the deadline.

"I would support the president in the decisions he makes because this is ultimately his decision," he said.

Simmons was one of seven Republicans who voted for a failed amendment last fall that would have required Bush to work with the U.N. to eliminate weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. If those efforts failed, the president would have been required to return to Congress to get a vote authorizing military force. Simmons then voted for the congressional resolution that authorized Bush to use force unilaterally.

Crew of destroyer USS Churchill awaits orders as war clouds continue to gather

From A1

and not overreact when analyzing the traffic, especially in light of the current terrorist threat," Meagher said.

Lt. j.g. Mark Boggis, the electronic warfare officer on the Churchill, is responsible for deciphering the morass of signals from ships, aircraft, radar stations and other sources in the operating area to determine whether they are coming from friend or foe.

Standing watch on the bridge for up to 10 hours a day — in addition to his administrative and training duties — leaves him only a few hours a day to himself.

"Everybody deals with the situation in their own way," said Boggis, who lived in Waterford from the time he was born in 1965 until he was in the eighth grade and his family moved to North Carolina. "I exercise, read when I get a chance, sleep when I can."

"You really don't think about it. You just have to do."

So far, the ship's official duties have been limited to escorting aircraft carriers and commercial ships through dangerous waters, but the crew trains daily in some of the missions that it might be given in the coming weeks.

In the meantime, Command Master Chief Mitchell "Doc" Holliday is trying to make sure that there are enough activities to keep all his enlisted personnel entertained, from bingo games to talent contests to the ever popular "steel beach," which involves a barbecue on the afterdecks.

The Churchill left Norfolk, Va., in January for what was thought to be a five-week training exercise. But before it could return, word came from the fleet commander that it would leave directly for the Mediterranean instead.

Boggis had hoped to be around when his first child is born — his wife is due in two weeks. And his job is important enough it would be difficult for the captain to release him.

"She's in the Navy, too, so she understands," Boggis said. "It's tolerable, but this is all before the child. We'll see after the baby is born. But she has a lot of support at home, and it'll all work out."

Normally, the Churchill would probably make one port call a week in the Mediterranean. So far, it has made just one, to Sigonella, Italy. And its two helicopters logged almost 70 flights in the first 12 days of this month, shuttling parts, people and supplies to and from shore and other ships.

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The crew is working 16 to 20 hours a day, and many of them are doing duty far above their rank.

Damage Controlman 2nd Class Michael Jones of Carthage, Mo., was acting as the helicopter control officer recently, a job normally done by a lieutenant or lieutenant commander.

When the SH-60 Seahawks pull up to the flight deck, they have only a few feet of clearance between their blades, spinning too fast to see, and the control room where Jones sits. Even slowing to about five knots for the final approach, the chopper looks like it's coming right into the control room, but Jones' voice reveals not a hint of nervousness as he calls out instructions.

He was a boatswain's mate on his first enlistment, from 1979 to 1985, then got out of the Navy to work as a



TIM COOK / The Day

An SH-60B Seahawk lifts off from the flight deck of the destroyer USS Winston S. Churchill in the eastern Mediterranean Sea on Wednesday.

firefighter and landscaper. He tried several times to rejoin the service over the years, and his persistence paid off in 1999 when he was brought back in.

"I set a goal when I was 17 that I would make master chief," Jones said. "I'm still working at it."

Four sets of brothers are on board, including Gas Systems Mechanic 2nd Class Todd Martinez and Sonar Technician 2nd Class Chad Martinez, who grew up in Wyoming.

"We wanted to get out and see the world," Todd Martinez said with a shrug. Recently he volunteered for the boarding team, because he thought it would be "a little more exciting, a little more adventure."

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The Churchill has a strong connection to its namesake's family — the former British prime minister's daughter and grandson have ridden the ship several times, and the grandson donated money that was used to install a satellite television system.

The Churchill is also the only ship in the Navy to have a permanent spot assigned to a British officer, presently Lt. Stuart Yates, halfway through his two-year tour as navigator.

And the ship's chief petty officers brag that it has the best chief's mess of any U.S. destroyer. Following British Navy tradition, Young's Brewery in London renovated the mess, replacing the stainless steel and plastic walls and floors with wood and hanging an assortment of pictures of Churchill the man on the walls.

But the centerpiece is an authentic, 200-year-old bar that Young's pulled out of storage and restored, complete with two beer taps — one for its Ramrod Ale and the other for its Oatmeal Stout, both fully functional for special occasions, though no alcohol of any sort is carried on board when the ship is under way.

Down in the Combat Information Center, more than a dozen young enlisted people stare at screens that show aircraft, ships or submarines in the area.

Senior Chief Sonar Technician Michael Deiningner explained how each "contact" shows up as a small symbol; if the screen is expanded to take in the Middle East, the symbols start to blur into each other and cover the entire map.

"It's a busy place here in the eastern

Med," said Deiningner. "Obviously, we have to stay on top of it. You have to have that situational awareness."

If the engines are the heart of the ship, Deiningner said, "this is the brains." Radar, sonar and a variety of other sensors monitor the space for miles in every direction; the Churchill can also receive data from other ships, and extend its picture even further.

"This is the beast that everybody feeds, then we distribute the information to our bosses," Deiningner said.

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For Holliday, the command master chief, the current situation is familiar. In the 1991 Persian Gulf War, he was a gunner's mate in turret 3 on the battleship USS Missouri. The Missouri relied on brute force — tossing shells the size of Volkswagen Beetles about 23 miles that land in the general neighborhood of a target. The Churchill relies much more on finesse, with missiles that can fly 1,000 miles and land in a garbage can.

The Churchill was also the first Arleigh Burke-class destroyer outfitted with a gun to fire the Extended Range Guided Munition, which will be able to travel 63 miles with pinpoint accuracy. Though the ERGM is not in the fleet yet, the 5-inch shells it uses in the gun now are also highly precise, and the Churchill is rated the best "shooter" in the battle group.

"Let's put it this way: I wouldn't want them shooting at me," Holliday said. "And it took 90 guys to get a round out of the barrel on the Missouri. On here, you don't need anybody if the drum is loaded."

"We're ready to do whatever we're called to do," Holliday said. "We're pretty damned good at a lot of stuff, and just waiting for a chance to show it."

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