

Defiant Saddam refuses to recognise court

"This is all theatre. The real criminal is Bush," he tells judge

REUTERS

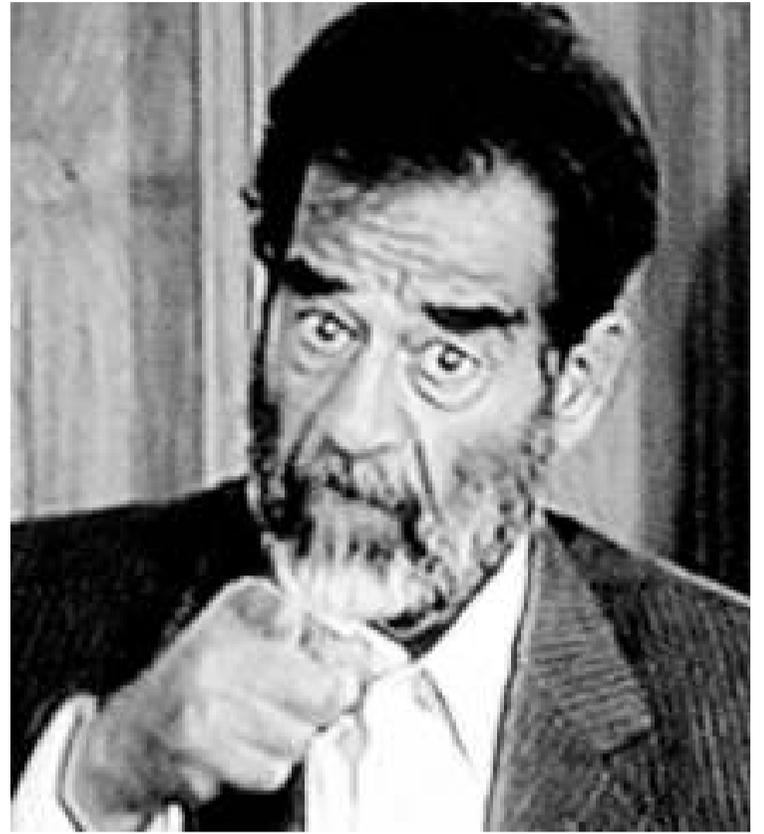
Downcast but defiant, Iraq's deposed dictator Saddam Hussein appeared before an Iraqi tribunal on yesterday, but refused to recognize its authority and said the "real criminal" was president George W. Bush. Saddam, who arrived at the courtroom in handcuffs, was read seven charges under a preliminary arrest warrant and told his rights, according to pool reporters granted access to the heavily guarded court. "I am Saddam, president of Iraq," he repeated. He refused to recognize that he was guilty of a crime invading and occupying Kuwait in 1990, telling the judge: "I did that for the Iraqi people. How can you defend these

dogs?" The judge reprimanded Saddam for his language and reminded him he was in a court of law. He looked around with half-smile, saying: "This is all a theatre, the real criminal is Bush."

Saddam, 67 and held as a US prisoner of war since his capture in December, appeared thin and tired, reporters said. He arrived in a US helicopter at a military base and was transferred to an armored bus to be driven to the makeshift courtroom near Baghdad international airport. Two burly Iraqi guards escorted him into the courthouse. He was dressed in civilian clothes, with a gray jacket and a trimmed beard. His chains were removed before he reached the

courtroom. His handcuffs were taken off inside the room where he sat down and charges against him are expected to include war crimes and genocide.

Saddam, accused of ordering the killing and torture of thousands of people, was captured by US forces in December near his hometown of Tikrit after eight months on the run following his overthrow on April 9. The public last glimpsed him, disheveled and with a bushy beard, in tv footage shot soon after his capture. Kuwait has called for Saddam to be sentenced to death over Baghdad's seven-month occupation of the Gulf state in 1990-91. Many Iraqis want Saddam to be executed.



Saddam on appearing at his first court hearing in Baghdad yesterday / EPA

Space probe runs rings around Saturn

AGENCIES

An internationally-backed space probe has entered into Saturn's orbit after spending six years travelling to the planet. The Cassini-Huygens probe is a joint \$3.3 billion US-European mission, which will carry out a detailed study of the ringed planet, to determine how it was formed. The spacecraft carries a smaller probe - the Huygens - which will be released for a journey to Saturn's biggest moon, Titan. Bob Mitchell, Cassini programme manager was delighted with the craft's entry into Saturn's orbit. "It was kind of a nail-biter throughout but what you saw was the result of a lot of work by a lot of people and it all paid off just perfect," he said. The space probe had travelled over three billion km to reach Saturn and is the first human-made object to orbit the planet. The mission will measure mag-



Artist's impression of space probe / AP

netic fields and radio waves, charged particles, cosmic dust, infrared and ultraviolet light. The mission is a joint venture with Nasa, the European Space Agency (Esa) and the Italian Space Agency.

Hong Kong protesters demand democracy

AGENCIES

Thousands of protesters packed the streets of Hong Kong demanding the right to elect their next leader for the territory. Reports say that at least 250,000 people turned out to vent their rage against the Chinese government, which has taken a hardline stance and ruled out full democracy for Hong Kong. Many of the protesters were wearing t-shirts with slogans saying "give power to people". Many citizens on the territory

feel Beijing has reneged on its promise to give Hong Kong a high degree of autonomy.

The Beijing government had asked the people on Hong Kong to use the day to celebrate the anniversary of its handover to Chinese rule in 1997. The demonstration took place exactly a year after 500,000 people took to the streets to protest against planned new security laws, which the government never implemented.

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