

Saddam weapons chief seized

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Qatar

IN THE biggest potential breakthrough so far in the coalition's search for weapons of mass destruction, Saddam Hussein's chief scientific adviser has surrendered to American forces in Baghdad.

General Amer al-Saadi, who reportedly gave himself up in front of German television cameras, is believed to have masterminded Iraq's efforts to conceal weapons projects from United Nations inspectors in the run-up to the war.

Although quoted by the German television station ZDF as claiming Iraq had no chemical or biological weapons, al-Saadi could play a key role in unlocking the secrets of Saddam's military programmes.

Dr David Kelly, the UN's former chief weapons inspec-

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tor, said al-Saadi "knew where all the bodies were buried", adding: "He advised Saddam on what he could get away with."

As he surrendered, American and British forces were fighting to seal off escape routes into Syria for the other most wanted men and women of Saddam's elite.

A crack unit of American marines was dispatched to reinforce US green berets and British commandos trying to intercept members of the regime, including scientists who have worked on chemical and biological weapons programmes.

Fierce desert fighters were reported between coalition forces and units of Saddam's Special Republican Guard near the town of Qam, on the Syrian border. Some of the Iraqi forces engaged were believed to be protecting senior members of the regime.

"We are closing the border to

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show you a chemical weapons site, I am the only one who knows where it is but I want \$1m' (then) yes. Politically, this information is priceless."

Britain's contribution to the search for such weapons is being exceeded with the transit of hundreds of troops from the 16 Air Assault Brigade towards Iraq's border with Iran, where intelligence suggests evidence may be found.

US forces, who agreed to

been offered for Osama bin Laden, and one source said the figure for Saddam was 'in the same ball park'.

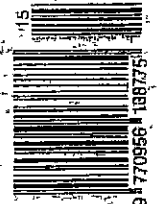
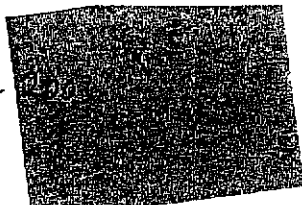
A Ministry of Defence spokesman in Qatar said search teams known as SSJs — sensitive site exploitation teams — could pay up to \$1m in cash for other intelligence. "They will literally have briefcases they can open up with US dollars on one side and Swiss francs on the other," he said. "If someone said, 'I'll

betray wanted members of the fallen regime come around unnoticed, I am the only one who knows where it is but I want \$1m' (then) yes. Politically, this information is priceless."

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