

1189

Holy Roman Emperor Frederick I Barbarossa and 100,000 crusaders depart Regensburg for the Third Crusade

1751

Pennsylvania Hospital founded by Dr. Thomas Bond and Benjamin Franklin, in Philadelphia



British Prime Minister Spencer Perceval is assassinated by John Bellingham in the lobby of the House of Commons, London. Ironically, descendants of both later stand for the same seat in Parliament at the same time, but neither wins

1812

1995

More than 170 countries agree to extend the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty indefinitely and without conditions to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons

Israeli forces operated from Iraq's desert

AFP | Baghdad, Iraq

Israeli forces established a makeshift base using an old airstrip in Iraq's desert during the war against Iran, two security officials told AFP on Sunday, confirming a report by The Wall Street Journal.

Early in the war, the troops were detected in the Najaf desert in the country's southwest and clashed with Iraqi forces, killing one soldier and wounding two others.

The security official said "Israeli forces established a base in an abandoned airstrip, built by Saddam Hussein, in the Najaf desert".

"There are no longer forces there, but they may have left equipment," he said, adding that the Israeli operation "was in coordination with the US".

It was unclear how long the forces were there or what their mission was.

Reports of foreign troops in the Najaf desert emerged early in the war after a shepherd reported seeing military activity.

On Saturday, the Wall Street Journal reported that "Israel

set up a clandestine military outpost in the Iraqi desert to support its air campaign against Iran", quoting people familiar with the matter including US officials.

The report said that "Israel built the installation, which housed special forces and served as a logistical hub for the Israeli air force, just before the war started with the knowledge of the US".

Following the WSJ report, an Iraqi security spokesman referred journalists to a previous statement issued on March 5.

At the time, Qais al-Mohamadawi, Iraq's deputy commander of joint operations, said that after receiving reports of "individuals or movement in the Najaf" desert, Iraq's military sent a force to investigate.

The troops came under heavy aerial fire, leaving one soldier dead and two others wounded. Reinforcements later searched the area, but "did not find anything", Mohamadawi said. He added that at the site in Najaf, "one force was providing support to another that was conducting reconnaissance or setting up equipment". He said no foreign troops were authorised to be in that location.

Another security official told AFP on Sunday that there were "indications that the operation involved an Israeli technical team under American military protection".

He also confirmed that the foreign forces used an old airstrip built by Saddam, and that CH-57 Chinook helicopters were seen on the site.

"There are no longer military personnel there,"

though they left equipment behind, including a radar, probably used for jamming.

The site was hidden in a valley, "a location chosen carefully to avoid Iranian missile strikes", the official said.

The Najaf desert is vast and largely uninhabited, making it difficult for Iraqi forces to maintain tight security there.

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