

Iraqi president offers condolences to families

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Iraqi President Saddam Hussein told President Reagan yesterday that Iraqis "wish we could do anything that might alleviate the grief" of the families of the 37 sailors killed aboard the USS Stark.

Meanwhile, administration officials said the Iraqi government had notified Washington it agreed in principle it has an obligation to compensate the families and the Navy for their losses.

In his letter to Reagan, which was released by the White House, Hussein said, "Rest assured that the grief which you feel as a result of the loss of your sons is our grief, too.

"On the occasion of the funeral ceremony of the victims lost in the grievous and unintentional incident that has happened to the American frigate Stark, I would like to express to you again my condolences and feelings of grief," the Iraqi president wrote.

"All the Iraqis and I feel most profoundly the sorrow of moments such as these, since we have ourselves lost a great many of our dear ones in the war [with Iran] which has been raging now for seven years, while the Iranian government still persists in ... rejecting our appeals and those of the international community for the establishment of a just and lasting peace."

Hussein said it is "incumbent upon us to carry on tirelessly with our efforts to stop this bloody human tragedy."

"I as well as all Iraqis share with you your grief in moments such as these and wish we could do anything that might alleviate the grief of the victims' families," the Iraqi leader said.