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HEADLINE: Schaefer Sets Trade Mission To Kuwait

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BODY:

Maryland Gov. William Donald Schaefer is scheduled to leave Wednesday for a five-day trade mission to Kuwait at the invitation of Kuwait's ambassador to the United States.

Schaefer confirmed the trip tonight, saying he will offer the services of Maryland businesses and facilities to help with the estimated \$ 100 billion cost of Kuwaiti reconstruction in the aftermath of the Iraqi occupation and the Persian Gulf War.

Schaefer, who in November 1989 became the first American governor to visit Saudi Arabia on a trade mission, will be part of what the Kuwaiti Embassy called its first "freedom flight" to the country since it was liberated. Schaefer said he would be the only governor on the trip, but added that former secretary of state Henry Kissinger would be in the group.

"This is an opportunity for Maryland businesses to help in reconstruction," Schaefer said. "We have the expertise. We have a book prepared with 150 businesses available to help them rebuild. We could put up 2,000 temporary housing [structures] in a month."

On Feb. 13, Schaefer met in Washington with Ambassador Saud Nasir Al-Sabah, offering to set aside areas of the Port of Baltimore and Baltimore-Washington International Airport for shipments to Kuwait.

If major portions of reconstruction materials and supplies moved through Maryland facilities, state officials have estimated it could increase port business by 50 percent.

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The governor also has offered to send a team of 100 doctors from Johns Hopkins University and the University of Maryland to the Middle East if needed. Rep. Helen Delich Bentley (R-Md.) also has been in contact with Kuwaiti officials to urge them to use Maryland companies in the reconstruction.

"I don't know if anything will come of it," Schaefer in an interview tonight. "But he [the Kuwaiti ambassador] didn't forget about us. The royal family must know we're coming too."

The group leaves Andrews Air Force Base on Wednesday and is expected to be in Kuwait City on Friday. The governor said he will return to Maryland on Sunday.

GRAPHIC: PHOTO, GOV. WILLIAM DONALD SCHAEFER