



Cole investigation focuses on Bin Laden

BY ROBERT BURNS
ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — Osama bin Laden, the exiled Saudi suspected of masterminding terrorist plots around the Middle East, has emerged as a prime focus of the investigation into the USS Cole bombing, but several American officials say investigators have no hard evidence he directed it.

By Friday, the FBI had brought home about 80 technicians and lab experts sent to Aden, Yemen, after completing collecting physical evidence from aboard the crippled destroyer. Other elements of the team, including investigators and security and communications specialists, remained on the scene.

FBI spokeswoman Debbie Weierman said investigators will continue to be rotated in and out of Yemen as needed.

A federal law enforcement official said, mean-

while, that many of the remaining agents moved Friday from a hotel in Aden to a U.S. ship in the harbor for security reasons.

"There's clearly a concern about the level of cooperation we're receiving, but it's not at a point where the investigation is stalled or shut down," said another U.S. official, speaking on condition of anonymity. "In fact, given the difficulties, it's going along pretty well."

The damaged ship, on which 17 sailors died Oct. 12, will be leaving the Gulf of Aden soon aboard a Norwegian "heavy lift" ship for the five-week trip for repairs in the United States. Under a \$4.5 million contract with the U.S. Navy Sealift Command, the 8,300-ton ship will be hauled Monday aboard the Blue Marlin, which has been refitted for the job in the Persian Gulf port Dubai.

The Blue Marlin, which normally lifts and trans-

ports commercial cargo such as oil rigs, is expected to arrive off the coast of Yemen. The loading operation will take at least 24 hours.

While Weierman denied investigators were pulled out for lack of cooperation by Yemen's government, Secretary of State Madeleine Albright and FBI Director Louis Freeh appealed in an unusual joint statement for more Yemeni help. FBI agents have encountered the same problem they had in an earlier terrorism investigation in Saudi Arabia: lack of direct access to suspects.

The FBI, working with Yemeni authorities in the port of Aden, where the Cole was attacked by a small boat laden with explosives, has finished examining the ship and scouring various locations in Yemen for physical evidence, Albright and Freeh said.

They did not identify the sites, but officials have

said they include several houses thought to have been used to prepare the attack.

Albright and Freeh praised Yemen for its "early cooperation," when the FBI had full access to the sites and was able to send key evidence to Washington for detailed lab tests.

"The next critical phase will require Yemeni and U.S. personnel to work as partners in the collection of information and participants in the interview process of witnesses to this criminal act of terrorism," Albright and Freeh said. "We count on President (Ali Abdullah) Saleh's commitment of full cooperation."

Bin Laden, a millionaire dissident wanted by the FBI on charges he masterminded the 1998 bombings of U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania that killed 224 people, is believed to be living in Afghanistan.

NEWS BRIEFS

Budget battle leads to overtime for congressmen

WASHINGTON (AP) — A nasty budget war between President Clinton and Congress over taxes, education and immigration is forcing lawmakers to endure rare weekend sessions just 10 days from the presidential and congressional elections. Both chambers planned to meet to pass one-day bills to keep government agencies from closing and rekindling voters' memories of the 1995-96 shutdowns. The stopgap measures are needed because only six of the 13 must-pass spending bills for the 2001 fiscal year, which began Oct. 1, have become law.

Nader backers weigh idealism against Bush win

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — With months of hard work finally paying off for their candidate, this shouldn't be a difficult time for supporters of Ralph Nader's presidential bid. But it is, and nowhere is the pressure as great as in battleground states like Minnesota. With Nader near double-digit support, and most of it believed to be coming at Democrat Al Gore's expense, his Green Party supporters are being forced to weigh their progressive ideals against the possibility their votes will throw the election to Republican George W. Bush. Jesse Jackson stopped in Minneapolis this week to urge students at the University of Minnesota to give up on Nader and get behind Gore. In California, the Green Party has agreed to pull ads over fears that Nader, a longtime consumer advocate and critic of corporate America, will cost Gore that critical state. But many of Nader's backers are refusing to budge. "It's just spineless and pathetic," says Nick Raleigh, a field organizer for Minnesota Greens. "We've been on the ground for eight months or so and built people's expectations. Our support base didn't just appear overnight." Raleigh and other Nader advocates have a simple response to all of the pressure: Hold steady.

Islamic militants warn of further suicide attacks

JERUSALEM (AP) — Islamic militants warned of more suicide attacks on Israeli soldiers following a day of violence in the West Bank and Gaza that left four Palestinians dead and more than 150 injured. In Syria, Ramadan Shalah, the leader of the Islamic Jihad group, which has already claimed responsibility for a suicide bombing in the Gaza Strip, said it would carry out more attacks. "This operation will be the beginning for more operations against Israeli soldiers. We will not attack Israeli civilians," Shalah told a rally Friday that Israeli helicopter gunships fired on a West Bank village to retaliate for a shooting attack on a Jerusalem neighborhood, capping a day of mayhem that touched almost every major Palestinian city. It began with Palestinians pouring out of mosques following midday prayers and clashing with Israeli troops amid clouds of acrid smoke and tear gas.

Radio's Keillor talks to educators in New Jersey

ATLANTIC CITY, N.J. (AP) — Garrison Keillor knows a thing or two about teaching children. After all, he has a 31-year-old son and a 2-year-old daughter. So who better to talk about classroom bullies, teen-age girls who dress like harlots and mothers who believe schoolteachers are the problem, not the solution? The radio raconteur regaled the New Jersey School Boards Association's annual conference Friday, and if his address had a theme, it was that there's nothing as honorable as serving children, as a parent, teacher or otherwise. "Nothing you do for children is ever wasted," he said, eliciting a standing ovation from several hundred administrators and school board members.

Northern Ireland party election won by Protestant party leader

BY SHAWN POGATCHNIK
ASSOCIATED PRESS

BELFAST, NORTHERN IRELAND

The leader of Northern Ireland's biggest Protestant party narrowly won a crucial party battle Saturday, keeping alive the province's power-sharing government, but only by promising to punish his coalition partners.

Angry, the Irish Republican Army has not begun disarming, hard-liners in the Ulster Unionist party had put forward a motion calling for the party to withdraw from the government, collapsing it, if the IRA doesn't make a disarmament move by Nov. 30.

Ulster Unionist leader David Trimble defeated the motion Saturday. But to fend off the challenge and defend his own leadership, Trimble had to propose his own get-tough plan designed to force the IRA to take action. It passed the party's grass-roots council on a 445-374 vote.

Trimble's plan would impose immediate sanctions on the IRA-linked Sinn Fein party, junior members in the four-party power-sharing government. Under the plan, Sinn Fein's two ministers in the 12-member Cabinet would not be allowed to represent the government any longer in policy-making summits with the Irish government until the IRA begins "substantial engagement" with an independent disarmament commission.

The commission's leader, retired Canadian Gen. John de Chastelain, has been waiting in vain since 1997 to collect and destroy IRA weapons stockpiles. The IRA has allowed two foreign diplomats to visit three of its arms dumps in secret, most recently Thursday, but has contacted de Chastelain only once since February.

"Contrary to what they say, the republicans have only moved when they're under pressure," Trimble said. "So the pressure is starting gently, in the hope of

doing the least possible damage to the institutions. But don't mistake where it is heading."

Regular meetings between the Belfast and Dublin governments are a prized part of the province's peace accord for Catholics, who regard such cross-border cooperation as likely to promote Ireland's eventual unification.

"The meetings can go ahead, but not with Sinn Fein," said Trimble, who leads the Cabinet at the heart of the peace accord. In that role, he must sign documents authorizing which ministers attend meetings.

Both Sinn Fein and the major Catholic-supported party in the coalition, the moderate Social Democratic and Labor Party, criticized Trimble's move.

Sinn Fein leaders said they might try to take Trimble to court. They were adamant that the IRA, now three years into a cease-fire, was unlikely to respond favorably to the pressure.

"It's not for David Trimble or any other unionist leader to set limits on our rights," said Gerry Kelly, a former IRA car bomber who is now one of the most influential Sinn Fein figures.

Peter Mandelson, Britain's minister for Northern Ireland, appealed to Catholics to understand Trimble's difficulties in trying to keep his party together. He urged the IRA to open a detailed dialogue with the Canadian disarmament chief.

"Don't overreact," Mandelson said. "If you portray this as a recipe for collapse, it could well be a self-fulfilling prophecy."

Trimble initially persuaded his party in November 1999 to form the power-sharing government, the intended cornerstone of the province's 1998 peace accord, after receiving assurances from Sinn Fein that gradual IRA disarmament would be likely to follow.

More than 50 Palestinians wounded in new clashes

BY GREG MYRE
ASSOCIATED PRESS

JERUSALEM — Israeli troops drove back Palestinian stone throwers with rubber-coated bullets and tear gas at chronic trouble spots in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, wounding more than 50 Palestinians Saturday.

The clashes included at least a dozen shooting attacks on Israeli soldiers and a homemade bomb hurled at a border police patrol, the military command said. But no one was killed Saturday, one of the few such days since the violence first erupted exactly a month ago.

Fighting between Israelis and Palestinians has left 133 dead and thousands wounded, the vast majority Palestinians. The Israeli military has predicted that the unrest could go on for months more.

Ibrahim Hawamdi, a young Palestinian man watching the clashes in the West Bank town of Ramallah, agreed that Palestinian frustrations were still running high. But the uprising was taking a heavy economic toll on the Palestinians, many of whom haven't been able to travel to jobs in Israel, he added.

"People want to go back to work; they're running out of money," Hawamdi said. More than 100,000 Palestinians work in Israel.

Elsewhere, Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat called for a "political separation" from Israel but said he would reject any geographic or economic division. With Mideast peace talks on hold because of the fighting, both the Israelis and Palestinians have raised the possibility of taking unilateral action.

Israel's Prime Minister, Ehud Barak, called Cabinet ministers to his residence Saturday night to discuss Foreign Minister Shlomo Ben-Ami's trip to Paris and Washington next week.

Barak also spoke by telephone with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak and King Abdullah II of Jordan, reiterating he wanted an end to violence as a precondition for resuming peace talks, Israel Television reported.

Some Palestinians have called for a declaration of statehood next month, while the Israelis have been assessing a "unilateral separation" that could include staking out borders and placing strict limits on the number of Palestinian workers in Israel.

The Palestinians strongly oppose any one-sided action by Israel, and Arafat's comments suggested he was leaning away from such moves as well. He said an independent Palestinian state should be established on land Israel

captured in the 1967 Middle East War, Egypt's Al-Ahram newspaper reported Saturday.

"We are (for) a political separation that is based on the 1967 border," Arafat was quoted as saying.

Also Saturday, the radical Palestinian group that hijacked the Achille Lauro cruise ship and killed an American passenger in 1985 declared it was resuming attacks on Israel.

"As a result of the enemy's intransigence and the killing of our children, we have to respond to it in the manner it understands," Abul Abbas told the Saudi newspaper Asharq al-Awsat.

Abul Abbas, the pseudonym of Mohammed Abbas, the leader of the Palestine Liberation Front, said "how and when we will fight is left to the future." The London-based newspaper said he was interviewed by telephone from Baghdad.

In Lebanon, the leader of Hezbollah urged Palestinians to move from stone-throwing to suicide missions.

"The most important operations in the confrontation are suicide missions because of their negative material, psychological and moral effect on the enemy and their positive effect on the mujahedeen (holy warriors)," Sheik Hassan Nasrallah said in a TV interview.

Also Saturday, an Israeli was shot and his body burned near Ramallah, the Palestinian Authority said. The unidentified man was allegedly involved in "organized crime and drug smuggling," and his death was not linked to the current wave of political violence, officials said.

Israel's military said only that the body had been returned to Israeli authorities and that the matter was under investigation. But Israel TV quoted Israeli police officials as saying they had "reasonable grounds" to believe the man was lynched in a political killing.

In Saturday's clashes, at least 25 Palestinians were injured in four separate confrontations in the Gaza Strip, among them a 14-year-old boy who was in serious condition after being shot in the head at Rafah, on the southern end of Gaza, doctors said.

In an unusual development, Palestinian police intervened in a protest at the Karni crossing point in Gaza, forcing demonstrators onto trucks and driving them away.

Microsoft break-in might lead to major losses for company

BY GENE JOHNSON
ASSOCIATED PRESS

SEATTLE — If valuable computer secrets stolen from Microsoft Corp. are disseminated, they could hurt the company more than it is letting on, some analysts say.

During the past several weeks, hackers broke into Microsoft's system and got a look at, but did not corrupt, a valuable software blueprint, or "source code," for a computer program under development, the company said Friday.

The FBI is investigating; the company will not identify the program under development.

"For Microsoft, that's a significant loss of intellectual property and a significant loss of a competitive edge," said Simon Perry, a computer se-

curity expert with Computer Associates of Islandia, N.Y.

"What we would expect is that code now either will appear on the Internet or it will be sold off to the highest bidder, probably overseas," Perry said.

Microsoft's source codes are the most coveted in the multibillion-dollar industry. With access to them, competitors could write programs and challenge Microsoft's products.

Hackers also could use the codes to identify software flaws, making break-ins and virus-writing easier.

Microsoft, while acknowledging the seriousness of the attack, downplayed its long-term significance. Company officials said the program won't be finished for years and will go through many changes before then.

Microsoft's chief executive, Steve Ballmer, said during a visit to Stockholm, Sweden, "You bet this is an issue of great importance."

But asked by a reporter how damaging the break-in was, he said, "Not very. But we want to make sure it doesn't get that way, and that's why we called in the FBI."

Company spokesman Mark Murray said the investigation revealed no evidence the intruders gained access to existing products, such as Windows 2000, Windows ME or Office.

Microsoft learned of the break-in Wednesday and planned to handle the investigation itself. On Thursday, however, it called the FBI. A source familiar with the case said hackers had access to the code for up to five weeks.

No motive for the break-in has been disclosed, but hackers in the past have tried to extort money

from companies by threatening to publish stolen information on the Internet.

Investors did not seem too concerned. Microsoft stock rose 5 percent Friday to \$67.69 on the Nasdaq Stock Market.

The break-in adds to the woes of a company now appealing a federal judge's ruling ordering that it be broken up for engaging in predatory business practices.

Microsoft found that passwords used to transfer source codes were being sent from the company's computer network in suburban Redmond to an e-mail account in St. Petersburg, Russia.

"You can operate there as a hacker with a fair level of confidence you won't get caught," Perry said. "The technology doesn't exist to track them down. Also, the laws don't exist to prosecute them."

Germans demonstrate against increase in neo-Nazi hate crimes

BY ERICH REIMANN
ASSOCIATED PRESS

DUESSELDORF, GERMANY — More than 30,000 people demonstrated against neo-Nazis in Germany on Saturday, drawing praise from a Jewish leader who said the nation is increasingly standing up against rising hate crimes.

Officials said 25,000 people rallied in Duesse-

ldorf, where a July bomb attack on immigrants joined the nation into confronting the far right and where the attempted firebombing of a synagogue

this month heightened concerns. Another 6,000 demonstrated in Kassel.

Civic groups, unions and politicians organized the rallies as a reply to what turned out to be much smaller neo-Nazi marches in both cities Saturday. Police reported about 70 arrests after scattered clashes between neo-Nazi marchers and radical leftist demonstrators.

Speaking to an applauding crowd in Duesse-

ldorf, the head of Germany's Jewish community said citizens must not remain silent when neo-Nazis

strike.

"When ranting skinheads can claim they are carrying out the will of the silent majority, then the silent majority is not without blame," Paul Spiegel said.

A few hundred yards away, 300 neo-Nazis, mostly young men and boys with shaved heads, marched under heavy police guard, chanting "Clear the street for the national resistance." Leftists shouted back and threw fruit and stones at them from behind police barricades.

As government figures show far-right crime on the rise, Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder has urged Germans to take part in an "uprising of decent people" against neo-Nazis. About 20,000 people gathered last weekend in Dortmund to show solidarity with foreigners.

At least three people have died this year in a surge of far-right violence against immigrants, the homeless and other minorities. The Duesseeldorf bomb attack in July injured 10 recent immigrants from the former Soviet Union, six of them Jewish.