

Cops detain 7 more in Makkah raid on terror

REUTERS, Riyadh
Saudi police have arrested seven suspected Islamic militants in the Muslim holy city of Makkah where five other militants were earlier killed in a police raid, security sources said Monday.
The sources said seven men suspected of involvement in Saturday's shoot-out in Makkah, which is off-limits to non-Muslims, were arrested around the city Sunday.
Saudi officials declined to say if the militants were linked to Saudi-born Osama bin Laden's al-Qaeda group, which has been blamed for suicide bombings in Riyadh in May against foreigners.
Stung by US charges of not doing enough to prevent the bombings which killed 35 people, Saudi Arabia has boosted security and cracked down on militancy in the oil-rich kingdom.
The Saudi-owned pan-Arab daily Asharq al-Awsat reported on its Web Site that the arrests took place after an exchange of fire with police on the outskirts of Makkah Sunday afternoon.

Palestinian militants mull ceasefire with Israel

REUTERS, Gaza
Palestinian militant groups weighed Monday a cease-fire with Israel in an Egyptian mediation bid to salvage a U.S.-backed peace plan.
"We are undergoing serious negotiations with Hamas with the help of our Egyptian brothers, so therefore we would certainly not like to discuss now anything that could negatively affect that effort," Palestinian Foreign Minister Nabil Shaath said.
"I hope that we will get their (Hamas') answer maybe tomorrow (Tuesday)," he said after talks with European Union foreign ministers in Luxembourg.
Hamas officials were non-committal after Egyptian envoys wrapped up two days of talks with militants in the Gaza Strip on ending bloodletting and kick-starting the "road map" to peace.
"We have listened to the ideas

and the proposals and we are studying them in order to respond to them," Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, Hamas' founder, told Reuters.
Mohammed al-Hindi, a top Islamic Jihad official who also met the Egyptian envoys, said any truce agreed by the group would not include Jewish settlers or Israeli soldiers, a non-starter for Israel.
A surge of violence since a June 4 peace summit attended by President Bush, Israeli leader Ariel Sharon and Palestinian Prime Minister Mahmoud Abbas has jeopardised the road map affirmed at the gathering in Aqaba, Jordan.
The bloodshed has included the killing of four Israeli soldiers in the Gaza Strip, a Hamas suicide bombing on a Jerusalem bus in which 17 died and Israeli air attacks that have killed more than 20 Palestinian militants and

civilians.
Hamas has said it would cease attacking Israelis in a 32-month-old uprising for independence only when Israel ended its occupation of land Palestinians claim for a state.
But Israel has put new pressure on the group by pledging to strike at its top leaders, backing up its threats by wounding one of Hamas's best-known spokesmen, Abdel-Aziz al-Rantissi, in a helicopter missile attack in Gaza last Tuesday.
Hamas officials said they remained opposed to the peace plan, which calls for an end to violence and the start of reciprocal confidence-building steps between Israel and the Palestinian Authority leading to a Palestinian state by 2005.
US envoy John Wolf was to meet Israeli Foreign Minister Silvan Shalom later in the day

and with Abbas Tuesday.
While the Egyptian envoys pursued truce efforts, Israel repeated its demand for Abbas to take the politically risky step of dismantling militant groups, as mandated by the road map, after any truce agreement.
Abbas has resisted confronting the militants, fearing a possible Palestinian civil war.
Israel also said it would continue to target "ticking bombs," its term for militants planning suicide attacks.
In parallel talks, Israeli and Palestinian security officials discussed Sunday possible Israeli troop withdrawals from northern Gaza and the West Bank city of Bethlehem in exchange for a Palestinian pledge to rein in militants there.



Senior Palestinian Islamic Jihad delegates Abdullah Shami (R) and Mohammed al-Hindi talk to the press after meeting with an Egyptian mediation team in Gaza City on Monday. The Egyptian delegation started a round table with all the main Palestinian factions in the morning after talks with each separately in a bid to reach a ceasefire agreement with Israel, participants said. The consultations are part of an international effort to revive the flagging peace process following one of the bloodiest weeks in the 32-month-old Palestinian Intifada, or uprising against Israeli occupation.

Turkey salutes Pak fight against fundamentalism

AFP, Islamabad
Visiting Turkish Premier Recep Tayyip Erdogan was to meet President Pervez Musharraf later Monday, after offering praise to Pakistan for efforts to contain fundamentalists.
The comments by Erdogan, whose Muslim-dominated country espouses secularism, come as a battle brews in Pakistan between hardline religious parties and General Musharraf over interpretations of Islam and its role in the state.
"The determination and crucial support Pakistan has shown in the fight against terrorism and fundamentalist radical movements have been well appreciated by the international community," Erdogan said at a state banquet hosted in his honour late Sunday, on his arrival for a three-day visit.



Protesters hold hands around a British tank during a rally in the southern Iraqi city of Basra on Sunday. Some 12,000 Iraqi Shiite Muslims marched in Basra demanding the withdrawal of British occupation forces from Iraq's main southern city.

Opposition seeks ouster of Pak Speaker

AFP, Islamabad
Pakistani opposition parties Sunday vowed to move a no-confidence motion against the speaker of the lower house of parliament after he ruled in favour of President Pervez Musharraf's controversial changes to the constitution.
The opposition parties at an emergency meeting here decided to table a motion to unseat speaker Chaudhry Amir Hussain.
"The speaker's ruling is unconstitutional. He gave his verdict without listening to the opposition," Javed Hashmi, acting president of former premier Nawaz Sharif's Pakistan Muslim League (PML-N) told reporters.

EI Baradei asks Iran to accept nuke checks

REUTERS, Vienna
The head of the United Nations' nuclear watchdog Monday called on Iran to accept strict inspection of its atomic program to help dispel fears that it is secretly developing nuclear weapons, as Washington alleges.
The watchdog's board members have already received copies of a harsh report on Iran by International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) chief Mohammed ElBaradei and will discuss it during a board meeting running this week.
"The report points out that Iran has failed to report certain nuclear material and activities, and that

corrective actions are being taken in co-operation with the Iranian authorities," ElBaradei said in a speech to the board.
ElBaradei also called on Iran to sign an Additional Protocol with the IAEA to grant inspectors wider access and more intrusive, short-notice inspections in order to be able to provide credible assurances about Iran's atomic plans.
A spokesman for Iran's Atomic Energy Organization told Reuters that Tehran might be willing to sign it, though he reiterated Iran's demands for access to nuclear technology in exchange for the government's signature.

'North Korea' shipped missiles to Iran by air

AFP, Seoul
North Korea has shipped missiles to Iran aboard cargo planes ever since a weapons-laden ship was intercepted en route to Yemen in December, a South Korean newspaper said Monday.
The United States has spotted Iran's IL-76 cargo aircraft leaving North Korea's Sunan airport on six occasions since April, the JoongAng newspaper said, quoting US and South Korean intelligence sources.
Until last year, Iranian airplanes visited North Korea about twice a year at most, the daily said.
"The Iranian cargo planes that took off from Sunan Airport flew over China and central Asian countries," an intelligence source was quoted as saying.

Tense, war-torn Liberia awaits signing of truce

AFP, Monrovia
Liberia remained tense Sunday despite promises that a truce between rebel forces and government troops would be signed Monday at faltering peace talks aimed at ending a barbarous civil war in the impoverished west African country.
The rebels, fighting to oust President Charles Taylor since 1999, had earlier this month battled their way to the edge of the capital Monrovia but have since pulled back as the peace talks resumed in Ghana.
The ceasefire was originally expected to be signed on Saturday but the rebels, in an about-turn, said they would only sign on if Taylor resigned.

US forces in fresh push to hunt pro-Saddam fighters

REUTERS, Baghdad
US troops scoured the hostile territory around Baghdad Monday for diehard Saddam Hussein loyalists blamed for recent attacks, after a new ambush on an American convoy wounded several soldiers.
US Central Command said it had launched a new mission, Operation Desert Scorpion, to hunt for guerrillas who have mounted several deadly attacks in the restive towns and villages to the north and west of the Iraqi capital.
It said in a statement that the

operation was "designed to identify and defeat selected Baath party loyalists, terrorist organizations and criminal elements..."
It said that at the same time US forces will deliver humanitarian aid.
A US convoy traveling from Baghdad was ambushed 20 km south of Balad Sunday evening. A US truck was left crippled and smoldering, its tires and canopy ablaze. Apache helicopters buzzed overhead hunting for the attackers.
Soldiers at the scene said several casualties had been evacuated. They said the truck was apparently hit by a rocket-

propelled grenade.
A US military spokesman said Monday he had no information on the attack.
Around 40 US soldiers have been killed in hostile attacks and ambushes since the start of May, mostly in Baghdad and two nearby areas -- to the west around Ramadi and Falluja, and to the north around Baiji, Baquba and Tikrit, Saddam's home town.
Iraqis in the troubled areas say they have no love for Saddam but that anger is mounting toward US soldiers.

China to chop half a million military jobs

REUTERS, Beijing
China aims to cut up to half a million people from the armed forces over the next two years as it reinvents a decade-old plan to make its bloated military more efficient, analysts said Monday.
The plan marks a significant departure from the stop-and-go modernization drive started in the early 1990s as it aims beyond merely updating hardware and shoots to revamp the antiquated structure of the two million plus armed forces, they said.
The Communist leadership renewed its commitment to streamlining the officer-heavy People's Liberation Army (PLA), the world's biggest military force, at the Party Congress last November as it promoted a younger batch of military leaders.

US lawmakers for sidelining Arafat

AFP, Washington
Two leading lawmakers said Sunday the world needed to further marginalise Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat to boost the latest international peace effort in the Middle East.
"I think we have to sideline Arafat right now," California Representative Jane Harman told Fox News Sunday.
Harman said senior US officials must persuade leaders in the Middle East to shun Arafat, who despite having been marginalized by the United States in its current peace initiatives, remains the head of the Palestinian Authority.
"When (US Secretary of State)

Colin Powell goes to Jordan next weekend, he should be spending time with Arab governments making sure they remove Arafat from all political power in the Palestinian Authority," said Harman, senior Democrat on the US House Intelligence Committee.
The best outcome, she said, would be for Arafat to go into exile.
"If he wants to live in the south of France ... that would be fine for me," Harman told Fox News.
Senator Diane Feinstein, another Democrat from California, said Palestinian Prime Minister Mahmud Abbas' efforts to build peace would be undermined as long as Arafat held sway in the region.

20 feared killed in Andhra mine accident

TIMES NEWS NETWORK, Hyderabad
Over 20 miners working in an underground mine of Singareni Collieries at Godvarikhani in Karimnagar district are feared killed when the mine caved in on Monday afternoon.
Additional DGP (law and order) Umesh Kumar, quoting initial reports from Godavarikhani, said the 3rd C block in the 7th LEP mine caved in around 2 pm.
He said the supporting beams to the mine suddenly collapsed and within minutes the entire mine was filled with water.
Umesh Kumar said efforts were on to pump out water from the mine and emergency squads have been pressed into service to rescue the trapped miners. He said the exact cause of the accident could not be ascertained yet.

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Trio to hold talks on DPRK nukes today

THE KOREA HERALD/ ANN, Phnom Penh
Foreign Minister Yoon Young-kwan will discuss ways to settle North Korean nuclear disputes with his Japanese and Chinese counterparts Tuesday when the three hold talks on the sideline of regional gatherings here.
Yoon, Japanese Foreign Minister Yoriko Kawaguchi and Chinese Foreign Minister Li Zhaoxing arrived in Cambodia Monday to attend annual meetings of the ASEAN plus Three, which includes 10 members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, along with South Korea, Japan and China and the larger ASEAN Regional Forum.
The ministers will discuss follow-up measures to the Saturday agreement between South Korea, the United States and Japan that they will crackdown on certain illegal activities alleged against the North including drug trafficking and money counterfeiting.
They will also exchange ideas on opening the second round of nuclear talks over Pyongyang's nuclear weapons development at an early date. During his five-day stay in the Cambodian capital, Yoon also plans to hold bilateral talks with foreign ministers from Australia, Canada, New Zealand and Mongolia and is adjusting schedules for a meeting with the Russian foreign minister.

ASEAN pushes Myanmar for Suu Kyi's release

AFP, Phnom Penh
Southeast Asian foreign ministers pressed Myanmar Monday for the release of its opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi as Yangoon faced the spectre of increasing sanctions from an angry international community.
"All of us in ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) wish

that Aung San Suu Kyi will be free to be able to do what she would like to do," ASEAN secretary-general Ong Keng Yong told reporters during annual ministerial talks in the Cambodian capital.
"I think that is at the bottom of our heart and in our own way we have explained to the Myanmar foreign minister that wish. But we don't want

to do it in a confrontational manner," he said.
Military-ruled Myanmar has been the target of vitriolic attacks by world leaders since its arrest last month of Aung San Suu Kyi and a crackdown on democracy activists.
The United States has already toughened sanctions against it while the European Union is expected to do so later Monday.
Japan reportedly plans to warn Yangon in talks between its foreign ministers in Phnom Penh this week that it may "review" its economic aid unless the junta releases the Nobel peace laureate immediately.
"In the discussions on Myanmar many of the ASEAN ministers conveyed their concerns to the Myanmar foreign minister," Singaporean Foreign Minister S. Jayakumar said.
"The point was made that the recent developments were a setback not just for Myanmar but also a setback for ASEAN," he added.
Some ministers called for the release of Aung San Suu Kyi, he said, declining to specify who they were.
In a significant move for the 10-member bloc, ministers are to express their concern in a joint communique at the conclusions of talks Tuesday, according to ASEAN secretariat spokesman M.C. Abad.



(L-R) Foreign ministers of the Philippines Blas Ople, S. Jayakumar of Singapore, Surakiart Sathirathai of Thailand, Nguyen Dy Nien of Vietnam, Princess Hajar Masna of Brunei, Hor Namhong of Cambodia and Hassan Wirayuda of Indonesia join hands for a group photo ahead of their roundtable discussions on Monday.