

## Inmate kills pedophile priest in US prison

REUTERS, Boston

Defrocked priest John Geoghan, a central figure in the Catholic Church's sex abuse scandal, was killed on Saturday by a fellow inmate in the prison where he was serving a sentence for child rape, officials said.

Geoghan was apparently strangled, Worcester County District Attorney John Conte said on Saturday.

Geoghan, who had been accused of molesting more than 130 people while serving as a priest in various Boston area parishes, was brought to Leominster Hospital where he died shortly before 2 p.m., said Kelly Nantel, a spokeswoman for the Massachusetts Department of Corrections.

Conte's office said Joseph Druce, currently serving a life sentence, will face murder charges in Geoghan's death. An autopsy on Geoghan is planned for Monday.

## Israeli, Palestinian hawks reject new truce efforts

AFP, Jerusalem

Israel and Palestinian hardliners both rejected Sunday a proposal by the Palestinian leadership for a new ceasefire after the collapse of a seven-week-old truce amid a new spate of violence.

Tensions were high with the radical group Hamas threatening new suicide bombings and Israeli tanks poised north of the Gaza Strip after militants hit Israel with what officers called a new, longer-range rocket.

Progress on a US-sponsored peace plan was stalled after the latest round of bloodshed, capped last week by a deadly suicide bombing in central Jerusalem and a retaliatory Israeli airstrike on a Hamas leader.

Palestinian officials said Saturday a new truce was possible if the Israelis formally recognised it, pulled out of occupied towns and ended their practice of "targeted killings" of militant leaders.

But Israel, which considered the truce dead after the bombing Tuesday that killed 21 passengers on a Jerusalem bus, dismissed on Sunday the suggestion of a new ceasefire.

"It is not serious," senior government spokesman Avi Pazner told AFP. "As long as terrorist organisations continue to exist, there will not be the possibility of a real ceasefire."

Pazner repeated Israeli demands that the Palestinian Authority take all measures to disarm and dismantle the hardline groups, and arrest and prosecute their leaders for involvement in violence.

"Only after that can the peace process continue," he said. Hamas leader Abdelaziz al-Rantissi also rejected out of hand the possibility of negotiating a new truce to replace the one formally scrapped after the death Thursday of one of his top aides, Ismail Abu Shanab.

"There is no possibility to talk about this issue now," Rantissi told AFP. "The Zionist enemy should pay a high price for their crime."

Asked about Pazner's categorical rejection of a new truce, Rantissi

said, "When we will contact them (the Israelis) through suicide operations, they will speak differently."

Despite a relative calm that settled on the region over the weekend, Israeli forces remained on high alert, especially after Palestinian militants fired a makeshift rocket deep into Israel from the Gaza Strip.

Israeli military sources said it was the first time a rocket had reached the outskirts of the Israeli port city of Ashkelon, some 10 kilometres (six miles) from the border with the Gaza Strip.

Israeli military intelligence said recently that Hamas had improved the capabilities of its rockets, and Israeli media said the army was ready to move on Gaza if the rocketfire continued.

A photograph of Israeli tanks massed outside the Gaza Strip was splashed across the front page of the Hebrew daily Maariv on Sunday, emblazoned with the caption: "Tank barrels pointed at Gaza".

"Israel is giving the Palestinian Authority a chance (to crack down on militants) and that is why the army is not moving into the Gaza Strip," a senior Israeli military official said Sunday.

"But Israel must be ready for tougher developments," the unidentified commander told public radio.

For its part, the Palestinian Authority said late Saturday it had sealed three arms-smuggling tunnels running into the Gaza Strip from Egypt and arrested nine weapons smugglers in the first operation of its kind.

But rifts appeared to be widening within the Palestinian leadership over control of its security services, with prime minister Mahmud Abbas rejecting a bid to strip him of his post as interior minister.

Officials of Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat's Fatah movement said its central committee had considered a proposal to seek the nomination of Nasser Yusuf, a general with ties to Arafat in the past, to the interior post.



Palestinian policemen close a tunnel in the Rafah refugee camp, close to the Egyptian border on Saturday. The Palestinian Authority sealed three arms smuggling tunnels running between the Gaza Strip and Egypt, and arrested some smugglers.

PHOTO: AFP



UN Secretary General Kofi Annan (C) prays while Gilda Vieira de Mello (L), mother of Brazilian diplomat Sergio Vieira de Mello embraces his coffin, accompanied by Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva (L, behind) and de Mello's widow Annie (R) during a remembrance ceremony on Saturday in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. UN envoy to Iraq Vieira de Mello was among 23 people killed in a devastating suicide bombing at UN headquarters in Baghdad on Tuesday.

PHOTO: AFP

## 'Over 400 Iraqi women kidnapped, raped in post-war chaos'

AFP, Baghdad

More than 400 Iraqi women have been kidnapped and raped amid the lawlessness gripping the country since the ouster of Saddam Hussein, the Organisation of Women's Freedom in Iraq said Sunday.

The group's director Yanar Mohammed said the four months since the US-led coalition took control had seen an "unprecedented" explosion of violence against women.

"More than 400 women have endured the pain and suffering of being kidnapped, raped and sometimes sold," she told reporters at a demonstration in Baghdad's Fardous Square.

"This violence is still a daily occurrence, especially on the streets of Baghdad, without attracting the least attention of the (US) soldiers."

Mohammed said the attacks had created a climate of fear among women which meant few dared venture out of their homes.

"The moment a woman steps out on to the street, she is an immediate target for humiliation, sexual assault and abduction."

"The assaults against women, whether organised by professional gangs or individual crimes supported by male chauvinism, and unleashed and unobserved by coalition authorities, consequently turned the streets into a no-woman zone."

Saihan Ali, a 35-year-old health ministry employee who joined the protest, agreed.

"Before, I would take a walk after work, but now I quickly return home, and I'm always on the alert because anything can happen," she said.

The Organisation of Women's Freedom has accused US forces of not doing enough to secure the streets.

It said it had appealed, in vain, for help from Iraq's US-appointed interim Governing Council as well as US civil administrator Paul Bremer.

## Iraq on the frontline of terror battle: US

### Interim council meets Arab leaders

AFP, Baghdad

US officials warned Iraq was on the frontline of the battle against terrorism as a delegation from the country's US-appointed interim administration took its quest for international recognition to the Cairo-based Arab League.

The multi-ethnic city of Kirkuk was tested by the killing of three Turkmen in demonstrations, as British troops in the southern port of Basra went back out on patrol the day after three of their soldiers were killed in a drive-by shooting.

The continued violence around the country came as US civil administrator Paul Bremer declared Iraq one of the main battlefields in the US-declared war on terror, in the aftermath of Tuesday's suicide attack on the UN building in Baghdad that killed 23 people and wounded more than 100.

"It is now unfortunately the case that Iraq has become one of the fields of battle in this global war" on terror, Bremer told reporters.

His comments echoed the tough words of his boss, President George W. Bush, who in his weekly radio address warned terrorists would be hunted down by America wherever they are.

In a worrying sign for Bush, a Newsweek poll, released this weekend, found that more registered voters -- 49 percent -- would not want Bush to return for a second term in office if the elections were now, compared with 44 percent who would.

The poll found 69 percent of Americans are now convinced the United States will become bogged down in Iraq, while 66 percent said the US government was spending too much on rebuilding Iraq.

The pressure also grew Sunday on Bush's chief ally, British Prime Minister Tony Blair, as questions piled up over his actions before the apparent suicide of an arms expert at the centre of allegations that his government embellished the case for war in Iraq.

Just five days before Blair was

due to testify, the independent judicial inquiry into arms expert David Kelly's death published Saturday thousands of pages of private e-mails and memoranda from, among others, the prime minister's closest aides.

In Brazil, UN chief Kofi Annan paid an emotional farewell to his slain Iraq representative Sergio Vieira de Mello in the diplomat's hometown of Rio De Janeiro Saturday.

Meanwhile, Iraq's US-approved 25-member Governing Council sent a delegation to Egypt for meetings in a bid to win legitimacy around the Arab world.

The Iraqi delegation was led by Ibrahim Jafari, the council's current head, who announced his team would hold meetings with Egyptian Foreign Secretary Ahmed Maher and Arab League Secretary General Amr Musa.

Until now, Arab states have given the Governing Council the cold shoulder, refusing to recognise it as representative of the Iraqi people.

PHOTO: AFP

## Probe into Kelly's death: Papers published Pressure builds on Blair

AFP, London

The pressure built yesterday on British Prime Minister Tony Blair as questions piled up over his actions before the apparent suicide of an arms expert at the centre of allegations that the government embellished the case for war in Iraq.

Just five days before Blair was due to testify, the independent judicial inquiry into arms expert David Kelly's death published Saturday thousands of pages of private e-mails and memoranda from, among others, the prime minister's closest aides.

The 9,000 pages of documentation shed new light on Blair's role in the affair, suggesting that he was involved in naming Kelly as the source of BBC allegations that the government "sexed up" a dossier on Iraqi weapons.

A confidential note of a series of meetings held in the prime minister's office revealed that Blair supported "making public that a source had come forward", but left the specifics of the "naming strategy" to the defence ministry.

Evidence published by the inquiry -- led by senior judge Brian Hutton -- showed that Blair wanted Kelly to be properly briefed on what to say before he was made to appear in public before a parliamentary committee.

If further proof were needed of the depth of the crisis facing Blair, an ICM survey for The Sunday Telegraph newspaper showed that 67 percent of those polled felt they had been deceived by him over Iraq's weapons of mass destruction.

A third, 33 percent, said the prime minister should quit.

Kelly, a government expert on biological weapons and a former UN arms inspector in Iraq, was found dead with a slit wrist on July 18, three days after being publicly grilled by lawmakers over whether he was the BBC's source.

Kelly also testified privately before a second parliamentary inquiry.

"Tried PM (Blair) out on Kelly (appearing) before" the parliamentary committees, said an e-mail released Saturday from Downing

Street chief-of-staff Jonathan Powell, one of Blair's top aides.

"He (Blair) thought he (Kelly) probably had to do both but need to be properly prepared beforehand," said the e-mail, which was dated July 10.

Blair will give evidence before the inquiry on Thursday, the day after Defence Secretary Geoff Hoon -- Kelly's ultimate boss -- who came out of the ICM poll worst with 52 percent saying he should stand down.

During the first two weeks the inquiry heard that Hoon had overruled misgivings from his most senior civil servant to order Kelly to face the public examination.

BBC journalist Andrew Gilligan alleged in a British newspaper article on June 1 that Blair's office was responsible for inserting a headline claim that Saddam Hussein could deploy weapons of mass destruction within 45 minutes into a government dossier published in September 2002.

## Thousands mark King's 'I have a dream' speech

REUTERS, Washington

Several thousand people gathered on Saturday to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the civil rights March on Washington where Martin Luther King delivered his "I have a dream" speech.

Busloads from around the country turned out in the capital for the event organizers hoped would force Republican administration policy changes and get minorities and working class Americans out to vote in the 2004 presidential election.

"We still have a lot of work to accomplish," Martin Luther King III, whose father's historic speech on Aug. 28, 1963, was a defining moment for the American civil rights movement, told Reuters.

"It doesn't mean we haven't made any progress but a lot of work still must be done before the dream and vision that my father shared will come to fruition," King said.

A broad coalition of more than

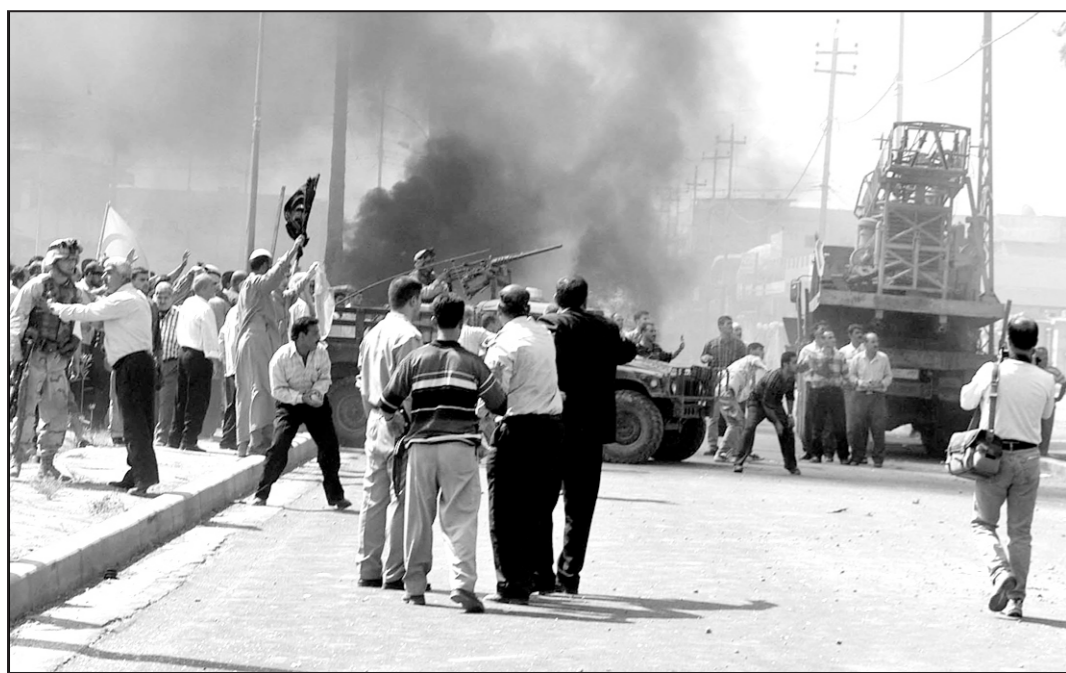
100 groups took part in activities including prayer, song and poetry, culminating in the march.

Socialists, Communists, opponents of U.S. policy on Cuba, Iran and Iraq, Falun Gong members, and people pushing for better national education collected in front of the Abraham Lincoln Memorial on the national mall.

Speakers included representatives from Hispanic and Arab American communities, from anti-war and gay rights movements as well as from leading black groups.

The event kicks off a 15-month campaign to highlight concerns about racial, environmental and economic issues and the Bush administration's "war on terrorism."

"This administration is focused strictly on the rich and the super rich," said King, who is president of the Atlanta-based Southern Christian Leadership Conference.



Iraqi Turkmen stage a demonstration Saturday in Kirkuk to protest the August 22 killing of seven Iraqi Turkmen by Peshmergas. Three Turkmen were shot dead by police after they opened fire on a police building during a demonstration, Governor Abdul Rahman Mustafa told AFP.

PHOTO: AFP

## US, allies play down breakthrough hopes in nuke talks

REUTERS, Seoul

The United States and its allies played down hopes of a quick breakthrough in talks with North Korea this week on the communist state's nuclear plans, while Pyongyang renewed demands for guarantees against a US attack.

As diplomats from six countries prepared to gather in Beijing for the crucial talks, North Korea kept up its usual harsh rhetoric against Washington and what Seoul said were groundless accusations of South Korean military provocation.

Diplomats from the two Koreas, the United States, China, Japan and Russia will meet in the Chinese capital, Beijing, on August 27-29 in an attempt to defuse the nuclear crisis.

US officials in Washington played down expectations from the talks, saying they were the start of what was likely to be a long process that Washington hopes will lead to a verifiable end to North Korea's suspected atomic weapons programs.

"This is a beginning," said one official on Friday. "We don't... expect to reach some kind of an agreement next week."

Russia's Interfax news agency quoted diplomatic sources as saying that no breakthrough should be expected from the talks. The agency noted that the previous North Korean nuclear crisis in 1993-94 took nearly 18 months of negotiations to resolve.

## Entry to US gets tough

### Visas, immigration controls a first line of defence against terror

AFP, Washington

Washington is tightening procedures for gaining entry to the United States and turning visas into a first line of defence against terrorism on US soil.

The nineteen hijackers who carried out the deadly attacks of September 11 were all foreigners, 15 of them Saudi, who had entered the United States on tourist and student visas.

Two of them, including Mohammed Atta, an Egyptian who piloted a hijacked passenger jet into one of the towers of the World Trade Center, had an expired visa.

And several had used false identities to enter the United States.

"What we have discovered in the aftermath of September 11th terrorist attacks was that the perpetrators were able to use our visa system to enter the United States with impunity and carry

out their deadly mission," said Democratic California Senator Dianne Feinstein.

In late 2001, the US Immigration and Naturalization Service admitted that it had lost track of some four million people who had entered the United States legally and then allowed their visas to expire.

More than 500,000 foreigners enter the United States each year on student visas. In the 1990s, 16,000 of them came from countries suspected of having links to terrorism, such as Iran, Iraq, Sudan, and Syria, said Feinstein, co-author of a bill on border security and visa reform passed by Congress in early 2002.

The new legislation aims to reduce the risk of infiltration by tightening procedures for issuing visas at some 200 US consulates worldwide and at airports and other ports of entry.

A better flow of information

between immigration services, the FBI and the CIA, coordinated by the new Department of Homeland Security, should also enable the government to do a better job of spotting terrorists, US officials say.

Two of the 19 hijackers who carried out the September 11 attacks were suspected as terrorists by the Central Intelligence Agency, but that information was not shared with immigration authorities or the Federal Bureau of Investigation, according to a Congressional investigation into the attacks.

Starting in January 2004, immigration officials will take digital fingerprints and photographs of most foreigners carrying student or tourist visas upon their arrival in the United States, as part of a new system called "Visitor and Immigration Status Indication Technology System" or VISIT.