

## BRIEFLY

## Lahore airport blast: Four arrested

LAHORE, Pakistan, Aug 6: Police announced the arrests Monday of four men in connection with last month's blast at the international airport here and alleged they were working for Indian intelligence, reports AFP.

City police chief Chaudhry Sajjad Ahmed said Mohammad Ishaq, 30, a Pakistani Science graduate who had been arrested last week, had confessed to being the mastermind of the July 22 Airport explosion which killed six people and injured around 60.

The police official identified the three other suspects as Mohammad Afzal, Abdul Ghafoor and Shamsher Ali Shah.

Police had announced on July 31 that a main suspect had been arrested in the airport bombing, but he was not identified until Monday.

Citing Ishaq's alleged confession, the police chief said the four had been working for Indian intelligence. He also said Ishaq had confessed to a cancer hospital in Lahore founded by cricketer-turned-politician Imran Khan, in which six people died, and several other bombings.

**Duke, Duchess of York appear in public**

LONDON, Aug 6: The Duke and Duchess of York appeared together in public Monday for the first time since their divorce in May, chatting and joking at a charity golf tournament, reports AFP.

The royals met the press during the tournament in Surrey organised to raise funds for the Motor Neurone Disease Association, of which the Duchess is patron.

Prince Andrew, Queen Elizabeth's second son, took part in the game and later posed for photographers with the ex-wife and their two daughters, Princess Beatrice, who will be eight on Thursday, and Princess Eugenie, aged six.

**Appearance of Megawati in police HQs still uncertain**

JAKARTA, Aug 6: Embattled Indonesian opposition leader Megawati Sukarnoputri has received a summons to appear at police headquarters here Friday, but it is still uncertain she will appear in person, her lawyer said today, reports AFP.

"We received the summons Monday afternoon, and we are still discussing whether Megawati will appear herself on Friday," the chief lawyer Robert Tambunan told AFP today.

Tambunan said that the summons contained one legal aspect which needed to be discussed — whether it was sufficient that the letter giving permission for her questioning was signed by State Secretary Mardiono, and not by President Suharto.

**Israel to further ease closure of Palestinian territories**

AMMAN, Aug 6: Israel has decided to further ease the closure of the Palestinian territories by allowing another 5,000 Palestinian workers to enter the country, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu announced here Monday, reports AFP.

"We have decided this morning, after consultations with our defence minister, to ease up on the closure and allow another 5,000 Palestinian workers to come and work in Israel," he told a press conference.

The army blockade of the West Bank and Gaza Strip was imposed on February 25 after the first in a wave of Islamic militant suicide bombings which left 58 dead in Israel.

However, since rightwing Premier Netanyahu's election victory in May 29 polls he eased the stronghold to allow 30,000 Palestinians to return to their jobs in Israel.

**3 days' rains kill 31 in China:** At least 31 people were killed, a thousand were injured and around 980 million yuan (118 million US dollars) was inflicted in property damage in southern China's Hunan province after the region was hit by three days of heavy rain. Wen Wei Po reported yesterday, AFP reports from Hong Kong.

The casualties occurred in and around Lingzhou, a city bordering Jiangxi province, after the rain, brought by typhoon herb, swept the region from Thursday to Saturday, the China-based daily reported.

**Blast rocks western Moscow:** An explosion rocked western Moscow yesterday just three minutes before Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin's car drove past. Interfax News Agency said, Reuters reports from Moscow.

Interfax said Chernomyrdin's car was two km (1.5 miles) away from where the blast went off on the Rublyovskoye Shosse, which links many government country residences with central Moscow. A Moscow police spokeswoman said the blast occurred at 8.50 am (0450 GMT) but it was too early to say if it had been aimed at Chernomyrdin. No-one was hurt, she said.

## Syria rejects Netanyahu's offer to resume peace talks

DAMASCUS, Aug 6: Syria rejected today Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's offer to resume peace talks, saying his proposal has nothing to do with peace, reports Reuters.

The officials daily Tishreen said that Netanyahu wanted the negotiations to discuss several issues mainly Israel's security problem in south Lebanon but not withdrawal from the Golan Heights, captured by Israel in 1967.

"This talks doesn't mean anything for the making of peace," Tishreen said. "It is mere nice words which are baseless. The issues are the resumption of the negotiations but the essence of what the negotiations would deal with."

Netanyahu said in Amman on Monday his government had submitted a peace proposal for Syria via the United States and was awaiting an answer.

The hardline Israeli leader, making his first trip to Amman since his election in May, welcomed what he said was a message from Jordan's King Hussein that Syria planned to pursue peace with Israel's new government.

While Hussein and Netanyahu met in Amman, Lebanese President Elias Hrawi held surprise talks with his Syrian counterpart Hafez Al-Assad in Damascus.

Syrian officials said the Israeli proposal of "Lebanon first" would be discussed by Assad and Hrawi. Damascus, which has 35,000 troops in Lebanon, and Beirut have publicly rejected the Israeli offer.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu says Israel is ready to start peace talks again with Syria and suggested he may put the Golan Heights on the negotiating table.

The peace overture toward Syria was the strongest yet from Netanyahu, who has vowed not to give up the Golan Heights, which Israel captured in the 1967 Mideast War.

Netanyahu, speaking Monday at a joint news conference with Jordan's King Hussein during his first trip to Jordan, said he believed resolving the conflict in south Lebanon was a "good starting point" for Israel and Syria.

"We are not limiting this to any one subject," said Netanyahu. "Our purpose is to achieve a formal peace with Syria. It is not to merely engage in process for process sake."

Peace with Syria, the most reluctant of Israel's neighbours to reach an agreement with the Jewish state, would be a major step toward ending decades of hostilities between Israel and the Arab world.

## 7 troops killed, 48 hurt in fighting Chechen rebels down 5 Russian choppers

MOSCOW, Aug 6: Chechen rebel fighters shot down five Russian military helicopters early today in a dawn assault on the capital Grozny, Interfax News Agency reported, citing a Russian military source, reports AFP.

A Russian military spokesman said seven Russian soldiers had been killed and 48 others wounded in fighting for control of the city.

"More than 350 independence fighters" had managed to penetrate Grozny with at least 10 armoured vehicles, the military command said, and were attempting to seize the headquarters of Chechnya's Moscow-appointed administration.

Earlier, separatist spokesman Movladi Udugov had said two helicopters were downed in fierce fighting for control of the capital, but the

Russian command insisted only one had been damaged. Hundreds of rebel fighters launched simultaneous offensive Tuesday on the breakaway republic's two other biggest towns, Gudermes and Argun, which lie to the east.

A Reuters report add: Chechen fighters stormed into Argun and Gudermes, two towns on the main road between the regional capital Grozny and adjoining region of Dagestan, early today, rebel information chief Movladi Udugov said.

The Russian-backed interior ministry of the region, quoted by Interfax News Agency, confirmed that fighters had entered the two of Argun, some 15 km (10 miles) from Grozny. Rebels also entered Grozny early today, attacking Russian road blocks and a railway depot.

## Muslims, Croats struggling to reach compromise on plan to govern Mostar

MOSTAR, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Aug 6: With the full weight of international pressure bearing down on them, Bosnian Muslims and Croats are struggling to reach compromise on a plan to govern the ethnically divided city of Mostar together, reports AP.

The European Union, which has administered Mostar since 1994, had threatened to withdraw by midnight Saturday unless Mostar's Muslim and Croat leaders agreed to abide by recent elections to share power in the southwestern Bosnian city.

With so much at stake in Mostar, talks continued Sunday and Monday far past the original EU deadline. Mostar Croats and Muslims returned later Monday to the hotel where intense negotiations had ended about 90 minutes

earlier, and met again with EU representatives.

"Half a sentence divides us from the agreement," EU spokesman Dragan Gasic said between sessions.

But that small gap proved impossible to bridge. Muslims, Croats and EU officials emerged around 4 am (0200 GMT) after five hours of talks to say they still had no agreement, but would meet again at 11 am (0900 GMT).

Failure in Mostar would bode ill for the Muslim-Croat federation that covers half of Bosnia and for Sept. 14 elections across the country.

Prolonging the European Union's stay past the deadline was suggested by Germany, a close ally of Croatia.

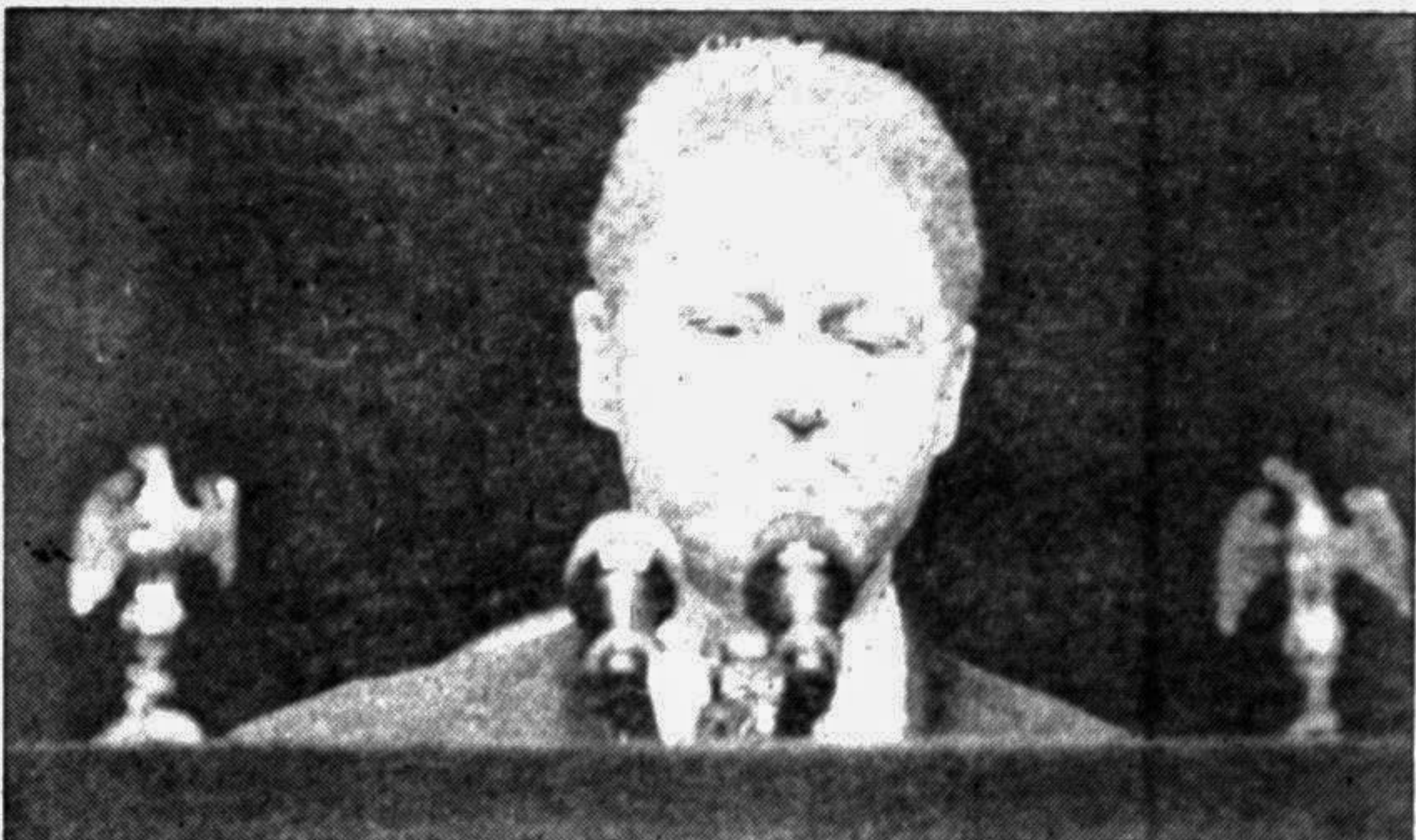
The city's latest divisions sprang from June 30 elections narrowly won by a Muslim-led coalition.

The Tigers have not given any of their own casualty figures but said five civilians perished in air attacks carried out by the military in and around the town of Kilinochchi, the target of the government's offensive.

Army lines had moved within three kms of Kilinochchi by Monday and the advance was slow because of intense rebel resistance, official sources said.

The LTTE said they were blocking the military push.

"LTTE fighting formations put up sustained resistance and foiled the advance thrust of the army," the LTTE said in a statement Monday.



US President Bill Clinton pauses during a speech on US foreign policy on Monday at George Washington University in Washington after earlier signing the Iran and Libya Sanctions Act. The sanctions were enacted after the TWA flight 800 explosion despite objections from European allies.

## India plans to showcase arms in global market

NEW DELHI, Aug 6: India plans to showcase its latest military hardware in the global arms bazaar in a bid to increase sagging defence exports, official sources said Monday, reports AFP.

Officials said India's new government was setting up a taskforce of experts who will identify the potential and capabilities of state-run defence enterprises and ordnance factories to promote exports.

The officials said the taskforce for the first time will offer a catalogue of India's latest defence products at global exhibitions in a bid to enhance awareness of the country's military potential.

"The export campaign would, however, be subject to India's policy to prevent arms proliferation in areas of conflict," an official said on conditions of anonymity.

The country's security and strategic considerations would be also given due consideration, United News of India (UNI) said in a related dispatch.

India has never sold arms to Pakistan, with which it has fought three wars since 1947, or had any military transactions with its eastern neighbour China.

Officials said the plans to increase arms exports came to the Indian government last month marginally hiked military spending in its federal 1996-97 budget.

India's arms exports rose from 28.90 million dollars in 1991-92 to 156 million dollars in 1994-95 but the earnings tumbled last year due to a glut

in the international market.

The government has not released its arms export figures for the previous financial year which ended on March 31.

Indian embassies abroad will be asked to promote indigenous military equipment in line with New Delhi's plans to bolster arms exports, the officials said.

"We will showcase equipment and systems which are at par with the hardware offered internationally... we will end the existing lack of awareness of our products," a senior Defence Ministry official said.

India has also begun to offer technical cooperation to "friendly nations" for the production and third-country export of its military equipment, he said.



Japanese adventurer Kenichi Horie, 57, waves to press photographers as he arrives at Tokyo Port Monday after his solo journey to finish the world's first crossing of the Pacific on a solar-powered boat. Horie set sail from the Ecuadorian port of Salinas on March 20 aboard the solar-engine boat which is constructed out of recycled aluminum equivalent to 22,000 cans.

— AFP/UNB photo

## Surplus US military equipment fuelling regional arms races

WASHINGTON, Aug 6: Where have all of the United States' surplus arms gone? Shipped away to developing countries, where else?

Since the end of the Cold War, the Pentagon has given away more than 2.0 billion US dollar worth of surplus military equipment, mostly to developing nations, a US disarmament group says, according to IPS.

That's more than Washington's entire annual development aid budget.

The equipment includes not only uniforms, small arms, ammunition, and logistical equipment, but also major weapons systems, including nearly 4,000 tanks, 125 attack helicopters, over 500 fixed-wing bombs, almost 100 ships and boats, and hundreds of guided missiles, according to the report by the Federation of American Scientists (FAS).

Lora Lumpe, co-author and director of the FAS's arms sales monitoring project, warns that much of the

equipment is fuelling regional arms races and that some of it is going to governments accused of serious human rights abuses.

"While other, more visible forms of military aid have been cut since the end of the Cold War, shipments of surplus arms through a variety of programmes have increased dramatically," she says.

Among the principal beneficiaries are Greece and Turkey whose long-simmering conflict regularly threatens to erupt into armed clashes.

Human rights groups, and even the US State Department, have also long criticised Turkey's counter-insurgency tactics against Kurdish rebels in the southeastern part of the country as brutal and indiscriminate.

Other major recipients of surplus arms include Morocco, whose occupation of the Western Sahara has drawn international censure, Egypt,

Israel, Thailand, the Philippines, Oman, Bahrain, Taiwan, Argentina, India, Brazil, Chile, El Salvador, Peru, and Colombia.

UN peacekeeping forces have received a small fraction of the equipment, including tanks, 126 armoured personnel carriers, eight Cobra helicopters and five observation helicopters.

Surplus arms transfers are generally omitted from statistics on the overall value of US arms exports, according to the report, entitled Recycle Weapons. Without counting these transactions, the United States was already far and away the world's number one arms exporter, accounting for about 50 per cent of all weapons sold to developing nations from 1990 to 1995.

Since 1990, Washington has approved an average of over 10 billion US dollar a year in arms sales, although in 1994,

the total fell to just over 6.0 billion dollars from almost three times that amount the previous year.

Congress never debates or votes on surplus arms transfers as it does on other forms of military aid and major sales of arms equipment to other nations, according to the report.

Instead, decisions on transfer used weapons are made by a Pentagon committee which includes representative from the State and Commerce Department.

The vast majority of surplus arms are given away free of charge, while some are leased at no or nominal cost, and yet others are sold at a fraction of their actual value, says the report.

Giving away excess weapons is often cheaper than destroying or storing them, it says, adding that many developing countries are eager to get new weapons — even if already used from the world's dominant military power.

## Off the Record

## Marriage of a dead couple!

TAIPEI: A couple killed in a bridal shop fire last month were "married" Tuesday by their families with the blessing of Buddhist masters and Taipei Mayor Chen Shui-Bian, witnesses said, reports AFP.

The pictures of Wang Kuancheng, 28 and Chang Hsin-Feng, 25, were placed side by side with friends and relatives called to witness the event, they said.

Shortly after the simple ceremony, a funeral was held for the couple and for three others who also perished in the fire on July 25.

The couple had planned to marry next February.

"Marriages" of dead people are not uncommon among the Chinese, many whom believe that the spirits of the dead people cannot rest unless planned ceremonies are completed.

## Wonder Woman! Multiform woman

HONG KONG: An elderly Chinese woman in Sichuan province has shed her skin every year for the past 20 years because of a rare condition, a report said Tuesday, says AFP.

Ninety-nine-year-old An He of Shuning city undergoes a month-long shedding of her skin, the Hong Kong branch of China News Service said.

The report did not say what illness An had but noted that she only felt "psychologically uncomfortable" with a "reduced appetite" during the change. The report said that in the past year, the skin changes have started occurring every one to seven months.

91 M-60 battle tanks, 38 fixed-wing aircraft, 28 military helicopters, 8 side winder missile, four frigates and one landing ship. Its neighbour — and historic rival Argentina — received 36 Skyhawk warplanes, 74 other fixed-wing military aircraft, 18 Huey attack helicopters, and one landing ship.

Elsewhere in Latin America, Colombia has received 53 military aircraft: Venezuela, 18; Chile, 22; Mexico, 33; El Salvador, 9; Peru, 11; Ecuador, four; Uruguay, three; and Bolivia, two. Costa Rica has received small arms as have Guyana, Chile, Belize and Uruguay. Venezuela, Uruguay, Colombia, the Dominican Republic and Mexico also received naval craft.

Some of the equipment has also found its way to Sub-Saharan Africa. Botswana, Ivory Coast, Mali, Namibia, and Zimbabwe have all paid little or nothing for observation helicopters.