

# CIA looks into possible Iraqi role in attacks

AFP, Washington

The US Federal Bureau of Investigation expanded the list of people wanted in connection with terrorist attacks to nearly 200 late Tuesday, as the CIA pored over reports that one of the suspects in the plot had a meeting with an Iraqi intelligence official.

The updated list has been sent to local police stations, border crossings and US airlines in hope of getting hold of the individuals that officials said could be helpful to the probe, an FBI official said.

But the investigation acquired a new dimension, when the Central Intelligence Agency began looking into reports that one of the hijackers, who took part in last week's terrorist attacks, met with a senior Iraqi intelligence official prior to them, a US government source told AFP.

"There is an indication that such a meeting occurred earlier this year in Europe," the source said.

The hijacker in question was Mohammed Atta, the man believed to have been inside an American Airlines plane that was the first to crash into the World Trade Center, according to the source.

But at the moment, the CIA was not certain the meeting "had anything to do with Tuesday's events,"

the source said.

US Attorney General John Ashcroft refused any comment when asked Tuesday about a possible Iraqi connection. "I wouldn't be in a position to discuss evidence in regard to questions about other responsible parties," he said.

The attacks, in which two jet airliners crashed into the twin towers of the World Trade Center, have left at least 5,600 missing and presumed dead.

A third hijacked plane struck the Pentagon outside Washington, and a fourth crashed in a field in the state of Pennsylvania after its passengers apparently forcefully resisted the hijackers.

One full week after the tragedy, investigators were questioning 75 people detained for immigration violations as they pursued more than 96,000 leads in hopes to figure out the full scope of the plot.

Administration officials have warned that members of the terrorist conspiracy may still be on the loose on US soil and could strike again.

Meanwhile federal prosecutors impeached a grand jury in White Plains, New York, to make it easier to subpoena people and documents, according to law enforcement sources.

In Texas, FBI agents have raided

a flight school in the city Arlington seeking information about a man they had removed from a train in Fort Worth, The Dallas Morning News reported.

They were inquiring about Ayub Ali, Khan, arrested last Thursday along with an individual named Mohammed Jaweed Azmath during a drug sweep at a Fort Worth train station. The two men were travelling to San Antonio, the report said.

The men had 5,000 dollars in cash as well box cutters the weapon used by the hijackers to take control of planes, according to police.

Khan reportedly had a outstanding deportation order against him before he was detained. Both and he and Azmath were taken to New York for questioning, according to law enforcement sources.

The two were held in New York together with a San Antonio, Texas, resident named Albader Al-Hazmi, a radiologist from Saudi Arabia, who worked at the University of Texas Health Science Center, according to the Dallas Morning News.

Federal investigators are also pursuing a lead in Southern California, said an official without providing specifics.

The San-Diego Union-Tribune reported that a unidentified San Diego resident suspected of financially aiding Nawaf Alhamzi and

Khalid Al-Midhar, two of the alleged hijackers, had been taken into custody late Sunday.

In Boston, federal agents have searched an apartment complex which is home to relatives of Osama bin Laden, the Saudi-born exile named the main suspect in the terrorist attacks, the Boston Herald reported Wednesday.

The agents arrived at the Flagship Wharf condominium complex hours after the attacks, according to the paper, which said that at least two bin Laden relatives, Mohammed bin Laden and Nawaf bin Laden currently own units in the complex.

In Detroit, the FBI arrested three men after allegedly finding them with false identification papers and notes about a US military base in Turkey, according to media reports.

Meanwhile Iraqi Foreign Minister Najib Sabri denied in an interview published yesterday that Iraq was involved in last week's suicide hijack attacks on New York and Washington.

"The United States, Britain and Western nations and the world know that Iraq has nothing to do with the attacks against America interests," Sabri told al-Iqtisadi (Economist) weekly.

# Unrest brews in Pakistan

## US promises rewards for Pak cooperation

AFP, Islamabad

Opposition to Pakistan's support for any US attack on Afghanistan gathered momentum Wednesday as President Pervez Musharraf prepared to address the nation.

Western embassies began sending non-essential staff and family members out of the country in fear of widespread unrest from religious groups after Musharraf promised the Islamic state's "full cooperation" with the United States to hunt down alleged terrorist Osama bin Laden in Afghanistan.

Pakistan's top mainstream religious body, the Pakistan Ulama Council, called for holy war if Washington attacked Afghanistan, while thousands of radical seminary students marched through the streets of northwestern Peshawar in support of Saudi-born dissident bin Laden.

"The Pakistan Ulama Council has called for a jihad against America and its allies if they attack Afghanistan. The attack will be an act of terrorism," the council said in a Fatwa sent to AFP.

"It is the duty of all the Muslims in the world to protect Muslim countries and Muslims, and the people of Pakistan and the Ulemas will not let America destroy the interests and identity of Pakistan and Afghanistan."

US President George W. Bush has said bin Laden, who is hiding in Afghanistan under the protection of the ruling Taliban militia, is wanted

"dead or alive" in connection with last week's terrorist onslaught in New York and Washington, in which some 6,000 people died.

Pakistan has been a close ally of the Taliban since the fundamentalist militia seized the Afghan capital Kabul in 1996 and imposed a radical brand of Islamic law.

But in the wake of the attacks in the United States, Musharraf sent a special delegation to tell the Taliban they would face terrible consequences unless they hand over bin Laden immediately.

The general has also been battling on the home front to keep underlying pro-Taliban sentiments from boiling over into mass unrest.

He has met senior religious, political and civil leaders in a bid to explain Pakistan's position, and was due to make a televised address to the nation later Wednesday.

But the Fatwa from the Ulama council -- the most important Islamic body in Pakistan which includes senior clerics from all branches of the majority Sunni sect -- indicated Musharraf has failed to win the support of the country's religious leaders.

"We warn President Musharraf to keep in mind the sentiments of the people of Pakistan before taking any action in support of America," the Ulama statement said.

It said US President George W. Bush had made a serious mistake when he said the United States was launching a "crusade" against



PHOTO: AFP

US Ambassador to Pakistan Wendy Chamberlain (L) speaks to the press as her bodyguard stand alert behind her during a short press conference after a meeting with Pakistani minister for Kashmir affairs Sarfraz Khan in Islamabad on Wednesday. The United States assured Pakistan that it would be rewarded for its decision to back possible US military action against Afghanistan.

terrorism around the world.

Meanwhile, the United States on Wednesday assured Pakistan it would be rewarded for its decision to back possible US military action against Afghanistan.

"Let me just assure you that the United States stands by its friends,"

Washington's ambassador in Islamabad, Wendy Chamberlain, told reporters after meeting with Pakistan's minister for refugees.

"We are quite aware of a number of needs that Pakistan has really to accomplish the objectives of this government.

## Arab-Americans on top FBI list for recruitment

REUTERS, Dearborn

"Is this going to be, you know, like a 007 mission?"

Waleed Mohamed asked that question yesterday when told that the FBI wanted to engage people like him fluent English-speakers also proficient in Arabic in what US President George W Bush is calling the "fight against terrorism on all fronts."

"This war ain't gonna be no quick, in and out in one-month thing. It's going to be a long-term war," said Mohamed. "I need time to think," he said, after sharing fleeting thoughts about becoming a James Bond-style secret agent.

FBI Director Robert Mueller announced the recruitment drive at a news conference in Washington on Monday. He said the FBI was seeking candidates who speak Arabic to help crush what US authorities are calling an international terror network linked to Saudi-born exile Osama bin Laden.



PHOTO: AFP

Sabina Stedra smiles after being elected Miss Hungary 2001 at the Convention Centre in Budapest on Tuesday. Stedra will represent her country in the coming Miss World contest in Manila in October.

# US steps up diplomatic drive

AFP, Washington

The United States on Tuesday accelerated its diplomatic drive to build a global anti-terrorism coalition as President George W. Bush and Secretary of State Colin Powell began a flurry of face-to-face meetings here with top foreign officials.

Bush was to receive French President Jacques Chirac, the first foreign head of state to visit the United States since last week's terrorist attacks in New York and Washington, later in the day.

British Prime Minister Tony Blair and Indonesian President Megawati Sukarnoputri are to meet with Bush later in the week as a parade of foreign ministers and other senior officials passes through Washington.

Powell has scheduled meetings with 10 European, Asian and Arab foreign ministers, including those from Russia, China and Saudi

Arabia, between Tuesday and Friday and ahead of the Bush-Chirac meeting kicked off the week of intense lobbying with his South Korean counterpart Han Seung-Soo.

But the overtures are not just being made to friends, allies and powerful rivals.

The State Department said Tuesday it had reached out to Cuba and Sudan, two countries it deems "state sponsors of terrorism," for help.

Powell called Sudanese Foreign Minister Mustafa Ismail on Monday to discuss counter-terrorism cooperation after Khartoum sent a condolence message to Washington and said it wanted to assist in the campaign, spokesman Richard Boucher said.

The call to Ismail, believed to be the highest-level contact between the United States and Sudan in

several years, followed a US request last week to longtime foe Cuba relayed to Fidel Castro's communist government through the Cuban Interest Section in Washington.

The contacts with Cuba and Sudan occurred as Powell said he had been encouraged by positive signs from two other designated terrorism sponsors, Iran and Syria.

"We have seen an outpouring of support for the idea of really making the campaign work, of not having any more tolerance, of asking countries to choose sides," Boucher said, listing the talks set for the week.

"In all those meetings in different ways we'll be talking to people about how we can cooperate and what kind of effort we can make," he said.

Boucher said the visiting officials would be asked to provide intelligence information, conduct special investigations, curb the finances of terrorist groups, prevent their transit and shut down their offices.

# FBI pieces together terror plot

AP, Washington

The FBI has meticulously pieced together a broad terrorist plot, securing evidence the hijackers trained for months or years without raising suspicions in the United States, received financial and logistical support from others and identified additional targets for destruction.

Law enforcement and other officials familiar with the evidence said the FBI is investigating whether the terrorist network behind Tuesday's attacks targeted more flights for hijacking beyond the four that crashed.

Authorities have grown increasingly certain from intelligence intercepts, witness interviews and evidence gathered in hijackers' cars and homes that a second wave of violence was planned by collaborators. They said September 22 has emerged as an important date in the evidence, but declined to be more specific.

Tuesday's attacks were "part of a larger plan with other terrorism acts, not necessarily hijacking of airplanes," said Sen. Bob Graham,

chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee. "Those acts were going to occur in the United States and elsewhere in the world.

The FBI said it has issued an advisory to fire departments across the country to increase security and guard against the theft of any ambulances or fire trucks, which could be used in bombing attacks. The bureau said the warning was precautionary.

The investigation, the largest in American history, has engulfed the full resources of the FBI, Justice Department, Customs Service, Treasury Department agencies that track assets and the CIA, National Security Agency and other spy agencies.

Officials from several of those agencies described developments in the investigation to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity. Most of the evidence remains sealed by court orders. A federal grand jury in White Plains, New York, was convened last week to weigh evidence and issue subpoenas.

US officials have made no secret they believe exiled Saudi millionaire

Osama bin Laden masterminded the plot from Afghanistan and organized his and other terrorist groups to carry it out. In President George W. Bush's words, bin Laden is wanted "dead or alive."

The FBI has hinted at the magnitude of the collaboration, sending airlines, local police and border patrol agencies a list of about 200 people it believes may have information or assisted the attacks. The government has detained 75 people for questioning and on immigration charges, from California to Germany.

At least four people on the list have been arrested as material witnesses, law enforcement officials said Tuesday. That means they are believed to have critical information about the plot and are at risk to flee.

Authorities have explored whether the hijackers may have had help from people with access to airlines. On Tuesday, authorities arrested and charged three men in the Detroit area with possessing false documents after a raid on a home agents found airport-related diagrams and documents about a military base and a US foreign minister.

## New worm on the Internet block

AP, Tokyo

A new Internet worm attacked computers at several Japanese companies and a university on Wednesday and one credit union had to shut down its Website, officials said.

"There were several cases of suspected infections reported so far," said Toshiaki Kokado, an official at the Information Technology Promotion Agency, a non-profit organisation handling private sector computer security.

Takao Ide, a spokesman for Tsuru Credit Union, a local credit bank based in Fujiyoshida, 90 km, west of Tokyo, said the bank shut down its Web site after finding it infected with the program, known as "W32-Nimda."

After the shutdown, the bank suspended accepting account settlements and transfer of funds by customers via the Internet, Ide said.

The IPA's Kokado said several other Japanese entities were suspected of being hit by the computer worm, including Yamanashi Gakuin University in central Japan.

Computers at Kyodo News Agency, a major Japanese news service, and the Chunichi newspaper, a regional daily in Nagoya, 269 km, west of Tokyo, were suspected of being infected, Kyodo said.

## Blast kills 6 in Pakistan

AP, Lahore

A powerful bomb exploded near Pakistan's border with India on Wednesday, killing at least six people and wounding several others, police said.

The bomb, apparently hidden in a bicycle, ripped apart a bridge, crowded with construction workers near Sialkot, some 15 kilometres (9 miles) from Pakistan's eastern frontier with its uneasy neighbour India, Police Superintendent Police Mohammed Tahir told The Associated Press by telephone.

Five construction workers died immediately, while a sixth man died of his injuries en route to hospital, he said. Several other workers were critically injured.

## 7 buried as hotel collapses in Turkey

AFP, Istanbul

A hotel in Aksaray in the historic centre of Istanbul on the European side collapsed early Wednesday burying at least seven persons, Turkish television reported rescuers as saying.

No bodies had been found and 18 people were hospitalised, three in serious condition, the rescue workers said.

The people buried under the rubble were said to be six Romanians and an Iranian.

Near the two-storey building, construction work was being carried out on a metro line and cracks had earlier appeared in the walls.

# Western embassies move families out of Pakistan

AFP, Islamabad

Western embassies here have begun moving the families of diplomats and some non-essential staff out of Pakistan, fearing unrest if there is any US military action against neighbouring Afghanistan.

But diplomats stressed Wednesday that there was no emergency evacuation under way.

US ambassador Wendy Chamberlain said non-essential staff at the American embassy had been told they could leave if they wanted to earlier this week but that no evacuation order had been issued.

"We are quite satisfied with the security we are getting from Pakistan," she told reporters.

The British High Commission in Islamabad issued a statement advising nationals that "in light of the security situation" they should consider whether to leave the country.

It said anybody in the North West Frontier Province (NWFP), Baluchistan and northern parts of the country - all areas close to Afghanistan -- would be "strongly

advised" to leave immediately.

"British nationals will also want to be aware that the dependants of staff at our offices here and a few non-essential personnel who wish to leave will be leaving Pakistan," a spokesman said.

Other European Union countries, Australia and Canada have adopted a similar approach.

Australia said that all its nationals in Pakistan should consider leaving. Previously it had advised only Australians in NWFP and Baluchistan to leave those areas.

"For embassy staff that means that some non-essential staff and dependants are leaving," a spokesman said.

Diplomats stressed however that the departures were precautionary rather than a sign of sign of panic. The British High Commission has chartered a special flight to take some staff out of Pakistan but it is not due to leave until Friday, a diplomatic source told AFP.



PHOTO: AFP

Members of the pro-Taliban Jamat-Ulema-Islam burn a US flag during a demonstration in Peshawar on Wednesday. Pakistan's senior religious body issued a fatwa calling for a holy war against the US and its allies as the US plans retaliatory actions against Afghanistan in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks in New York and Washington last week.

## All-out support to US action

# Indian ministers at odds

REUTERS, New Delhi

Indian ministers were at odds over the wisdom of offering full support to any US retaliatory action for last week's attacks on New York and Washington, officials said yesterday.

They said there was a heated discussion at a cabinet meeting on Tuesday after External Affairs Minister Jaswant Singh's swift offer to allow US forces to use Indian facilities if it launches military strikes against Afghanistan.

"It seems people were not at all happy with how he came out with an offer of unilateral support," said one government official, who asked not to be identified.

The chief suspect in the attacks, Saudi-born dissident Osama bin Laden, is being sheltered by Afghanistan's ruling Taliban, and Pakistan under pressure from Washington is trying to persuade the Taliban to hand him over.

An official close to Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari said cabinet

members expressed "various views" at their meeting, but said there was no basic difference of opinion on supporting Washington in the battle against terrorism.

He said that since Washington had not sought any assistance from India, the question of joining or backing any military reprisal was hypothetical.

However, a senior official of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), which leads the ruling coalition, said some ministers advised the government to be cautious while supporting US retaliatory action.

"Of course we have to confess that Jaswant Singh jumped the gun to offer military help to the United States," said the official. "It was a little too early considering we had not consulted the cabinet or other political parties."

The party leader, who asked not to be identified, said the concern expressed by some was fully justified.

"Suppose there is a flood of Afghans, not just into Kashmir but

into Rajasthan or Punjab and a bullet is fired across the (India-Pakistan) border ... it could change the course of action in the entire region."

The official said India also had a large population of Muslims 120 million and their sentiment towards India's involvement in any action by Washington had to be kept in mind.

The Samata Party, another coalition partner, said that India should take active part in US action only if Washington helped India's fight against the "cross-border terrorism" New Delhi accuses Islamabad of sponsoring in Kashmir.

"If that is being brushed under the carpet then we should only give moral support and express our sympathies just as the US has been doing about our victims of terrorism," Samata spokesman Shambhu Shrivastava told Reuters.

"We should not be sucked into a war without making a cost-benefit analysis."