



## Laden spotted in Kabul last week

REUTERS, London

U.S. and British intelligence agencies have a "pretty good idea" where Osama bin Laden is hiding after he was spotted in Kabul last week, London's Guardian newspaper reported yesterday.

Citing well-placed sources, the Guardian said Washington and London have a much better idea about Saudi-born militant bin Laden's recent movements than previously admitted.

The newspaper said it was not clear whether he was spotted in the Afghan capital by U.S. spy satellites or whether it came from a tip-off by the Pakistani intelligence service ISI, which is close to Afghanistan's ruling Taliban.

On Sunday, the Taliban admitted that were hosting the world's top fugitive, fingered by the United States as the mastermind behind the September 11 hijack attacks on New York and Washington in which thousands died.

The Guardian said defence sources were "deeply frustrated" at the failure to get real-time or "actionable" intelligence as they search for a window of opportunity to nab bin Laden.

## Five US navy ships leave Japan port

REUTERS, Tokyo

Five U.S. Navy warships left a port in Japan yesterday, a day after the aircraft carrier Kitty Hawk left its base near Tokyo to support the U.S. military response to last month's attacks on New York and Washington.

The 40,532-ton amphibious assault ship Essex, the 15,726-ton dock landing ship Germantown and Fort McHenry, and the 1,312-ton minesweepers Guardian and Patriot all left their home port of Sasebo on Japan's southern Kyushu island, Kyodo news agency said.

Kyodo, citing Sasebo base sources, said the ships will head for their destination after picking up Marines in Okinawa.

U.S. Navy officials could not immediately be reached for comment, and a spokesman for U.S. Forces Japan said he could not comment on ship movements.

On Monday, the USS Kitty Hawk, an 81,123-ton aircraft carrier, escorted by several Japanese destroyers, left the Yokosuka base southwest of Tokyo to support Operation Enduring Freedom - the U.S. code name for its response to the September 11 attacks.

## Russia, Iran sign military cooperation accord

AFP, Moscow

Russia and Iran signed a military cooperation agreement yesterday opening the way to sales of Russian arms to Iran worth up to 300 million dollars a year, Defence Minister Sergei Ivanov said, news agencies reported.

"This agreement is no secret, it conforms to all the norms and standards of international law, and is practically identical to other documents which Russia has signed with many countries," Ivanov said after talks with his Iranian counterpart Ali Shamkhani.

## Sharon Stone hospitalised

AP, San Francisco

Sharon Stone was under observation at a hospital on Monday after suffering what appears to have been a brain aneurysm.

The 43-year-old actress was hospitalised Saturday for bleeding on the brain, according to her publicist, Cindi Berger.

Stone's husband, San Francisco Chronicle executive editor Phil Bronstein, took her to a hospital emergency room because she was suffering severe head pain.

An angiogram showed the likely cause was a tiny aneurysm that required no treatment. Berger said Stone, who was resting comfortably, probably will remain hospitalized the rest of the week.

"I spoke to her and she sounded great," Berger said.

# 150 arrested worldwide as US anti-terror probe continues

AFP, Washington

Nearly 150 suspected terrorists and their supporters have been taken into custody in 25 different countries, as a US-led worldwide campaign against terror gathered steam, said US President George W. Bush.

"We're finding out members of the al-Qaeda organisation, who they are, where they think they can hide, and we're slowly but surely bringing them to justice," Bush told employees of the Federal Emergency Management Agency on Monday.

Federal Bureau of Investigation officials confirmed the FBI had arrested or detained 480 individuals as part of its investigation of the September 11 attacks on the World Trade Center in New York and the Pentagon outside Washington that have left about 5,700 people dead or missing.

Bush announced the arrest abroad of Zayd Hassan Abd Al-Latif Masud Al-Safarini, the man believed to be behind a 1986 hijacking of a Pan Am flight in Pakistan, which left two Americans dead.

He pointed out, however, that Al-Safarini had no known ties to al-Qaeda, the network led by Saudi-born Islamic militant Osama bin Laden, which is believed to be behind the September 11 attacks.

Bush on Monday signed a law restoring a special "S" visa for the temporary admission into the United States of people who can help in the investigation and prosecution of terrorists and other criminal organizations, the White House said.

As US investigators pursued 238,000 leads received since the attacks,

their attention increasingly shifted overseas, where the hijackers of US passenger planes used to ram the buildings are believed to have hatched their plot.

Law enforcement and intelligence officials looked into reports Monday that two days before the strikes, three of the suspected hijackers - Mohamed Atta, Marwan al-Shehhi and Waleed al-Shehri - each wired 5,000 dollars to a Saudi man in the United Arab Emirates, who, upon receipt of the money, quickly left for Pakistan, according to law enforcement officials.

The transfers, made through Western Union outlets in Laurel, Maryland, apparently represented leftover money from preparations for the terrorist attacks and were addressed to Mustafa Ahmad, a long-time bin Laden associate, the sources said.

Meanwhile, according to unconfirmed reports Monday, the US government probe may be closing in on bin Laden, whom Bush has named as "the prime suspect" in the attacks.

According to NBC News, bin Laden called his mother on the phone two days before the attacks, telling her, "In two days you're going to hear big news and you're not going to hear from me for a while."

While the bin Laden family has formally disowned Osama bin Laden, his mother, Al-Kalifa bin Laden, is believed to have maintained ties with her son, the report said.

Asked about the report, Justice Department spokesman Dan Nelson said: "I can't discuss this."

# Countries join US efforts to cut flow of money to terrorists

AP, Washington

Some \$6 billion has been blocked and 50 bank accounts frozen as countries worldwide join the US effort to stop the flow of money to terrorist networks, President George W. Bush said.

The frozen accounts include 30 in this country and 20 overseas, Bush said Monday in a speech one week after he announced a move to freeze the assets of Islamic militant Osama bin Laden and 26 other people and organizations.

"And we're just beginning," Bush declared.

In his executive order barring Americans from doing business with any of the named individuals or organizations, Bush also promised to shut down US operations of foreign banks that conduct business with bin Laden, the prime suspect in the Sept 11 terrorist attacks, or his associates.

Soon after, foreign ministers

from the seven leading industrialised nations the United States, Japan, Germany, Britain, France, Italy and Canada - agreed to produce a coordinated plan to freeze the assets of terrorist organizations.

And with uncharacteristic speed, the United Nations Security Council unanimously adopted Friday night a US-sponsored resolution requiring all 189 UN-member nations to deny money, support and sanctuary to terrorists.

Under the legally binding resolution, all countries must make the "willful" financing of terrorism a criminal offense, immediately freeze terrorist-related funds and prevent the movement of individuals and groups suspected of having terrorist connections. Nations must also deny terrorists any "safe haven" and speed the exchange of information, especially on the actions and movements of terrorists.

"This is the final piece in pulling

together this international coalition in denying terrorists funding," Treasury Department spokeswoman Michele Davis told reporters Monday.

In the week since the US order to freeze assets, actions have been taken with "amazing speed on every possible front," she said.

Davis declined comment on a report in Monday's New York Times that administration officials were preparing to expand the asset freeze to some two dozen additional charities and other organisations suspected of providing money to bin Laden's terrorist operations.

Treasury has said it was reviewing additional individuals and groups as possible additions to the official list.

As of Monday, according to Treasury, governments of 20 nations had ordered banks to block the assets of the 27 individuals and organisations named on the US list. The 20 include most of the United

States' major economic allies (Italy and Russia are exceptions) as well as Pakistan and the United Arab Emirates.

US officials acknowledge that the bulk of the suspect money is in accounts outside of the United States.

In France, major bank Credit Lyonnais on Monday froze assets belonging to Al Shamal Islamic Bank, a Sudanese institution linked to bin Laden. The Khartoum-based bank is on lists being circulated to banks by regulatory authorities in Europe.

The 20 countries that have ordered banks to freeze assets on the US list are: Argentina, Australia, Austria, Bahamas, Belgium, Brazil, Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Japan, Luxembourg, New Zealand, Pakistan, Paraguay, Switzerland, Thailand, United Arab Emirates, Uruguay and Venezuela.

## Gujarat chief minister resigns

AFP, New Delhi

The chief minister of India's western Gujarat state, Keshubhai Patel, resigned yesterday following his party's dismal showing in recent polls and complaints of mishandling relief operations following an earthquake that killed 25,000 people.

Several media reports said Patel, who belongs to Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee's Hindu nationalist BJP party, had sent in his resignation to the party leadership.

While discontent over Patel's alleged mishandling of relief operations following the massive earthquake early this year had been brewing for months, the party's debacle in two recent by-elections to the provincial legislature sealed his fate.

The seats, one of them in Home Minister L.K. Advani's Gandhinagar parliamentary constituency, were won September 20 by candidates from the main opposition Congress party.

The January 26 quake, which measured 7.9 on the Richter scale, claimed 25,000 lives and rendered 1.25 million people homeless.

Although Patel's successor has not yet been named, media reports said BJP general secretary Narendar Modi was a probable contender for the post.

## Quake rocks Afghanistan

AP, Peshawar

A moderate earthquake shook a remote region of mountainous northern Afghanistan yesterday, the Pakistan Seismological Center reported. There were no immediate indications of damage or injuries.

The tremor, with a reported magnitude of 5.0, took place at 5:39 am local time (0139 GMT), according to the centre. It said the quake's epicenter was about 200 kilometers north of Peshawar in the sparsely populated Hindu Kush mountains of northern Afghanistan.

The quake was also felt in parts of northern Pakistan, the center said. No further information was immediately available.

Moderate quakes and other seismic activity are not uncommon in the region, according to the US National Earthquake Information Center in Golden, Colorado.



Investigators look through debris yesterday at the scene of a deadly car bomb explosion outside the legislature complex in Srinagar. In all 38 people were killed in the explosion and the subsequent storming of the legislature complex.

# Kashmir seeks US help as blast toll rises to 38

REUTERS, Srinagar

India's state of Kashmir appealed to the United States for help yesterday as the region braced for more violence following a suicide bomb attack on the state assembly which killed 38 people.

A state government spokesman said the region was urging Washington to extend its war on terrorism to target Islamic militants fighting against Indian rule in Kashmir, the country's only Muslim-majority state.

On Monday, a suicide bomber from the Pakistan-based Jaish-e-Mohammad drove a jeep packed with explosives to the main gate of the assembly and blew himself up, while others ran into the building throwing grenades.

The police chief of the state said 38 people had died - raising the death toll initially reported at 29 - and more than 60 were wounded in the attack.

The attack, the worst since the September 11 assault on the United States, spread fear among Kashmiris beset by nearly 12 years of insurgency in which at least 30,000 people have died.

Many residents stayed indoors and many shops around the site of the attack remained closed as fire fighters raked through debris searching for bodies in the assembly building.

"I am scared, things have become very uncertain. We don't know if a bomb will kill us near a bus stop, inside our office or my car. Life has become terrifying...it is horrible," Rukhzareen Khan, a government employee, told Reuters.

Responsibility for Monday's attack was claimed by the Jaish-e-Mohammad, which along with the Lashkar-e-Taiba, has increasingly used suicide attackers over the past year or so.

India at first had hoped the attacks on the United States would make Washington more sympathetic to what it calls Pakistan-sponsored terrorism in Kashmir, the Himalayan region which both Islamabad and New

Delhi claim. But it has been dismayed to see the issue put on the back burner after Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf pledged to help Washington hunt down Afghanistan-based Osama bin Laden, blamed by the United States for the September 11 attacks.

A government source said Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee had written to President Bush about Monday's attack in Kashmir.

"There has been understandable anger in the country at this wanton act of violence," the source quoted Vajpayee as saying. "Incidents of this kind raise questions for our security which as a democratically elected leader of India, I have to address in our supreme national interest."

"...we urge and hope United States, the champion of democracy, will extend its fight against terrorism to Kashmir and will also target militant groups in its war and campaign against terrorism," a government spokesman for the state of Kashmir said.

The Indian foreign ministry lost no time in blaming Pakistan for Monday's attack, issuing a statement on Monday saying that Islamabad was taking only "cosmetic steps" against terrorism. Pakistan has condemned the attack.

The incident is expected to add to the tension between India and its nuclear rival Pakistan.

India accuses Pakistan of supporting the Jaish-e-Mohammad, launched by Pakistani cleric Moulana Masood Azhar after he was freed by Indian authorities in exchange for the passengers of an Indian Airlines plane hijacked to Afghanistan in December 1999.

Chief Minister of Kashmir, Farooq Abdullah, who visited the site of Monday's attack, also blamed Pakistan. "It is strange that they (Pakistan) who are involved in the attack have condemned it," he told reporters.



Pro-Taliban supporters belonging to Pakistan's fundamentalist party Jamiat Ulema-i-Islam chants anti-American slogans during a protest in the southwestern city of Quetta yesterday. Hundreds of thousands of JUI protesters armed with sticks chanted pro-Taliban slogans and called for a Jihad against the US if it attacks Afghanistan.

# US increases pressure for end to ME violence

REUTERS, Jerusalem

Israel and the Palestinians faced new U.S. pressure yesterday to halt a year of bloodshed after a fresh surge in violence and a car bomb attack in Jerusalem.

The bomb, which exploded in a car park near a Jerusalem shopping district on Monday, caused no serious injuries.

But it heightened alarm about the violence, in which 17 Palestinians have been killed since the two sides reaffirmed their commitment to a cease-fire plan last Wednesday.

The United States hopes an end to the fighting would help it enlist

Arab and Islamic states to the global anti-terror alliance it is trying to form in response to the suicide plane attacks on New York and Washington on September 11.

"We're deeply troubled by the continued violence over the week-end. We condemn in the strongest possible terms the car bomb attack," State Department spokesman Richard Boucher said on Monday.

"The Palestinian Authority, we believe, must take sustained and effective steps to pre-empt violence and to arrest those responsible for planning and conducting such acts of violence and terror," he told a daily briefing in Washington.

He urged the two sides to "avoid actions that jeopardise the re-establishment of direct discussions and do everything possible to restore an atmosphere of calm."

A U.S. representative took part in security cooperation talks on Monday between Israel and the Palestinians, the second such meeting since last Wednesday.

"These meetings represent an important step toward restoring calm," Boucher said, but there was no word of any breakthrough.

At least 604 Palestinians and 169 Israelis have been killed in the violence since a Palestinian uprising began a year ago.

# Taiwan wants to buy US destroyers

AP, Taipei

Taiwan's military said yesterday it wants to buy four destroyers from the United States, warships that could greatly complicate any plans China might have to blockade or invade the island.

The military has spent months debating whether to buy the Kidd-class destroyers, decommissioned by the U.S. Navy about three years ago. Some lawmakers have opposed the deal, arguing the vessels are designed for ocean-going combat missions, not the coastal fighting Taiwan would likely engage in with China.

But Taiwanese Defence Ministry spokesman Huang Suey-sheng told reporters Tuesday the military decided the guided-missile destroyers would "meet the battle needs" of the navy, which has been desperate to expand its small, aging fleet.

The military's next step is to get lawmakers and the government to endorse the purchase.

Erich Shih, an editor at Defence International magazine in Taiwan, said getting the legislature's support shouldn't be difficult.

Shih agreed the destroyers would be more useful than smaller vessels in stopping a Chinese naval

blockade, especially in the South China Sea, the Taiwanese navy's most vulnerable area.

"You need to carry powerful weapons, and these weapons are very large. You need a big destroyer, like a Kidd-class destroyer," Shih said.

The Kidd-class deal might be Taiwan's only opportunity to purchase quality destroyers. Earlier this year, the Taiwanese wanted to buy U.S.-made Aegis-equipped destroyers, but the United States - the only nation that sells advanced weapons to Taiwan - wouldn't approve the deal.