

'US to pursue Al-Qaeda wherever it appears'

AFP, Cairo

US ambassador to Cairo David Welch said Thursday that his country will pursue Osama bin Laden's al-Qaeda organisation "wherever it appears," responding to concerns Arab states might be attacked. "Our evidence is rock solid against the al-Qaeda organisation led by Osama bin what's his name," he said in an interview with Egyptian state television. "We don't know where the evidence might lead in the future or what tentacles this organisation has elsewhere in the world but we feel ourselves obliged to go after that problem wherever it appears," Welch said. Beda and the ruling Taliban in Afghanistan, which has refused to deliver bin Laden to Washington. In a letter last week to the United Nations Security Council, the US reserved the right to take action against other organisations and other states if required, in its fight against terrorism.

Pak lawyer visits aid workers in Afghan prison

AFP, Washington

The Pakistani lawyer representing eight foreign aid workers detained in Afghanistan by the Taliban militia visited his clients in a Kabul jail on Wednesday and found them in good health despite the ongoing US airstrikes against the country, the State Department said. Spokesman Richard Boucher said the lawyer Atif Ali Kan had reported to US officials in Islamabad that the eight, including two Americans, "appeared well and were extremely happy to see him." "He delivered personal items -- clothing, blankets and letters -- to the Americans that have been sent there by their parents," Boucher told reporters.

Plane crashes in Alaska : 9 killed

AP, Dillingham

A commuter plane with 10 people aboard crashed in the southern Alaska tundra shortly takeoff, killing nine people and critically injuring one. The plane, a single-engine Cessna 208 Caravan operated by PenAir, Alaska's biggest commuter airline, went down Wednesday in calm, clear weather about 2 miles (3.2 kilometers) from the end of the runway, state police said. It was on its way to a tiny community about 120 km away. The cause of the crash was not immediately known. Richard Harding, PenAir vice president of operations, said the crew gave no indication the plane was in trouble. National Transportation Safety Board investigators were being sent to the site near Dillingham, 530 km southwest of Anchorage.

3 hurt in blast in Taj Mahal town of Agra

AFP, New Delhi

Three people were injured when a crude bomb went off in the communally sensitive Taj Mahal town of Agra in northern India, the Press Trust of India (PTI) reported Thursday. The explosion took place at a house in the Nala Mantola area of the city late Wednesday. The condition of one of the injured was said to be serious, PTI said quoting officials. Three people, including a woman and a boy, have been arrested in connection with the blast. The owner of the house was said to be on the run. The motivation behind the apparent bombing was unclear. Security around India has been tightened since the September 11 terrorist attacks in United States. There has been a spate of hoax bomb calls in the Indian capital in recent weeks against railway stations, courts and other prominent targets.

Blair arrives in Egypt

AFP, Cairo

British Prime Minister Tony Blair arrived in Cairo Thursday for talks with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak on support for US-British military strikes on Afghanistan, airport sources said. Blair, Washington's chief ally in the war on terrorism, was welcomed at the airport by Egyptian Prime Minister Atef Ebeid on arrival from Oman where he met Sultan Qaboos amid a string of consultations with Arab leaders.

Taliban in Laden's pocket \$100 million, military assistance paid in return

AFP, Washington

Saudi extremist Osama bin Laden has Afghanistan's ruling Taliban in his pocket after having given them 100 million dollars and military assistance, The Washington Post reported Thursday. Bin Laden "owns and operates" the Taliban, US government sources told the daily, adding that US President George W. Bush and his top advisers recently benefited from intelligence detailing the terror suspect's support of the Taliban. The money he has been providing, the officials said, does not come from his personal fortune, but from legal and illegal businesses, tribute payments from Islamic countries, businesses and individuals as well as entities disguised as charities. Bin Laden has also supplied the Taliban with military equipment, training and some of his best fighters to help in their struggle against the Northern Alliance, the officials told the daily. One of the goals of Washington's drive to freeze assets traceable to bin Laden and his al-Qaeda terrorist network, the officials said, was to drive a wedge between him and the Taliban, the fundamentalist militia controlling Afghanistan. But while a senior official said there were indications one of bin Laden's key lieutenants was starting to hurt for money, other sources said the US government did not expect any near-term impact from the effort. Bin Laden's close relationship with the Taliban, meanwhile, provides him with shelter and protection from US forces. US officials said bin Laden changes locations frequently and at times

uses an ambulance as cover under the protection of the Taliban militia. The officials said the terror suspect often spends the night in mountain caves. "It's like chasing one particular rabbit in the entire state of West Virginia," one official told the daily. The officials also said US intelligence agencies believe bin Laden's videotaped remarks broadcast shortly after the US attack on Afghanistan began on Sunday were made not a few hours but several days earlier. The tape, they added, was apparently pre-positioned with the Qatar-based al-Jazeera news group with instructions it should not be made public until after the bombings began. Meanwhile, British Prime Minister Tony Blair on Wednesday refused to rule out military action being taken against countries other than Afghanistan in the war against terrorism. Asked whether Britain would back strikes against Iraq, Blair told BBC's Newsnight: "The first phase of our war (against terrorism) is against Afghanistan." "What I am not going to be prepared to do is to say that if there is evidence that emerges in respect of other terrorist operations elsewhere in the world we are not going to take action," Blair added in the interview conducted during a visit to Oman. "What I say is that is something to consider, debate and discuss with our coalition partners." Earlier in Washington, US President George W. Bush announced "a new line of attack" in the war on global terrorism, unveiling a new list of 22 "most wanted terrorists" worldwide, including some reported to have Iraqi links.



An activist of a radical Islamic group Anjuman Talba-i-Islam sets a US flag on fire during a demonstration in the port city of Karachi on Thursday. Muslim fundamentalists held a protest against the US-led airstrikes on Afghanistan and to express solidarity with Taliban militia.

OIC has a central role in fighting terrorism: Annan

AFP, United Nations

UN Secretary General Kofi Annan told Muslim states Wednesday they had "a central role in devising an effective strategy to combat terrorism," because they had suffered from terrorism. In a message to foreign ministers of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) meeting in Qatar, Annan also said "the global response to terrorism must be truly universal and not divisive." He added that "to defeat terrorism, we need a sustained effort and a broad strategy that unite all nations, and address all aspects of the scourge we face." The message was delivered by Annan's special advisor on Africa, Ibrahim Gambari. The OIC foreign ministers met to discuss the crisis sparked by the

terrorist attacks on the United States on September 11 and the massive US military retaliation against Afghanistan. In their final communique, they condemned the attacks as barbaric and stressed the need to bring the perpetrators to justice, but also rejected any link between Islam and terrorism. They also expressed concern that innocent civilians in Afghanistan might suffer and they set up an aid fund for the Afghan people with a first cash injection of 14 million dollars from Arab states in the Gulf. In his message, Annan recalled that the UN Charter provided for the right of individual or collective self-defence by states and said there was "a rare sense of unity, human solidarity and purpose" against global terrorism. "The OIC has a central role in devising an effective strategy to combat terrorism, not least because your member states have themselves suffered from terrorism," he said. The OIC's message of "the inherently peaceful and tolerant nature of Islam" needed to be more widely heard and accepted, he said. Annan said the Afghan people were not responsible for the actions of the Taliban regime and were in desperate need of humanitarian aid from the United Nations. The UN was also "actively engaged in promoting the creation of a fully representative, multi-ethnic and broad-based Afghan Government," he said. "The United Nations will continue to address the ills of hatred, ignorance, conflict and poverty wherever they are found," Annan said.

40 civilians killed in Colombia

AFP, Bogota

Right-wing paramilitaries killed as many as 30 farm workers in south-eastern Colombia and 10 fishermen in the north, many of them shot while lying face-down on the ground, authorities said. Leftist guerrillas, meanwhile, announced the execution of two police officers they had kidnapped over the weekend, throwing the tenuous three-year peace process into further turmoil. Armed Forces Commander Fernando Tapias said 17 people were confirmed dead in two attacks Wednesday in the southwestern township of Buga, but reporters on the scene, some 400 km southeast of Bogota, place the number of dead as high as 30.

India mulls intensified offensive in Kashmir

AFP, New Delhi

India is considering intensifying offensives against Muslim separatist guerrillas in Kashmir, Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee was quoted as saying Thursday. Both the United Nations of India (UN) and the Star TV private television network said Vajpayee, during talks with reporters in the northern town of Benares, hinted at the possibility of stepped-up military action in the Indian zone of Kashmir. "We are discussing the matter and an operation to this effect might be launched after considering all options," UNI quoted Vajpayee as saying. The prime minister gave no further details on plans to expand strikes in Kashmir, where tens of thousands of personnel are deployed to tackle a 12-year-old insurgency in India's only Muslim-majority state. Officials from Vajpayee's office were not available for comment.

Pakistan ready for any Indian aggression

AFP, Islamabad

Pakistan said Thursday it was ready to deal with any external aggression as India announced it was considering stepping up its military offensive in divided Kashmir. "Pakistan desires settlement of all issues with India through peaceful means," a foreign ministry spokesman told reporters. "At the same time Pakistan is ready, as was stated by the president (Pervez Musharraf) ... to face any aggression." Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee said Thursday New Delhi might step-up military strikes in the Indian zone of the disputed Himalayan state of Kashmir. "We are discussing the matter and an operation to this effect might be launched after considering all options," the United News of India quoted Vajpayee as saying.

The prime minister gave no details on his plans to expand strikes in Kashmir, where tens of thousands of security personnel are deployed to tackle a 12-year-old insurgency in India's only Muslim-majority state. India accuses Pakistan of fomenting the insurgency in Kashmir, while Islamabad says it only provides moral and diplomatic support to an indigenous "freedom struggle." Both India and Pakistan have pledged to cooperate with the US-led coalition against terrorism declared after the September 11 terrorist attacks that left more than 5,000 dead in New York and Washington. India, however, has publicly called for the United States to target militancy in Pakistan and Kashmir as part of its anti-terrorism campaign.

Islamic group hunts for foreigners in Jakarta

AFP, Jakarta

The hardline Front for the Defenders of Islam said Thursday it has started searching for Americans and Britons to intimidate them into leaving Indonesia in protest at the US-led attacks on Afghanistan. And at the heavily-guarded US embassy, about 1,000 protesters shouting "Destroy America" rallied for the fourth straight day to denounce the air strikes. Hundreds of armed police in full riot gear and backed-up by a water cannon kept them well away from the mission, however, and they later moved on to the residential palace to demand that Megawati Sukarnoputri sever ties with Washington.



An F-14 "Tomcat" and an F/A-18 "Hornet" aircraft assigned to the aircraft carrier USS Enterprise complete air-to-air refuelling operations with a US Air Force KC-10 "Extender" from the 763rd Expeditionary Air Refuelling Squadron on October 5. The refuelling squadron supports Navy jets conducting missions in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.

Bush puts Laden, 21 more on 'most wanted terrorist' list

AFP, Washington

President George W. Bush announced "a new line of attack" in the US-led war on global terrorism Wednesday, unveiling a new list of 22 "most wanted terrorists" worldwide, including Osama bin Laden. "Terrorists try to operate in the shadows, they try to hide, but we're going to shine the light of justice on them," the president, who has declared he wants bin Laden "dead or alive," said in a speech at FBI headquarters here. Bush blames the Saudi-born militant for September 11 terror strikes on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon that left some 5,500 dead or missing, but has said

that his broader goal is to eradicate all terror groups of global reach. US officials hoped rewards of up to five million dollars for useful information would help the new initiative mirror the success of the Federal Bureau of Investigation's famed "10 most wanted fugitives," which the FBI says has had a success rate of about 94 percent since its inception in 1950. Bin Laden and two top lieutenants appear on the list as suspects in the August 1998 bombings of US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania. Those attacks had already earned bin Laden a spot on the top 10 fugitives list. The new list also includes suspects in the 1985 hijacking of a TWA flight in Beirut; the 1993 World Trade Center bombing; a 1995 plot to bomb 12 US aircraft flying Asian-Pacific routes; and the 1996 Khobar Towers bombing in Saudi Arabia. "They're among the most dangerous, the leaders and key supporters, the planners and strategists. They must be found. They will be stopped, and they will be punished," declared Bush, who said the list would expand. The suspects, all of them indicted in the United States, can be seen on the FBI Internet site, which describes bin Laden as six feet four inches to six feet six inches tall, 160 pounds, left-handed, and needing a cane to walk.

German foreign secretary due in India

AFP, New Delhi

German Foreign Secretary Juergen Chrobog was set to arrive in New Delhi later Thursday for talks with his Indian counterpart Chokila Iyer, the German embassy said. "The consultations with Foreign Secretary Chokila Iyer will cover a wide range of international issues of common concern," an embassy statement said, saying the talks were part of "the annual India-German strategic dialogue." The meeting will prepare the groundwork for the state visit to India by German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder between October 28 and 31.

6 killed in bus accident in Nepal

AFP, Kathmandu

At least six people were killed and 15 others seriously injured in Nepal Thursday when a bus plunged off a road into a field, police said. The bus, carrying 52 passengers, fell 30 metres (98 feet) off the road at the village of Baitadi, 460 km southwest of Kathmandu. At the time of the accident, the bus was being driven by a man who did not have a licence, while the bus driver was drinking tea at a local tea stall, police said. The driver fled the scene before he could be questioned.

Muslims shrug off call for jihad

AFP, Chicago

American Muslims Wednesday wearily shrugged off a call to arms by militants believed responsible for deadly terror attacks, dismissing the appeal for a jihad, or holy war, against the United States as the ravings of extremists. As the US military pounded targets in Afghanistan for a fourth night, and the ruling Taliban militia reported civilian casualties from the air strikes had risen to 76, there appeared to be little support here for Saudi-born militant leader Osama bin Laden's bid to rally Muslims against the United States. "I don't appreciate the fact that these people are saying it's a jihad," said Adil Ahmed, a 19-year-old Pakistani-American at the University of Houston, in Texas. "There's no religious justification for calling it a religious struggle. It's only these extremists who are injecting our faith into it." "I think they'll blow it off," was the verdict of Najat el-Sayed, a 21-year-old history student at the same university, speculating that other young Muslims like herself would

dismiss the battle cry out of hand. "America has offered us so much opportunity. We were born and raised here," said el-Sayed, the daughter of Lebanese immigrants from the Bekaa Valley who was born in Iowa and brought up in Texas. "There are horrible things going on at the hands of the United States overseas," added this student of current affairs, "but the answer is not to go fight some dirty, sneaky war." In a videotaped statement broadcast on Qatari Al-Jazeera satellite television Tuesday, bin Laden aide Sulayman Abu Ghalth called on all Muslims to fight against US interests in retaliation for the air strikes on Afghanistan and bin Laden's al-Qaeda network. "Every Muslim should carry out his real role to champion his Islamic nation and religion," said Abu Ghalth in the pre-recorded message. "Carrying out terrorism against the oppressors is one of the tenets of our religion and Shari'ah." On Wednesday, radical Pakistani Islamic leader Abdullah Shah Mazhar followed that up with a

threat to launch suicide attacks against the United States and "infidel" forces as some 5,000 followers took an "oath of death," at an anti-US rally in the southern Pakistani city of Karachi. But back in the United States, leaders of the estimated seven million Muslims here, were confident that those messages would not find an audience here. "As Americans living in the West, we're just as worried about the threat of more attacks," said Dr Sayyid Syeed, head of the Islamic Society of North America, an umbrella group for Muslim organisations based in Plainfield, Indiana. Like many of his brethren he has little time for bin Laden and his allies, not just because he disapproves of the September 11 suicide attacks on New York and Washington and the way they have tarnished the image of Islam, but also because those assaults have seriously undercut the efforts of Muslims here to build up some political capital and participate more actively in US civic society.



A man carrying a Palestinian flag, demonstrates along with hundreds of protesters on Wednesday in Madrid, against the US-led attacks on Afghanistan. Banner reads "No to the bombing of any people, PEACE."

US military action in SE Asia unlikely

AP, Singapore

US military action in Southeast Asia a region officials say has links to Osama bin Laden's al-Qaida terrorist network is unlikely, the US ambassador to Singapore said Thursday. Ambassador Frank Lavin told The Associated Press that any US action in Southeast Asia to curtail terrorism would likely involve moves such as coordinating to fight money laundering, not direct military strikes. US officials in Washington, speaking on condition of anonymity, said on Wednesday that the al-Qaida network has been bolstering Islamic insurgencies in Indonesia, the Philippines and Malaysia, and that Southeast Asia has become a major operational hub for the terrorist network. Lavin said the United States would work with governments in Southeast Asia if any anti-terrorist action was needed in the region. Most countries in Southeast Asia have condemned the Sept 11 attacks in the United States, when hijackers crashed four passenger planes into the World Trade Center, the Pentagon and rural Pennsylvania. But some people in the region have staged anti-American protests since the Sept 11 attacks, with many saying the United States unfairly blamed Muslims for the attacks. Ambassador Lavin said the demonstrations and political instability would stymie US investment flows into the region.