

# Bush terms anthrax cases '2nd wave of terror attacks'

Reuters, Washington

US President George W. Bush on Saturday called the recent anthrax cases "a second wave of terrorist attacks," and federal agents were holding a man for possible immigration violations after a raid conducted as part of the nationwide investigation into the outbreaks.

With his administration under fire for initially sending mixed messages and being slow to protect postal workers after anthrax-laced letters were discovered, Bush devoted his entire weekly radio address to the issue for the first time.

"As we learn more about these anthrax attacks, the government will share the confirmed and credible information we have with you," Bush said. "I'm proud of our citizens' calm and reasoned response

to this ongoing terrorist attack."

In Trenton, New Jersey, the focus of the anthrax probe because three letters tainted with the germ warfare agent were mailed from there, federal agents on Friday conducted a three-hour search of an apartment that was home to four Middle Eastern men, witnesses said.

One of the men was taken away and detained by the US Immigration and Naturalization Service for possible immigration violations, the FBI said on Saturday.

FBI agents confiscated several bags of potential evidence at the residence, the witnesses said.

Conclusive results of anthrax tests on a suspicious package found in a private car in a Washington suburb are not expected for another 72 hours, a

local official said on Saturday. A resident of Bethesda, Maryland, found a small bag of white powder on his car's dashboard on Tuesday.

Pete Piringer, a spokesman for the Montgomery County Fire and Rescue Service, said a field test by the county's hazardous material unit indicated the possible presence of anthrax, and a sample was sent to the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) for further tests.

The number of confirmed anthrax cases in the United States climbed to 17 on Friday after the CDC said an employee of the New York Post had skin anthrax.

The unidentified employee, an editor of the tabloid's editorial page, is being treated with antibiotics and is expected to recover fully, New York officials said.

# US, UK set for major ground push

AFP, London

The United States and Britain are set to launch a wave of sustained ground assaults in Afghanistan in a drive to decisively topple the country's ruling Taliban regime, British newspapers reported Sunday.

The Sunday Telegraph said the new offensive was "imminent", while the Sunday Times said that a push involving thousands of troops would be launched "within weeks".

Military planners have been told to be ready to step up attacks in anticipation of a breakthrough in international support for an interim government with the exiled Afghan king, Zahir Shah, as figurehead leader, according to the Sunday Telegraph.

In the first stage, the United States will concentrate the deployment of special forces around the key northern city of Mazar-i-Sharif, to pave the way for its capture by the opposition Northern Alliance, the paper said.

The decision to step up pressure on the Taliban reflected anxiety in Washington that public opinion and the international coalition will erode if action were limited to draw-out bombing raids, the Sunday Telegraph added.

The Sunday Times reported that British and US forces were about to mount the first significant ground offensive of the war in Afghanistan in an attempt to establish a "humanitarian bridgehead" that would bring winter relief to hundreds of thousands of refugees.

Royal Marine commandos and British special forces were expected to join soldiers from the US 10th Mountain Division in securing a corridor from Uzbekistan through enemy positions in northern Afghanistan, the broadsheet reported.

Senior British officials told the paper that thousands of troops would act "in support" of Northern Alliance forces ranged against the Taliban regime. The aim was to establish a forward base from which to distribute clothing, food and medicine that cannot be safely dropped from the air.

A Ministry of Defence spokesman told AFP: "There is a lot of speculative material floating around. We are not going to discuss our plans for future deployments."

Britain announced on October 26 that it was mobilising 200 marines in the Gulf area, to be "immediately available", and putting 400 others on high alert, ready to deploy from Britain.

Meanwhile, suspected terrorist mastermind Osama bin Laden launched a scathing verbal attack on the United Nations with the jittery organisation already on high alert since the September 11 destruction of New York's World Trade Center.

In a videotape broadcast Saturday by Al-Jazeera television in the Gulf emirate of Qatar, bin Laden branded UN Secretary General Kofi Annan a "criminal" and said Arab leaders whose countries were members of the world body were "infidels".



A television frame grab taken on Saturday from a videotape broadcast by Qatar's al-Jazeera satellite television, shows terror suspect Saudi born Osama bin Laden. Bin Laden said in the recorded video address, that the United Nations is "an instrument of crimes" against Muslims, and leaders of Arab UN member countries are "infidels".

# India to urge US to lift ban on arms sales

AFP, New Delhi

Defence Minister George Fernandes said Sunday that India would urge the United States to lift military sanctions that prevent US companies from selling high-tech weapon systems to New Delhi.

Fernandes told India's main state-run television broadcaster Doordarshan that there was "a wrong notion" that the United States had imposed the ban on transfer of high-tech systems to India only after it carried out its nuclear tests in May 1998.

"In fact, the American denial of critical technology to India had come about as far back as the 1950s," said Fernandes, ahead of a visit by US Defence Secretary

Donald Rumsfeld.

"Time has now come for the two countries to see that a development of a strategic partnership should also entail a removal of such bans. The two while developing a new partnership should see the trust is reflected in all fields."

In September, US President George W. Bush partially lifted US sanctions against India and Pakistan which were imposed in 1998 after they carried out nuclear test blasts. But a ban on the import of some strategic equipment is still in place.

India, whose main source of military hardware has been the Soviet Union and then Russia, has always been wary about depending on the United States militarily for

fear that sanctions would block the import of spare parts.

The Indian Air Force recently said it would consider buying military trainer jets from British manufacturers in a contract worth some 1.6 billion dollars provided the planes were not fitted with American technology.

Fernandes said he would discuss ways to improve the countries' relationship in his scheduled two-hour long talks with Rumsfeld on Monday.

Rumsfeld is expected to arrive in India late Sunday on a whirlwind tour aimed at shoring up support for his country's war in neighbouring Afghanistan.



Former Soviet president Mikhail Gorbachev (c) is accompanied by his daughter Irena (right) and grand daughter Natascha on arrival at the Vienna Hofburg late Saturday for the Men's World Award gala 2001.

# Aid groups race the clock to reach Afghans in need

AFP, Quetta

Relief groups are racing the clock to get urgently needed aid to millions of destitute Afghans with the start of the harsh winter barely days away.

The UN World Food Program, which is spearheading the drive to get food in, is under no illusions that it will get harder and harder as the days wear on.

"The clock is ticking but it doesn't stop ticking on November 15," said spokeswoman Heather Hill, referring to the traditional start of the Afghan winter when temperatures plunge far below freezing.

"All we can do is focus on pumping in as much as we can."

The first snowfalls of the season have already been reported in the Paghman Hills north of the Afghan capital Kabul which residents said indicated an early start to the bitter winter period.

According to aid workers, more than six million Afghans will be dependant on international aid as the weather deteriorates.

Living standards in Afghanistan are already among the worst in the world and even before the US bombing campaign food was scarce after three years of drought. Life expectancy is just 43 years.

Hundreds of thousands have managed to flee to Pakistan and other neighbouring countries since the United States unleashed

its military might on October 7. Many more are languishing in primitive conditions at makeshift staging posts near border crossings.

UNICEF has warned that "as many as 100,000 more children will die in Afghanistan this winter unless food reaches them in sufficient quantities in the next six weeks".

The countries neighboring landlocked Afghanistan refuse to open their borders except to the most needy. They show no sign of relaxing their headline stances despite the looming humanitarian crisis, fearing an influx of millions of refugees which they say they cannot cope with.

# Vajpayee begins trip to Russia, US, UK

AFP, New Delhi

Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee left Sunday on a 10-day tour to Russia, the United States and Britain on a diplomatic offensive to secure a role in post-Taliban Afghanistan.

Vajpayee left New Delhi in the late morning en route to St. Petersburg, an official statement said.

The prime minister is expected to meet in Moscow with President Vladimir Putin and sign an agreement for Russian construction of a nuclear power plant in the southern state of Tamil Nadu.

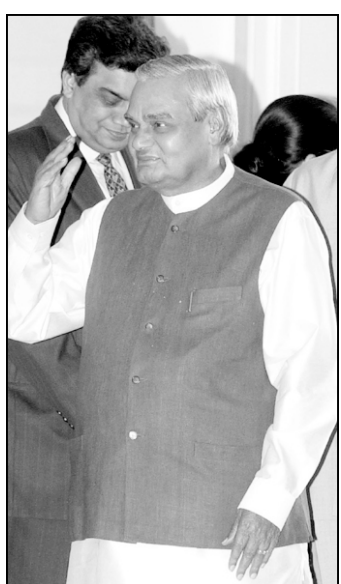
Speaking to reporters before departure, Vajpayee said relations with the United States "were affected to some extent" by the

Cold War, when India tilted toward the Soviet Union.

"But now the situation is better and today together we are combating terrorism. And since we are both democratic nations, our relations will improve," Vajpayee said.

However, Vajpayee's scheduled meeting Friday with US President George W. Bush could be frosty given the premier's public impatience with US reluctance to act on India's accusations that Pakistan is sponsoring cross-border terrorism in Kashmir.

Vajpayee has already indicated that he will not hold talks with Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf who will also be in the United States for the UN General Assembly in New York



India Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee bid farewell to admirers on Sunday prior to his departure for a three-nation tour.

# Pak leader brands Musharraf traitor

AFP, Peshawar

Pakistani fundamentalist party leader Qazi Hussain Ahmed, under house arrest to prevent him leading an anti-US rally on Sunday, has accused President Pervez Musharraf of betraying his people.

Qazi's residence in the north-western city of Peshawar was guarded by around 20 policemen early Sunday, with no visitors allowed and his telephone cut off.

However, in an interview with AFP hours before he was placed under house arrest late Saturday, the chief of the hardline Jamaat-i-Islami party called on Pakistanis to take to the streets in protest against Musharraf's decision to back US-led military strikes in Afghanistan.

"Innocent Afghans are the

target of state terrorism... and unfortunately, our government is (siding) with the aggressor," Qazi said.

"By being part of the (US-led) coalition, the Pakistani government is doing an injustice and a cruelty to the innocent Afghan people," he added, stressing that Musharraf's government -- established after a military coup two years ago -- had no constitutional legitimacy.

Qazi called for "peaceful" protests to force a change in Musharraf's stance on the US bombing campaign in Afghanistan.

"We need an honest and efficient leadership and government which acts according to the Islamic constitution of Pakistan," he said.

# Israel gears up for WB pullout

AFP, Jerusalem

Israeli Defence Minister Binyamin Ben Eliezer said Sunday the army will withdraw from one of five Palestinian towns it is still besieging, after Israeli missiles blasted militant works in the Gaza Strip which Israel said were being used as armaments factories.

Ben Eliezer said his forces will quit the northern West Bank town of Qalqilya on Sunday evening.

The minister was quoted by army radio as telling a weekly cabinet meeting that he was also in favour of withdrawing from four other towns -- Nablus, Ramallah,

Tulkarem and Jenin -- still surrounded or partly occupied, but did not fix a date.

The announcement came as Foreign Minister Shimon Peres said the army was planning a "town-by-town" pull-out from the Palestinian areas it re-occupied across the West Bank on October 18 after an extremist Palestinian group assassinated tourism minister Rehavam Zeevi.

"We are ready for a town-by-town withdrawal within a week if the Palestinian Authority arrests the provocateurs and the main terrorists who run free in these towns, and takes on responsibility for maintaining the peace," he said

on public radio.

Peres said the stipulated conditions had already been met in Bethlehem and neighbouring Beit Jala, to the south of Jerusalem, allowing the army to pull out last week.

He stressed that Israel "will be satisfied if we can do the same thing in the five other towns," reiterating that Israel had no intention of staying in Palestinian self-rule areas.

Israeli troops on Saturday however sealed off roads in the West Bank after a young soldier was shot dead a day earlier.

# 2 Pak nuclear scientists with Taliban link released

AP, Islamabad

Authorities this week released two Pakistani nuclear scientists who were detained on October 23 for questioning about their links with Afghanistan's ruling Taliban movement.

But a presidential spokesman said Sultan Bashir-ud-Din Mehmood and Abdul Majid were again called in for questioning Saturday. Majid was later released and Mehmood was expected to go home soon, Maj. Gen Rashid Quereshi said.

Earlier this week, the two scientists were allowed to go home, but relatives said their movements were restricted.

Quereshi said the scientists were not involved in any weapons programmes and that they were questioned about aid projects they run in Afghanistan.

# 'Taliban cram jails with political prisoners'

AFP, Peshawar

The Taliban are filling their jails with political prisoners as they round up anyone suspected of favouring their downfall, according to a French journalist released from the Islamic militia's custody at the weekend.

Paris Match reporter Michel Peyrard, who was detained on October 9 with two Pakistani journalists, was released on Saturday and handed over to Pakistani and French officials at the Torkham crossing point.

Held for 25 days in the eastern Afghan city of Jalalabad, Peyrard was able to interview numerous fellow detainees and build a unique body of eyewitness testimony on the security situation there.

Peyrard, who was arrested after sneaking into Afghanistan dressed in a burqa -- the traditional head-to-toe garment worn by Afghan women in public -- was held in one of an estimated six detention

centres in Jalalabad.

"These centres are for political detainees whose numbers were growing all the time. There were clearly organised roundups taking place," Peyrard told reporters in the northwestern Pakistan city of Peshawar.

"The main prison in Jalalabad is full," he said. "I think there are now around 400 prisoners, compared to 150 on September 11" -- the date of the terrorist attacks in New York and Washington.

Many, according to Peyrard, had supported the Taliban when they came to power in 1996 but were now suspected of plotting against the Islamic militia.

"Anyone suspected of putting forward a possible alternative (to the Taliban) has been rounded up and put in prison," he added.

Among those picked up, Peyrard noted a significant number of supporters of exiled Afghan warlord Gulbuddin Hekmatyar.

# 4 killed as militants raid army camp in Kashmir

AFP, Srinagar

At least four soldiers were killed and five others injured Sunday in an attack by Muslim separatist militants in Indian-administered Kashmir, police said.

A spokesman said two militants equipped with AK-47 rifles and grenades stormed into an army camp at Dayalgam on the outskirts of Anantnag, 55 kilometres (34 miles) south of Kashmir's summer capital Srinagar, early Sunday.

The militants, who authorities said were apparently part of a suicide squad, barged into the camp opening fire and hurling grenades, killing four soldiers and critically wounding one more.

"The two militants are still inside and an intense exchange of fire is going on," a police official said.

The entire area has been cordoned off by army reinforcements that rushed to the scene.

Counter-insurgency police and paramilitary troops have also closed in on the army camp and

ringed it from the outside.

The Pakistan-based group Lashkar-e-Taiba took responsibility for the surprise attack. Lashkar spokesman Abu Osama told AFP by telephone from Pakistan-administered Kashmir that three of the movement's men were involved.

"Three of our men are involved in the attack. One of them has come out of the camp while two others are still fighting," said Osama.

He said Lashkar fighters had so far killed eight Indian soldiers.

Lashkar-e-Taiba recently vowed that its suicide squads would target Indian forces to avenge India's shelling of Pakistani territory on October 15.

Lashkar has carried out nearly 50 suicide attacks across Kashmir over the past year, inflicting heavy casualties on security forces.

More than 35,000 people have been killed since the start of an Islamic separatist insurgency in Kashmir in 1989.

# Jayalalitha's security tightened

REUTERS, Madras

India has tightened security for a powerful regional politician, Jayaram Jayalalitha, after she received a threatening e-mail message, a senior police official said yesterday.

The official told Reuters the electronic mail message appeared to have been sent by a radical nationalist group, the Tamil Nadu Liberation Army, with links to Sri Lanka's Tamil Tiger rebels. He said the threat was being checked.

"We cannot take anything lightly in the current global circumstances and while we do not rule out a hoax, we have alerted all our agencies and security has been further beefed up for her," the official, who did not wish to be identified, said.



The President of Uzbekistan Islam Karimov (L) welcomes the US Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld (R) during their meeting in Tashkent on Saturday. Donald Rumsfeld arrived in Tashkent to discuss the situation around Afghanistan.

# Military coup attempt foiled in Comoros

AFP, Mutsamudu

A coup attempt in the breakaway Comoran island of Anjouan has been foiled and its mastermind, former leader Lieutenant-Colonel Said Abeid Abderemane, has fled, a military officer said Sunday.

"We -- the military -- have regained control of the whole of the island," said the officer. He gave his name as "Lieutenant Mouri" and said he was a supporter of Major Mohamed Bacar, who was briefly deposed by Abeid's forces on Friday.

Clashes between supporters of Abeid, who governed Anjouan until three months ago, and Bacar, who ousted the lieutenant-colonel in August, left one child dead and injured four.

Mouri said Abeid appeared to have fled at around 10 pm (1900 GMT) on Saturday night with his

commando.

A source close to Abeid later confirmed to AFP that the lieutenant-colonel had fled, accompanied by the head of his commando, former militia leader Allaoui Ahmed.

Mouri urged the 200,000-strong population of the tiny Indian Ocean island to "go about their normal business peacefully (but) listen out for instructions from the authorities".

Local residents said Abeid had returned to Anjouan on Friday, sailing by boat from Mayotte, where he had taken refuge after being ousted in August.

The lieutenant-colonel announced his return to power on Radio Anjouan on Saturday after claiming to have ousted Bacar. Ahmed, his commander, declared himself "head of police and security" on the island.

# Birmingham blast linked to Irish dissidents

AFP, Birmingham

A car bomb exploded in Birmingham, central England, late Saturday in an attack which British police swiftly linked to Irish dissident paramilitaries.

The blast, which caused no serious injuries, was not connected to the September 11 terror attacks on the United States, said Chief Inspector Ellie Bird of West Midlands police.

"Early indications are that this was the work of an Irish dissident group."

She said the explosion, which comes at a highly sensitive time in the Northern Ireland peace process, came from the rear of a vehicle on a busy street in Birmingham city centre when many people were heading for nightspots.

"We did receive a warning. However that was given far too late for us to take any positive action. We are concerned this could have had serious consequences."

The bomb appeared to have caused minimal damage despite being detonated in the heart of the city, close to theatres, nightclubs, bars and restaurants.

The BBC reported that several police officers were slightly injured in the blast.

# 15 killed in Pak road accident

AFP, Multan

Two buses collided head-on near the Pakistani city of Multan early Sunday killing at least 15 passengers, including three women and a baby and injuring 21, police said.

The accident happened at the Chowk Munda major intersection near Multan as one of the buses swerved to avoid a cart pulled by a donkey, police said.

Police officer Muhammad Ramazan said one bus was heading for Kotaddu from Lahore and a bus coming from Multan veered to avoid the cart.

Ten passengers were killed instantly, three died in hospital and 19 of the injured were in critical condition in the Nishtar Hospital in Multan, police said.