

# FBI issues fresh terror alert

## Bush takes tough line on Iran, Iraq, N Korea

AFP, Washington

The FBI issued a warning against possible terrorist attacks by a Yemeni national, while the White House said US President George W. Bush "has not ruled anything out" in dealing with North Korea, Iran and Iraq.

In a statement, the Federal Bureau of Investigation said late Monday that Yemeni national Fawaz Yahya al-Rabeei might be planning a terrorist attack "in the United States or against US interests in the country of Yemen on or around" February 12.

The FBI warning was based on intelligence gathered in Afghanistan and interviews of Taliban or al-Qaida detainees transferred to the US naval base at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, the FBI said offering no more specifics as to target or timing.

The agency issued a photograph of al-Rabeei, also known as Furqan, who is believed to be a Saudi-born Yemeni national travelling on a Yemeni passport. His current whereabouts are unknown.

The FBI said there may be other operatives involved and listed about a dozen al-Rabeei associates.

"All individuals should be considered extremely dangerous," the statement said.

There has been a series of FBI terrorism alerts since the September 11 terror attacks in the United States.

The latest alert comes at the height of the Winter Olympic Games in Salt Lake City, Utah, which have evolved into one of the largest security operations to date, with more than 300 million dollars spent on measures which include 1,000 metal detectors and nearly 300 surveillance cameras.

In Tehran on Monday between 300,000 to 400,000 people staged anti-US street protests and heard President Mohammad Khatami defend Iran

from Bush's criticism that it belonged to the "axis of evil."

Meanwhile, President George W. Bush "has not ruled anything out" in dealing with North Korea, Iran, and Iraq, which he has branded the "axis of evil," the White House said Monday.

"This president is not going to allow regimes such as Iran, Iraq and North Korea to threaten our way of life," the president said at a political fundraiser here.

Those comments came amid widespread speculation that Iraq is the next target of the "war on terrorism" Bush declared after September 11 terror strikes on New York and Washington, and a warning from Russian President Vladimir Putin that Washington should not pursue unilateral action against Baghdad.

Putin, who has lent warm support to the war US-led campaign in Afghanistan, told The Wall Street Journal that Iraq is a "problem" that Russia is willing to help solve -- but only under the auspices of the United Nations.

White House spokesman Ari Fleischer told reporters that the United States would "continue to work with Russia, and in the president's view, that always is a very constructive engagement," but he reiterated the United States' apparent willingness to go it alone.

Those three countries are "a clear and present danger to the United States with their development of weapons of mass destruction," and the president "has not ruled anything out," Fleischer said.

"The president is focused on what needs to be done to protect the American people," he said, adding that Bush "knows that on some issues he'll have the support of many nations and on others he'll have the support of a differing number of nations."

# Pak police arrest more for Pearl kidnapping

AFP, Karachi

Pakistani police said Tuesday they had arrested two more Islamic militants in connection with the kidnapping of US journalist Daniel Pearl, but were no closer to British-born chief suspect Skeikh Omar.

Police said they rounded up two members of the US-listed terrorist group Jaish-e-Mohammad during overnight raids in this southern city, where Pearl was last seen on January 23.

"It's too early to say whether the fresh arrests may lead us to the prime suspect, Sheikh Omar, but it will certainly help in the investigation," one investigator told AFP on condition of anonymity.

A series of raids was also conducted in the central city of Rawalpindi overnight but police said they failed to catch another man who they believe has valuable information on the kidnapping.

# Milosevic's trial begins

AFP, The Hague

The historic war crimes trial of Slobodan Milosevic opened here Tuesday with the former Yugoslav president facing the grisly charges of genocide and ethnic cleansing during more than a decade of conflict in the Balkans.

A defiant Milosevic showed no emotion as he entered the courtroom at the UN's international war crimes tribunal to answer a staggering array of charges that could put him behind bars for the rest of his life.

Europe's biggest war crimes trial since Hitler's Nazis took the stand in Nuremberg began after years of painstaking international investigation.

UN war crimes prosecutor Carla Del Ponte alleged in her opening statement Tuesday that Milosevic was "responsible for the worst crimes known to humankind" as she began laying out the case that he orchestrated crimes against humanity and genocide in the 1990s wars of Bosnia, Croatia and Kosovo.

Milosevic, defending himself before a court he does not recog-

nise, will have the chance to answer the accusations when he delivers his own opening statement, not expected before Wednesday.

The former Serb strongman has denounced the charges as "monstrous" and called Del Ponte a "retarded child."

The trial, hailed by its supporters as a landmark in international justice and denounced by detractors as a political charade, will have repercussions for leaders around the world and could forever change how war is conducted.



PHOTO: AFP

Video grab from the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) television of Slobodan Milosevic, the former Yugoslav president, taking the stand at the international tribunal in The Hague on Tuesday.



PHOTO: AFP

Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee (R) greets Kazakhstan President Nursultan Nazarbayev (C) as Indian President K.R. Narayanan (L) looks on during a welcome ceremony at the Presidential Palace in New Delhi on Tuesday. Nazarbayev is in India for a five-day official visit.

# Accord signed to end Maluku bloodshed

AFP, Jakarta

Christian and Muslim leaders from Indonesia's Maluku islands on Tuesday signed an agreement to end three years of sectarian bloodshed which has claimed some 5,000 lives.

Representatives of both camps vowed "to halt all form of conflicts and disputes" under the 11-point agreement.

It was signed at Malino in South Sulawesi at the end of two days of peace talks, national TV showed.

Christian and Muslim leaders loudly applauded as the agreement was read out and embraced each other after the signing by all 70 delegates -- 35 from each side -- plus 30 mediators and observers.

It was the second time in less than two months that senior government ministers have brokered a

deal to end Christian-Muslim battles in the provinces. A deal was signed in December, also at Malino, to halt sectarian fighting in the Poso district of South Sulawesi.

The Maluku bloodshed, triggered off by a trivial quarrel in January 1999, drove more than half a million people from their homes in what were formerly known as the Spice Islands.

"This is a big step... because this is a matter of morality and responsibility, all sides should support this agreement," top security Minister Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono said after witnessing the signing.

Also present were top welfare minister Yusuf Kalla and national police chief General Da'i Bachtiar, who called for efforts to promote the pact at grassroots level.

# US faces dilemma on Kashmir mediation

AFP, Washington

The United States has no wish to get dragged into India and Pakistan's bloody duel over Kashmir -- but it may find itself gingerly seeking to mediate over one of the world's most alarming flashpoints.

Successive US governments have stuck to a clear policy, that the conflict can be solved only by the rivals, taking into account the wishes of Kashmiris.

Brookings Institution scholar Timothy Crawford detects an "extraordinary degree of aversion" here to the idea of a US-sponsored Kashmir peace process.

"The policy has not changed," a State Department official added.

But, with India and Pakistan now nuclear powers and their borders

bristling with 800,000 troops, Kashmir has never been more of a powder keg.

Washington is already part of the equation. Secretary of State Colin Powell has spent weeks cooling Indo-Pakistani tensions following a guerrilla strike on parliament in New Delhi.

Pakistan's President Pervez Musharraf, who is due to visit the White House Wednesday, faced strong pressure to rein in insurgents in Indian Kashmir.

Kashmir was split between India and Pakistan in 1947, and has sparked two of their three wars. Pakistan denies fomenting the uprising.

Apart from fears the conflict could spark nuclear catastrophe, Washington has its own interests in

peace since South Asia is a key theatre in its campaign against terrorism.

But its intervention has raised the question of whether the United States should treat the cause of the Kashmir conflict, not just its symptoms.

US hesitancy is partly due to India's opposition to outside mediation.

Optimism is also stifled by the intractability of the dispute as Kashmir is vital to each country's identity.

"There is something about their respective national purposes that is at stake, it is more than just a territorial dispute," said Crawford.

# Israel keeps up attack as Arafat wins propaganda skirmish

AFP, Gaza City

The Israeli air force has kept up its attacks on Gaza City, injuring 37 people in the process, but Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat was on Tuesday enjoying his own small victories on the diplomatic front.

Israeli war planes and helicopter gunships pounded central Gaza City for a second day Monday, striking a security and jail compound, as demonstrators released a number of prisoners in the West

Bank town of Hebron.

The United States and UN chief Kofi Annan, both voiced concern over the Israeli air strikes.

In rare US criticism of Israel, State Department spokesman Richard Boucher said: "We are deeply troubled by the upsurge in violence in the region."

"Though we understand the need for Israel to take steps to ensure its self-defence, we're seriously concerned about Israeli attacks over the past several days on Palestinian Authority facilities,

particularly in areas that are heavily populated by civilians.

Israel said the strikes were in retaliation for a Palestinian shooting attack in Beersheva, southern Israel, that killed two women soldiers on Sunday and for the first-ever use by Palestinian militants of home-made rockets against Israeli territory.

In New York, Annan expressed dismay at Israel's massive bombing of Palestinian targets in Gaza and serious damage to UN offices in the city.

# Baghdad urges Europe to oppose US 'plot'

AFP, Baghdad

Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister Tareq Aziz on Tuesday urged European countries to oppose the US-Zionist "plot" against Iraq during talks with Austrian far-right strongman Joerg Haider.

Aziz and Haider's talks focused on the "current international situation and the US-Zionist plot against Iraq, calling on Europe to oppose it," newspapers reported.

Haider, the governor of the

southern Carinthia province and former leader of Austria's Freedom Party arrived in Iraq on Monday at the invitation of the Iraqi non-governmental organisation for friendship and peace.

The White House said Monday that President George W. Bush had "not ruled anything out" in dealing with North Korea, Iran, and Iraq, which he branded the "axis of evil" in his State of the Union speech last month.

# US ready for talks with Iran

AFP, Washington

The United States on Monday insisted it remained ready for a dialogue with Iran while reaffirming that country's presence in President George W. Bush's "axis of evil" amid anti-American demonstrations in Tehran.

State Department spokesman Richard Boucher was ready to talk with Iran on issues of US concern such as terrorism, its pursuit of weapons of mass destruction and would be willing to assist Tehran if it would disavow such things.

"The need is to disavow these kind of connections and get on with bringing Iran into the modern world,"

Boucher said. "We're prepared to discuss that process and other issues that are of concern to us."

"If Iran wants to set a clear course towards the modern world, we're happy to talk to them, work with them," he told reporters, stressing at the same time that the US concerns must be addressed.

"We want to be able to deal with those one way or the other and obviously, the preferred method remains to be able to sit down with them for a serious discussion," Boucher said.

He also repeated a warning to Iran, which on Monday celebrated the 23rd anniversary of the Islamic

revolution with large anti-US protests, not to meddle in post-Taliban Afghanistan.

And despite some positive signs from Tehran regarding Afghanistan that have been noted recently by Secretary of State Colin Powell as possible steps to improve ties, Boucher said relations remained cold.

"There's been no significant improvement in US-Iran relations," he said.

"The secretary's often talked about the possibilities, about exploring the possibilities, but we've continued to have our concerns about a variety of things."

# Saudi Arabia prays for peaceful Hajj

AFP, Riyadh

Saudi Arabia is praying for a peaceful pilgrimage next week but preparing for trouble, warning of zero tolerance at the first mass gathering of Muslims since the September 11 terror attacks.

The suicide hijackings in the United States for which Islamists and particularly Saudis have been blamed have raised tensions around the annual Hajj at Makkah, which is expected to witness a record turnout.

Saudi rulers are painfully aware of the dangers of hosting an estimated 2.5 million believers in the

cradle of Islam and fear certain elements may seek to stage demonstrations or raise slogans.

King Fahd bin Abdul Aziz was the latest to sound the alarm.

In a statement Monday night after a cabinet meeting, the king warned "Hajjis", or pilgrims, to keep away from any disturbance or activity in violation of the sanctity of the event, one of the five pillars of Islam.

At the same time as he welcomed the 900,000 throng who have already arrived by sea, land and air, the king said, "Pilgrims should cooperate with one another as well as with Saudi officials."

# Candidates face terror threats in Manipur

AFP, Imphal

Separatists in India's northeastern state of Manipur have gone into intimidation overdrive ahead of local elections -- triggering bomb blasts, abducting candidates and attacking their homes, officials said Tuesday.

Manipur police chief A.A. Siddiqui said unidentified militants Tuesday attacked the home of Amutombi Singh, a candidate of India's main opposition Congress party, in the Mayong area of provincial capital Imphal.

"A portion of the boundary wall was damaged in the blast although no one was injured," the police chief told AFP.

In separate attacks in Imphal overnight, armed gunmen opened fire on the homes of Kunjo Kishore, another Congress candidate, and S. Lala Singh of the regional Manipur People's Party.

"In both incidents, security forces retaliated and the gunmen fled with no casualties reported," Siddiqui said.

Militants Monday night abducted three workers of another political

party from Andro, near Imphal, he said.

"All these attacks are part of a campaign by militants to create some terror and realise extortion money from the candidates ahead of the polls," the police chief said.

Manipur goes to the polls on February 14 and 21 to elect a 60-member assembly.

On Monday, gunmen attacked the homes of two candidates from the Federal Party of Manipur on the outskirts of Imphal.

During the past fortnight, militants have attacked homes of at least a dozen former ministers killing two people, including a paramilitary soldier.

The majority of the 368 candidates in the fray have received extortion notices from Manipur's 19-odd separatist groups, officials said.

"Most of the candidates have received demands ranging from one to two million rupees (42,000 dollars)," Siddiqui said.

# 11 Maoist rebels killed in Nepal

REUTERS, Kathmandu

Soldiers in Nepal have killed 11 Maoist rebels and detained 22 suspected separatists in the past 48 hours, a defence ministry statement said late Monday.

The statement came hours after suspected Maoist rebels bombed a tax office in the heart of Nepal's capital Kathmandu today, wounding one person, the latest in a surge of violence by guerillas in the Himalayan kingdom, a police official said.

"Security forces have also seized a large amount of arms, ammunition and explosives in their search operations at different places," the statement said.

Maoists have stepped up their violent campaign ahead of the sixth anniversary of the start of their revolt, which seeks to topple Nepal's constitutional monarchy and set up a one-party communist republic.

The guerillas broke a truce and walked out of peace talks with the government last year. Today's explosion caused minor damage to the building of the internal revenue department, a police official said.

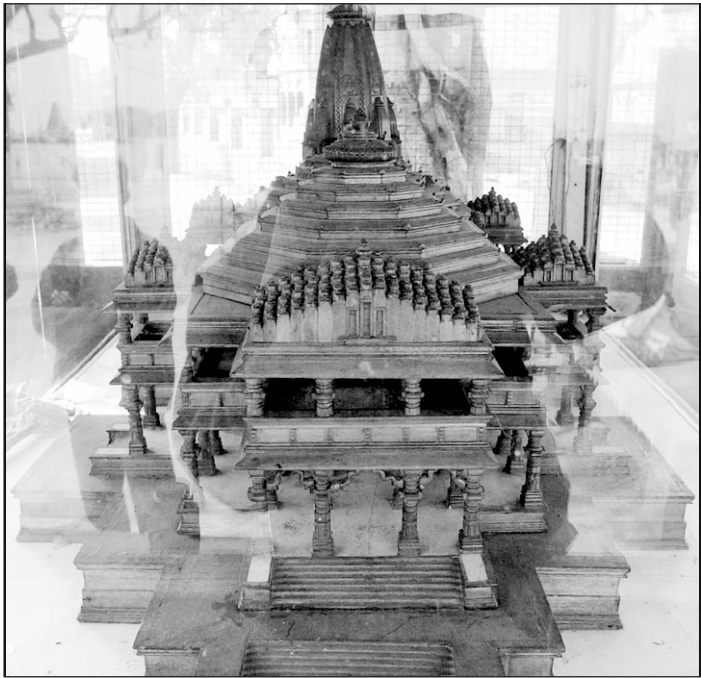


PHOTO: AFP

Photo shows the glass-encased wooden model of the proposed Ram Temple at Karsevak Puram in Ayodhya on Monday. The right-wing Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) said it would begin construction of Ram Temple from March 15 on the site of the 16th century Babri Mosque in Ayodhya which was razed by Hindu zealots in December 1992. Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee said a threat by the VHP to start construction of the Ram Temple would have no bearing on the state assembly election, which begins February 14 in Uttar Pradesh.

# Margaret to be cremated

AFP, London

The body of Britain's Princess Margaret is to be cremated in a break with royal tradition, the British television media said late Monday.

The Princess told friends that she favoured cremation rather than burial and it is understood that she left instructions with her immediate family, according to a BBC report.

The ashes are likely to be placed in her father, King George VI's vault at St George's Chapel, Windsor, west of London, they said.