

FBI was ill prepared to face terror attack

AFP, Washington

A top secret internal FBI report warned in the months before September 11 that the agency was ill-prepared to handle an attack from groups like al-Qaeda, the New York Times reported Saturday.

The classified document, called the Director's Report on Terrorism, provided detailed recommendations and proposed spending increases to address the problem, officials who have seen the document told the Times.

The internal report found virtually every major FBI field office undermanned in evaluating and dealing with the threat posed by groups like al-Qaeda, they told the daily.

Police break up anti-British demonstration in Kashmir

AFP, Srinagar

Police in Indian Kashmir used force Saturday to break up a demonstration against recent British remarks critical of rebels here, arresting a top separatist leader leading the protest. Javed Mir, the acting chairman of the pro-independence Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front, and a few dozen activists were blocked by baton-wielding police after marching only 50 meters (yards) in Kashmir's summer capital Srinagar.

Mir and five of his supporters were arrested and driven to a nearby police station.

The protest was called to protest comments by British Foreign Secretary Jack Straw, who visited India and Pakistan earlier in the week in a bid to cool tempers between the nuclear-armed arch-rivals.

Ahmedabad remains tense

AFP, Ahmedabad

The riot-scarred western Indian city of Ahmedabad remained tense Saturday with police saying they recovered bombs and explosives from areas of the city overnight.

Sporadic incidents of violence were also reported from other parts of Gujarat state, with one person being injured in police firing as Hindus and Muslims clashed in Baroda's Panigate area, 120 kilometres (74 miles) south of Ahmedabad, late Friday.

In another incident on Friday, a 22-year-old Muslim man was stabbed while returning from prayers in the same area.

"The assailants circled the man who was on a cycle, stabbed him and fled before he could raise an alarm," witness Zuber Gopalani said.

Myanmar for coexistence with neighbours

AFP, Yangon

Myanmar's ruling military junta has said that it wishes to adhere to a policy of "peaceful co-existence" with its neighbours, a report in the state-controlled press here said Saturday.

Obviously referring to Thailand -- with whom Myanmar's relations have deteriorated recently -- intelligence chief Lieutenant General Khin Nyunt expressed hope Friday that a practice of "good neighbourliness" would be reciprocated for the sake of "regional peace and prosperity", the New Light of Myanmar reported.

"If all of Myanmar's neighbours will respond with the same conviction and attitude, peace will prevail in the entire region," Khin Nyunt said during a speech at a civil service training school outside Yangon, according to the English-language daily.

Arms talks with India not suspended: Jack Straw

AFP, London

Negotiations on British arms sales to India have not been suspended despite the current crisis between India and Pakistan, British Foreign Secretary Jack Straw said Saturday.

Following press reports last weekend of a possible British government embargo on sales to India, in particular 66 British BAE Hawk training aircraft, Straw told BBC Radio: "Are BAE and their partners fully entitled to continue the negotiations about these sales? Yes.

"I certainly approve of a continuation of commercial relations with countries - India and Pakistan - with which we have good diplomatic relations."

US sees sign of Pak crackdown

Islamabad's claims on stemming militancy unreliable: Delhi

AFP, Washington

The United States said Friday it had seen signs of a Pakistani crackdown on incursions by guerrillas into Indian-ruled Kashmir, but still authorised nonessential diplomats and dependants to leave India, saying it could not rule out war in South Asia.

The announcements came as Washington prepared the groundwork for visits of two senior US officials to the nuclear-armed rivals next week in a double-barrelled offensive aimed at easing fears the crisis could erupt into the world's first nuclear war.

And in line with an emerging US strategy designed to convince both sides of the terrible cost of any nuclear conflict, the Pentagon warned that between nine and 12 million people would die in a "worst-case" nuclear war.

Secretary of State Colin Powell said it appeared a crackdown, demanded by India, and first promised by Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf in January, was underway in the Himalayan region claimed by both sides.

"I have seen indications that instructions have been given to cease this kind of activity," Powell said in an interview with the BBC World Service.

"I think it is still too early to say that it has stopped. And when and if it does stop, it must also stop permanently."

"I think what we're expecting President Musharraf to do is to use all of the authority he has to stop it, and to keep it stopped, so that we can get this crisis behind us."

President George W. Bush Thursday repeated his calls for such action echoing similar statements by India.

The State Department declined to say who had issued the orders for a halt to infiltration, or how it had come by the information, but Washington is known to carry out its intelligence assessments of the region.

The Indian army claimed earlier that there had been no decrease in the infiltration of guerrillas into Indian Kashmir.

Musharraf has repeatedly said he was opposed to such infiltration in Kashmir, where an Islamic separatist campaign has killed 35,000 people since 1989.

Pakistan-based militants have been blamed by India for recent terror attacks, including December's assault on parliament in New Delhi and an attack in Jammu and Kashmir this month which killed 35 people.

Powell has conducted an intense campaign of telephone diplomacy, hoping to ease fears of a full-blooded confrontation, amid a widening international effort to end the crisis.

Horrified by the prospect of a nuclear war, the United States is also concerned its campaign against terrorism in South Asia could be at risk.

Next week, Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage and Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld are due to visit South Asia in the latest visits by top foreign officials.

Meanwhile, India's hawkish Home Minister Lal Krishna Advani Saturday dismissed claims by Pakistan that it was cracking down on Islamic rebels, saying New Delhi's past experience had shown Islamabad to be "unreliable", reports said Saturday.

The Press Trust of India (PTI) news agency quoted Advani as telling reporters in the northern Kashmiri town of Leh that India's "experience has been that of once bitten twice shy."

"We will see what happens on the ground and then decide," Advani was quoted as saying when asked for comments on a televised speech by Musharraf on May 27, in which he vowed that Pakistan would not allow terrorism to be launched from its soil.

Musharraf had also said there was no infiltration of Islamic militants taking place into Indian Kashmir.

The PTI report quoted Advani as saying that Pakistan has "been waging a war against us for the past two decades".

"We are very seriously pondering how to respond to it." India accuses Pakistan of training, arming and funding an Islamic insurgency in Indian-Kashmir, a charge that Islamabad denies.



An officer from the Rajputana Rifles shouts orders to new recruits during an attestation parade at an army cantonment in New Delhi on Saturday. The new recruits will be deployed in operational areas along the border with Pakistan and the Line Of Control (LoC). Tensions remain high along the border, as Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee prepares to head to a regional summit, also attended by Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf.



UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan (C) meets with Kjell Larsson (L), minister of the Environment of Sweden, and Jaime Matas Palau (R), minister of the Environment of Spain, in New York on Friday. The 15 EU members simultaneously ratified the 1997 Kyoto Protocol on Friday, bringing the most ambitious international attempt to fight global warming a big step closer to reality.

'Indian embassy staffer kidnapped in Islamabad'

AFP, New Delhi

India on Saturday said one of its high commission (embassy) staffers based in Islamabad had been abducted and demanded his immediate release.

India's foreign ministry spokeswoman Nirupama Rao said Kulwant Singh was abducted from near his residence in the Pakistani capital when he was returning home with his son.

"He (Singh) was returning home on his scooter with his son when an unknown number of people abducted him," Rao told AFP.

"His son who was on the scooter witnessed the abduction and ran home to tell his mother."

Rao said the Indian high commission was informed of the abduction.

"Our acting high commissioner protested to the director general of South Asia in the Pakistan government," she said.

Door to talks with US not closed: Iranian Speaker

AFP, Tehran

The door is not closed to talks with the United States despite threats from Iran's justice department to prosecute anyone giving public support to such a dialogue, said parliament speaker Mehdi Karubi Saturday.

Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei "has never closed the door to negotiations with the United States," Karubi told journalists, despite the regular stream of vitriolic comments from Khamenei towards Washington.

Karubi, considered a leader of the parliament's majority reformist camp, cited the late Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, the Islamic republic's founder, in defence of his argument.

"Khomeini never closed the door permanently on negotiations with the United States," he said.

"The imam (Khomeini) said that if

the Americans acts like human beings, putting an end to their imperialist behaviour, the path will be open," Karubi said about the fiery Khomeini, who was famous for calling the United States "the Great Satan".

However, Karubi made clear that time had not yet come for dialogue, in the face of US President George W. Bush's labelling Iran part of "an axis of evil," in a January speech and tough pronouncements since then.

"The Americans treat us as a country belonging to an axis of evil. All over the world, they act against Iran... Negotiations with them now would be without benefit, without advantage for Iran," he said.

But he stressed "the door to negotiations is not closed forever."

In May, the reformist press and leading pro-reform MPs charged secret talks had taken place last

winter between Washington and key government figures, including former president and conservative stalwart Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani. They demanded that details be disclosed.

However, the government vigorously denied the reports and Iran's conservative justice department announced last Saturday any support in the media for negotiations with the United States would be considered a "criminal offence".

Tehran and Washington severed diplomatic ties following the 1979 Islamic revolution.

Meanwhile, Karubi also defended Iran's backing of the Lebanese Shiite movement Hezbollah, as well as the Palestinian uprising. Washington has blamed Iran for encouraging and abetting political violence against Israel.

Sept 11 was an warning of worse terror attacks to come: Wolfowitz

AFP, Singapore

The September 11 terror attacks on the United States were a warning of worse atrocities to come, US Deputy Defence Secretary Paul Wolfowitz said Saturday.

There were warning signs that "as terrorists continue to murder innocents, their methods will only grow more deadly", he told a conference here of Asia-Pacific, North American and European defence ministers and policymakers.

"It would be a mistake to think that we have seen either the last or the worst of such attacks. It would be a mistake to think that, in the future, they will strike only in the United States."

The conference on Asian security has locked on to the issues of global terrorism and the immediate neighbourhood threat of a war between India and Pakistan.

Indian Defence Minister George Fernandes, who is involved in a series of bilateral meetings on the margins of the conference, has played down the threat of war, describing the situation along the tense border with Pakistan as

"stable".

But his assurances have done little to dispel fears among several countries, including the United States, New Zealand, Britain and Canada which are among the more than 20 countries at the Singapore meeting and which have begun recalling their New Delhi-based diplomats.

The United Nations joined them on Saturday in advising relatives of staff to leave India and Pakistan.

Fernandes has been given a clear message that "there is a general concern in the international community about the horrific consequences" of a full-scale war between the nuclear-armed rivals, Singapore Defence Minister Tony Tan said.

"I'm sure the Indian minister will have carried away his impressions of the views of the ministers represented at this conference."

Pakistan is not represented at the meeting, as its geographical location did not fit the accepted definition of Asia-Pacific, said conference organisers from the London-based International Institute of Strategic Studies.

Wolfowitz, in his keynote speech, extended warnings from US Vice President Dick Cheney earlier this month that "there is no doubt" further attacks were being planned in the United States.

The deputy defence secretary said the threat was global and "threatens hundreds of millions of moderate Muslims in East Asia who are among the principal targets of the terrorists".

Intelligence analysts have reported increased communications among al-Qaeda cells, held responsible for the September 11 carnage, which they said could be an indication that preparations for a new terrorist attack were under way.

In a speech opening the conference on Friday, Singapore Senior Minister Lee Kuan Yew said al-Qaeda militants linked to Osama bin Laden were plotting to overthrow governments in Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines and Singapore to set up an Islamic state.

Malaysian Defence Minister Najib Razak appealed for "international solidarity" in the war against terror, and said countries should look within for possible causes of

extremism.

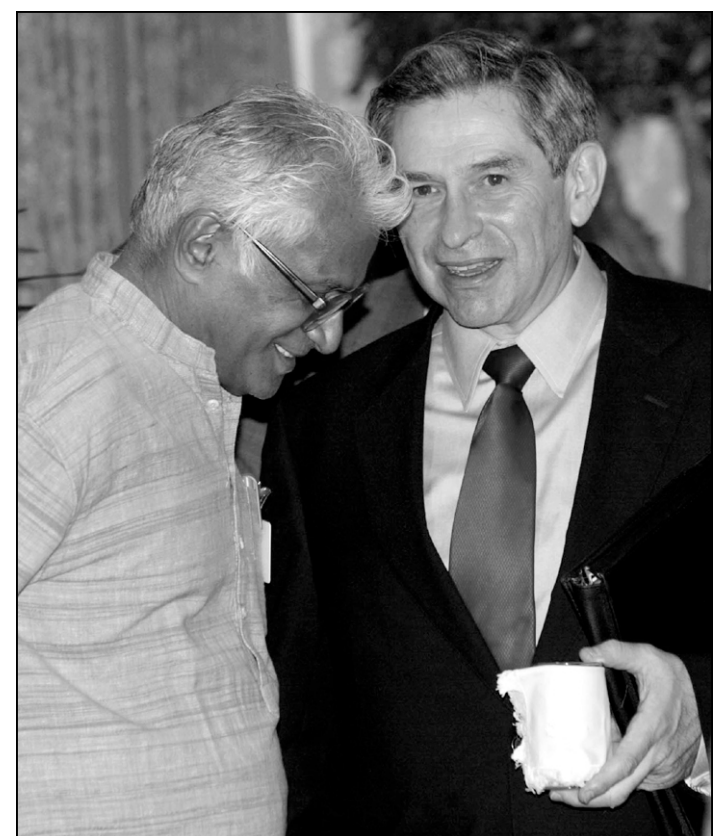
"We may well find underdevelopment, inequality, oppression, injustice, poverty and deprivation ... to be the ingredients that have fed into the propaganda machine of extremists," Najib said, calling on Washington to also take a lead in a global war against "injustice, poverty and underdevelopment".

Wolfowitz said the world could "never completely eradicate the threat posed by those who are willing to kill themselves to kill others" but there was much that could be done to preempt their actions.

"A global attack requires a global response," he said, praising the contributions of Asia-Pacific governments to the US-led war on terror.

In light of September 11, plans are being formed to make the Singapore meeting an annual event.

Much of the discussion is taking place behind closed doors, and Singapore's Tan said there was a general consensus among the defence ministers for a regular "informal meeting, of dialogue ... and exchange of views" to discuss common issues such as terrorism.



US Deputy Secretary of Defence, Paul Wolfowitz (R), chats with Indian Defence Minister George Fernandes (L) during a luncheon at the Shangri-La Hotel in Singapore on Saturday. Over 150 officials from 20 countries are attending the three-day conference.

Indian Maoist group names representatives for talks

AFP, Hyderabad

Efforts to find a peaceful end to one of India's oldest and most violent Maoist insurgencies received a boost Saturday with the rebels naming two representatives to begin preliminary talks with the government.

In an official release, the People's War Group (PWG), which has a powerful base in the southern Indian state of Andhra Pradesh, announced it had chosen left-leaning writer Varavara Rao and popular balladeer Gaddar as representatives to prepare the ground for the peace talks.

21 militants surrender in Kashmir

AFP, Srinagar

Twenty-one Muslim rebels gave themselves up in Indian-administered Kashmir Saturday, and handed over their arms and ammunition, an army spokesman said.

Sixteen of the militants belonged to Kashmir's dominant separatist group Hizbul Mujahedin, he said.

The rebels surrendered their weapons to the deputy commissioner of northern Kupwara district, Syed Haque Nawaz and senior police and army officers in the town of Kupwara, 100 kilometres north of the summer capital Srinagar.

"All sixteen Hizbul militants belonged to one battalion," Nawaz said, adding that the surrender marked the first time since the eruption of armed insurgency in 1989 that an entire battalion of any group has surrendered.

US, Canada to test air defences

AFP, Washington

The United States and Canada will test whether their joint air defences next week can effectively stop terrorists from repeating September 11 suicide attacks that killed some 3,000 people, the Pentagon said Friday.

The exercise, dubbed Amalgam Virgo 02, was planned before the deadly attacks with hijacked airliners and is set to take place Tuesday, officials said.

Jubilee fever grips Britons

REUTERS, London

Royal fever is gripping the country with the first of four days of parties, concerts and fireworks celebrating Queen Elizabeth's 50 years on the throne.

After days of bad weather, most of the country was bathed in golden sunshine, creating the perfect mood for a classical concert at Buckingham Palace in the evening and a feast of World Cup football.

"Send him victorious", read a Daily Express back page headline beneath a picture of England football captain David Beckham. "Long to reign over us", read its front page, dominated by a photograph of the Queen.

Lord Stirling, chairman of the Golden Jubilee Weekend Trust which organised the royal celebrations, said he couldn't predict how many would turn out but he was expecting huge crowds.

"I think the spirit out there to celebrate this great lady's 50 years is absolutely marvellous," he told the BBC.

"It's very difficult to say (how many will turn out) but there are hundreds of thousands of people already in London. We've got to be prepared for very large numbers indeed," he said.



Mariane Pearl, the French-born widow of slain US journalist Daniel Pearl, holds her newborn son in a Paris hospital, Adam D. Pearl, in this undated handout photo. Adam D. Pearl was born on May 28 in a Paris hospital.