



Security personnel and photographers take cover behind a car during a late night shoot-out on Saturday night after suspected separatist militants launched an attack in a mainly Hindu slum outside of Jammu. A wounded woman with her baby speaks to reporters at a local Jammu hospital late Saturday. The death toll in the attack by Islamic militants disguised as Hindu holy men rose to 27 on Sunday, as local politicians laid the blame for the bloodshed at Pakistan's door.

'Laden in Pak-Afghan border'

FBI working to hunt down al-Qaida

REUTERS, Berlin

Osama bin Laden is alive, probably in the border region between Pakistan and Afghanistan, the head of Germany's BND foreign intelligence network said in a newspaper interview due to be published on Sunday.

"Given the information we have we are convinced that bin Laden is still alive," August Hanning, president of the Bundesnachrichtendienst agency, told Welt am Sonntag newspaper. Bin Laden is Washington's main suspect in the September 11 attacks on New York and Washington.

"He is still the figurehead of al Qaeda, but doesn't appear to move around very much, and if at all, in a very conspiratorial way," Hanning said said there were an estimated 5,000 al Qaeda and Taliban supporters still in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Others had returned to their countries of origin.

They are preparing new attacks from their new locations. They will do all they can to strike again. We have to be prepared for that," Hanning told the newspaper, which released the interview ahead of publication on Sunday.

Hanning said major attacks such as the September 11 suicide assaults had taken place with bin Laden's blessing, but that he had not been involved in operational planning.

"He didn't prepare the attacks operationally, probably didn't even know all the details of the preparations," said Hanning.

He added that the September 11 attacks had cost al Qaeda little more

than one million dollars. Bin Laden now saw even more reason to attack the United States because he wanted to exact revenge for the U.S.-led campaign that ousted Afghanistan's Taliban rulers, Hanning added.

His comments follow a statement on Wednesday by a man claiming to be a spokesman for al Qaeda that bin Laden and Taliban leader Mullah Omar were alive and well.

Germany has played a central part in the investigation into the September 11 attacks. Three of the four suspected hijackers, including Mohammed Atta, their alleged ringleader, lived for years in the German port city of Hamburg.

AFP adds: The FBI has been working in tandem with US military forces in Pakistan in an unusual and sustained effort to hunt down al-Qaida fighters struggling to regroup, the New York Times reported Sunday.

In various Pakistani cities, agents of the Federal Bureau of Investigation are helping the local police and providing information -- in a few instances even manpower -- to break up remaining pockets of the network.

Never before have the traditionally independent military and law enforcement organizations worked so much in sharing information and expertise, the Times reported.

The deployment also includes intelligence officers in Pakistan, since al-Qaida's center of gravity has shifted east: first into the tribal areas of Pakistan, and then into its cities, the newspaper said.

The FBI's role in Pakistan reflects the bureau's effort to redefine its mission from one of investigating crimes to thwarting militant attacks planned outside the United States, the daily said.

Man pulls gun near French president

AP, Paris

A man pulled a rifle out of a guitar case and fired at least one shot at French President Jacques Chirac passed Sunday during the annual Bastille Day military parade. The man was arrested and no injuries were reported.

Cries of alarm from the crowd lining the parade route apparently alerted police to the gunman, standing near Paris' Arch of Triumph. The gunman fired just before he was wrestled to the ground. Agents stood him up, searched him and took him away in a van.

The Paris police said in a statement that the man was 25 years old and was a member of "neo-Nazi and hooligan" groups. France 2 TV reported that he had confessed to

wanting to shoot Chirac and told police he suffered from emotional problems.

It was not immediately clear if the shot came near Chirac or if the gunman fired into the air as police converged on him. LCI television said the gunman fired "at least one shot," suggesting the possibility of more rounds. It was not known whether Chirac was aware of the gunman at the time.

The man's motives for attacking Chirac were also not immediately known. The centre-right leader crushed far-right candidate Jean-Marie Le Pen in presidential elections in May.

Members of the crowd said the man, who had short, brown hair, took his gun - which police said was a .22 calibre rifle - out of a guitar case as the French president was

being driven past, down the Champs-Elysees aboard an open-topped jeep.

The military parade, a colourful pageant with troops, armoured vehicles and aircraft roaring overhead, continued uninterrupted. The parade is a highlight of celebrations marking Bastille Day, France's national holiday.

The man was arrested at the top of the Champs-Elysees where it empties into Place Charles de Gaulle, site of the famous Arch of Triumph. He managed to reach the flag-bedecked Champs-Elysees despite heavy security. Police lined the avenue and mingled with crowds along the route.

In a televised interview after the parade, Chirac was not asked about the shot and he did not mention it.

Delhi says 'no' to talks

Call for end to Indo-Pak cross-border terrorism

PTI, New Delhi

India on Saturday ruled out any dialogue with Pakistan unless it dismantles terrorist infrastructure in that country and provides proof of the same to New Delhi even as it said there has been fresh incursions from across the border.

Asked about prospects of early resumption of Indo-Pak dialogue, External Affairs Minister Yashwant Sinha told reporters, "Absolutely no. Till circumstances are created wherein Pakistan takes worthwhile steps to dismantle infrastructures of terrorism which Pakistan President General Pervez Musharraf has announced."

Stating that there was some decline in infiltration after Pakistan's assurance that it would end it permanently, Sinha, who took over the Ministry recently, said "after Musharraf went public that he had not given such an assurance, almost in tandem there were incidents from across the border.

"The decline (in infiltration) evaporated and fresh incursions were noted, which were brought to the notice of the international community. It is for Pakistan to provide proof that infiltration has declined," Sinha said after handing over of 25 Tata buses to the transitional Government of Afghanistan.

Meanwhile, Minister of State for Home Affairs I D Swami omn Sunday said incidents like last night's Qasim Nagar massacre could occur at any time and at any place unless cross-border terrorism was stopped.

"If cross-border terrorism is not stopped, these unfortunate incidents and barbarous killing of innocent people can happen at any time and at any place," he told a private TV news channel.

On infiltration from across the border, Swami said it looked like for sometime that infiltration was coming down.

Pentagon plots preemptive strike

AFP, Washington

A secret Pentagon five-year plan directs the military to be ready for preemptive strikes anywhere in the world and to develop even greater precision-strike capabilities. The Los Angeles Times reported Saturday in its Internet edition.

The "Defence Planning Guidance" for 2004-2009 gives the us military the task of dominating air and space on several fronts, said the report due to appear in the paper's

Sunday edition.

A Defence Department spokesman confirmed the existence of the document Saturday but flatly refused to discuss its contents.

"There is no way we will address any of that," spokesman Glenn Flood told AFP. "It's a classified document."

The annually updated five-year plan represents an acceleration of the shift toward the high-tech gadgetry of warfare on which the Pentagon has relied since the Persian Gulf War of 1991, The Times said.

The classified document requires the military services to further develop the capability to launch unwarmed preemptive strikes, a new doctrine President Bush outlined in a May graduation address at the US Military Academy at West Point, New York.

The plan directs the armed services to spend their money on five areas: countering terrorists and weapons of mass destruction, intelligence, cyber-warfare, airstrike capabilities and military systems in space, according to the report.

US struggles on home front in its war against terror

AFP, Washington

As Washington's undeclared war on terrorism engulfs US citizens suspected of fighting for the enemy, the nation's courts struggle to protect the rights guaranteed by the US Constitution without disarming its warfare.

This week, Taliban fighter John Walker Lindh's lawyers will try to convince a judge to suppress statements he made to interrogators before he was formally arrested on charges of conspiring to murder US nationals, aiding terrorism and using a firearm in a violent crime.

Lindh, 21, is scheduled to stand trial August 26 in Alexandria,

Virginia. He faces up to life in prison if convicted.

Meanwhile, another US federal judge in New York is considering whether to allow a lawyer for Abdullah al-Muhajir to petition for release. Al-Muhajir, born Jose Padilla, a 31-year-old former Chicago gang member who converted to Islam in prison, has been held as an enemy combatant since June 9, when authorities accused him of planning to detonate a radioactive "dirty bomb" in the United States.

He has not been charged with a crime.

AUS appeals court in Richmond,

Virginia, ruled Friday in a similar case that Yasser Esam Hamdi did not have the right to meet with a lawyer, reversing a lower court's decision.

Hamdi, 21 -- who also has not been charged with a crime -- was captured with Taliban and al-Qaida fighters after a prison uprising in November in Afghanistan and taken to the US military prison camp in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.

In April, he was transferred to the brig at the US Naval Station in Norfolk, Virginia, after authorities discovered that he was born to Saudi parents in the southern US state of Louisiana.

Stage is set for Indian presidential polls

PTI, New Delhi

The stage is now set for what is essentially a one-sided battle between eminent missile technologist APJ Abdul Kalam and INA veteran Capt Lakshmi Sahgal in the Presidential election on Monday with victory for Kalam remaining a mere formality.

Arrangements have been completed for polling in Parliament House, where the MPs will cast their vote, and State Assemblies, the MLAs. Counting of votes will take place here on July 18.

A dark horse, 71-year-old Kalam, a hero of the Pokhran nuclear tests and long associated with the country's space programme, pitchforked into

national politics by a surprise last-minute nomination made by the NDA and later adopted by the entire political spectrum barring the Left.

Equally surprising was the Left parties choice of 87-year-old Sahgal, who had kept herself from politics and social life and was leading a quiet life in Kanpur. Sahgal is the first woman to contest a Presidential election.

The Left parties insisted they were fighting the election on a principle. Despite her age, the INA veteran and a close associate of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose undertook a spirited election campaign addressing press conferences in various state capital but Kalam chose to keep a low profile.

Musharraf makes up his mind for military role

AFP, Islamabad

Ignoring opposition outrage, Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf appeared determined to give his proposed military-led National Security Council (NSC) powers to sack an elected Prime Minister and his cabinet.

"It is the only and best solution," Musharraf told editors and columnists of Pakistan's national press during a three-hour meeting late Saturday.

He said the purpose of the NSC was to have an "effective check" on the president, prime minister and chief of the army staff and eradicate chances of imposing martial law, the local media said.

"Everything is negotiable but I am somewhat fixated on some issues," the President said according to the Daily Times.

It said Musharraf was unlikely to go back on plans to scrap a constitutional clause which currently prevents the president from dismissing the government and National Assembly.

"It must go," he said.

Musharraf also defended the formation of the NSC, conceding he was only prepared to accept minor tweaks to his blueprint for the powerful body.

"I am not averse to a change in its name," he said.

Musharraf's proposals for the council comprising civilian leaders and military top brass, have been met with widespread indignation from opposition parties.

"It is a joke in the name of democracy," said Nawabzada Nasrullah Khan, chief of the 15-party Alliance for the Restoration of Democracy.

"We completely reject this. This is a mutilation of the 1973 constitution which was passed unanimously by an elected parliament," he told AFP on Saturday.

Analysts said the proposed NSC, to be headed by the president, will have the power to fire the prime minister without the need for fresh elections or the dissolution of the National Assembly lower parliament house.



Beirut's landmark Hilton hotel (L) is demolished on Sunday to make way for a new five-star hotel in its place, overlooking the Mediterranean sea. The 22-storey hotel, which stood unfinished throughout the war in the Green Line zone that split the Lebanese capital during the 15-year civil war into a Christian right-wing controlled east Beirut and pro-Palestinian left-wing west, was just completed when the war broke out in April 1975. The war left the hotel empty and unused in one of the most dangerous zones of the city centre at the time. In the background stands the Holiday Inn (R), another war-damaged landmark hotel, currently covered with a giant poster promoting tourism in Lebanon.

Iraq warns neighbours of dangers of US strike

AFP, Dubai

The regime of Saddam Hussein, which President George W. Bush's administration wants toppled, is warning its neighbours that a potential US strike would destabilise the entire region.

Saddam's elder son Uday warned during a meeting this week with an Iraq-based Iranian dissident of a US plan to carve up the Islamic republic.

"After Iraq and Saudi Arabia, Iran's turn will come," Uday told the

dissident, Tareq Abdul Karim Naama.

He also warned Iranian leaders against joining any hostile action against Iraq. "Not an inch of Iraqi soil will ever become part of their territory," he said without elaborating.

Iran and Iraq have not signed a formal peace treaty since their 1980-88 war, but Tehran, branded by Washington as forming an "axis of evil" along with Baghdad and Pyongyang, has said it is "strongly opposed" to a US military attack on

its old foe.

Uday had charged in the July 7 edition of his Babel daily that the United States had "drawn up a plan aimed at striking Iraq and breaking up the countries of the region," including Saudi Arabia.

The plan envisaged making "Jordan an alternative country for the Palestinians, dividing Saudi Arabia into three parts, and scraping Bahrain's identity and re-attaching it to Persia (Iran)," he said in the article which carried one of his pseudonyms, Abu Hatem.

3 m American teens think of suicide

REUTERS, Washington

Three million American teens have thought seriously about or even attempted suicide, a government survey released Sunday showed.

More than 13 percent of young Americans between 14 and 17 years of age considered suicide in 2000, the report from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration found. Only 36 percent of them had received mental health treatment or counselling, SAMHSA said.

Depression is the main cause of

suicide, SAMHSA administrator Charles Curie said in a statement.

"We need to help teens make the link between untreated depression and the risk for suicide, and help them identify serious depression or suicide risk in a friend," Curie said.

"We must encourage teens to tell a responsible adult when a friend is at risk for suicide."

More than a third of the 3 million teens aged 12 to 17 who said they thought about suicide in the past 12 months actually tried it, the survey, the first of its kind ever done by SAMHSA, found.