

# Israel ends West Bank raid after killing top militant

6 others also gunned down

REUTERS, AFP, Nablus

Israeli forces pulled out of the Casabah district of the West Bank town of Nablus at dawn yesterday, a day after killing a senior militant commander and six other armed activists there.

Palestinian Prime Minister Ahmed Qurei, also of Fatah, said Israel committed a brutal and ugly crime in Nablus, a militant stronghold. Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon called the operation another impressive achievement against terrorism.

Uncovering a hideout in a Nabul house Saturday, soldiers killed Nafeh Abu Sharif, head of Fatah's al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades in the West Bank, and six other gunmen, including local commanders of the Hamas and Islamic Jihad militant groups.

The brigades, whose militants have carried out dozens of suicide

bombings and attacks against Israelis in a Palestinian uprising that began in 2000, promised unprecedented retaliation -- "like an earthquake," they said in a statement.

Israeli military sources said Sunday the raid, codenamed "Full Court Press" and launched Wednesday by paratroopers into Nablus' casbah, a warren of ancient streets, was over.

Residents said soldiers took out of the neighborhood and took up positions on hilltops as thousands of Palestinians gathered in the city center for the militants' funerals.

The army commander who led the ambush on the gunmen's hideout said Israel carried out the operation after preventing a bombing in Jerusalem last week planned by militants based in Nablus.

"That's the reason we acted this weekend, but even though we act,

they (the militants) still manage to carry out attacks," said the officer, who could be identified under army regulations only as Lieutenant Colonel Itzik.

The killings overshadowed a visit by US Assistant Secretary of State William Burns, who urged both sides to fulfill commitments and take advantage of the "moment of opportunity" offered by Sharon's Gaza pullout plan.

Israeli troops late last month raided the Rafah refugee camp in Gaza, killing about 44 Palestinians, but have not pushed into West Bank towns with significant force since April.

Earlier Saturday, Israeli troops shot dead another al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades armed militant in Nablus. Military sources said he had confronted soldiers. Friday, soldiers killed two Palestinians, including one gunman in the city.

Nabil Abu Rdainah, a senior

adviser to Arafat, called Saturday's killings "a grave escalation that aims to sabotage the Egyptian and American efforts to revive the peace process."

Egypt has been talking with Palestinian officials about plans to train Palestinian security officers so they can secure control over Gaza after an Israeli pullout. Israeli hard-liners fear militants plan to take over Gaza after a withdrawal.

Sharon has won cabinet support in principle for his Gaza plan, which calls for the gradual evacuation of all 21 Jewish settlements in the Gaza Strip and another four hard-to-defend enclaves in the West Bank.

A second vote is necessary before any of the settlements, built on land Israel occupied in the 1967 Middle East war, are uprooted. Sharon included in the Gaza plan a pledge to hold on to parts of the West Bank permanently.

Questioning of prisoners will continue, the newspaper said, but without use of the techniques.

A CIA spokesman was not immediately available for comment.

The suspension follows a White House decision to review an Aug. 1, 2002, memo that detailed how to avoid violating US and international terror laws while interrogating prisoners.

## CIA stops using harsh interrogation tactics

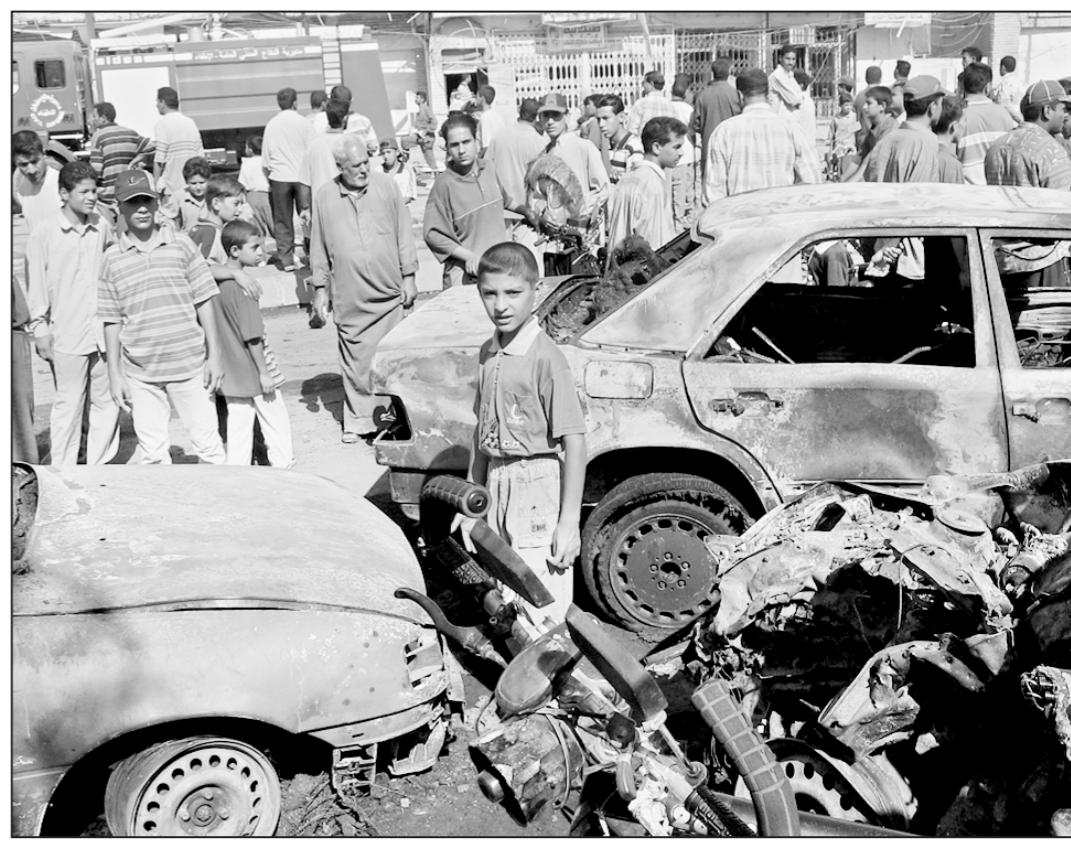
REUTERS, Washington

The CIA has stopped using interrogation techniques such as "stress positions," sleep deprivation and denial of pain medication while the Bush administration reviews their legality, The Washington Post said yesterday.

"The whole thing's been stopped until we can sort out whether we are sure we are on legal ground," the Post quoted a former senior CIA official as saying.

The newspaper said the so-called enhanced interrogation techniques have been used in questioning al-Qaeda leaders. The suspension applies to CIA detention facilities around the world.

Questioning of prisoners will continue, the newspaper said, but without use of the techniques.



Iraqis check the site of a car bomb attack yesterday which took place late Saturday in the town of Hilla, 100km south of Baghdad. Twenty-three people were killed and 58 wounded in the explosion, which occurred in a busy shopping area away from Iraqi security forces or patrols by the US-led coalition. All the victims were civilians.

## Jamali's exit exposes weakness of Pak democracy: Analysts

AFP, Islamabad

ruling coalition had no role in effecting this change," Askari told AFP.

"The change confirms the president's centrality to the political process and his ability to manipulate it according to his wishes."

Askari said there was no obvious justification for the removal of Jamali, who was hand-picked by Musharraf.

"There was no political crisis and there was no revolt in the party," he said.

"This exposes the weakness and hollowness of the civil institutions established after the 2002 elections."

Jamali was elected in November 2002 in the first polls after three years of military rule by Musharraf, who seized power by toppling the elected government of then-prime minister Nawaz Sharif on October 12, 1999.

He stressed that his government was unblemished. "There is no charge on me or my cabinet colleagues. My intention was pious and my conscience is clear."

However, the burly 60-year-old tribal elder from poor Baluchistan province was seen by many as docile and overshadowed by Musharraf, who is also the chief of the army.

## Bush pledges to include Turkey in EU

Nato summit kicks off today in Istanbul

AP, Ankara

President Bush pledged yesterday that he will fight for Turkey to become a member of the European Union, and praised this country as a Muslim nation which embraces democracy and the rule of law.

He held out Turkey as a model for the Middle East as he met with Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan at the start of an official visit to Turkey a day before a summit in Istanbul of the 26-member Nato alliance.

Bush, on his first-ever trip ever to Turkey, ignored reporters' questions about the capture in Iraq of three Turkish workers by supporters of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, a Jordanian-born terrorist, who kidnapped three Turkish workers in Iraq and threatened to behead them within 72 hours.

A White House spokesman, Sean McCormack, said: "We're in close contact with the Turkish government on the issue. It is an awful reminder of the barbaric nature of

these terrorists but their acts will not shake the will of free people everywhere."

Bush said his visit to Turkey would focus on ways to strengthen Nato, which he is pushing to take a greater military role in Iraq.

"I will remind people of this good country that I believe you ought to be given a date by the EU for your eventual acceptance into the EU," he said.

Bush said he and Erdogan would discuss "matters regarding the neighborhood Iraq and elsewhere."

During stops in Ankara and Istanbul through Tuesday, Bush hopes his Nato allies will formally agree to train Iraqi security forces. And the president is hoping his talks with Turkish leaders will smooth America's partnership with the only Muslim nation in the Western alliance.

Bush has the capability and I believe the responsibility to help the Iraqi people defeat the terrorist threat that's facing their country," Bush said Saturday following a US-European Union summit in Ireland.

that if the new government in Baghdad collapses it will destabilise Iraq, Turkey's neighbor to the south.

Nato nations tentatively agreed Saturday to respond to interim Iraqi Prime Minister Iyad Allawi's urgent request for military training and equipment. The agreement is expected to be finalized when Bush attends a Nato summit in Istanbul that ends tomorrow, a day before the transfer of political power in Iraq.

The Nato offer would be a boost for the United States, which has sought a wider role by the alliance in Iraq. However, it falls short of earlier US hopes that Nato would deploy troops to help restore order there. Sixteen of the 26 Nato members have individually sent forces to the US-led coalition.

"Nato has the capability and I believe the responsibility to help the Iraqi people defeat the terrorist threat that's facing their country," Bush said Saturday following a US-European Union summit in Ireland.

## Iran, European 'big-3' to hold talks on nukes

Tehran shrugs off criticism over uranium enrichment

AFP, Tehran

Iran and the big-three European Union states are to hold new talks this week in the wake of Iran's decision to resume making parts for centrifuges used to enrich uranium, officials said yesterday.

Foreign ministry spokesman Hamid Reza Asefi said the talks with Britain, France and Germany - which last year brokered Iran's cooperation with the UN nuclear watchdog -- would take place "in the coming days".

The Islamic republic will have discussions with the Europeans this week," top national security official and nuclear negotiator Hassan Rowhani was quoted as saying by the official news agency IRNA.

"We are ready for dialogue and we accept the invitation from the three Europeans," he was also quoted as saying by the student

news agency ISNA.

Iranian television said the talks would begin on Tuesday at the experts level, and then move on to meetings at the ministerial level.

Details on the content or aim of the discussions were not given.

The United States and the European Union Saturday called on Iran to go back on its decision to resume the construction of centrifuges, announced by Tehran in retaliation to a critical resolution passed this month at the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

A halt on centrifuge work had been one of several "confidence-building" measures Iran agreed to while the UN nuclear watchdog investigated allegations the country is seeking to develop nuclear weapons.

Meanwhile, Iran yesterday shrugged off yet more international criticism over its nuclear

programme, refusing to back down on the construction of centrifuges for the highly sensitive process of enriching uranium.

"Nothing very important has happened," foreign ministry spokesman Hamid Reza Asefi told reporters, trying to play down fresh alarm over an atomic energy programme the United States sees as a cover for weapons development.

The United States and the European Union Saturday called on Iran to go back on its decision to resume the construction of centrifuges, announced by Tehran in retaliation to a critical resolution passed this month at the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

But Asefi insisted that while Iran would go ahead with making centrifuges as of June 29, it was still sticking to its pledge to suspend enriching uranium.

## Taliban kill 10 Afghans for having voter ID card

BBC ONLINE

Taliban fighters in Afghanistan have shot dead at least 10 people after finding them in possession of voter registration cards on Friday, officials say.

The reported attack in the central Uruzgan province appears to be the latest case of violence against anyone involved in September's elections.

The former ruling Taliban group has been accused of trying to wreck the country's first democratic poll.

Two women died on Saturday in a bomb attack on female election workers.

Local police officials said the Uruzgan killings happened after a group of suspected guerrillas stopped a van carrying civilians.

There are differing accounts as to how many occupants there were and whether they were shot dead immediately or whether the van was taken to a neighbouring province before the killings.

## Tigers warn govt of 'war or peace' option

Norway moves to salvage talks

AFP, Colombo

Sri Lanka's peace broker Norway will make a fresh attempt this week to salvage its faltering efforts amid fears that the country could return to war, diplomats and officials said yesterday.

Norway's special peace envoy, Erik Solheim, was due here today to launch a renewed attempt to jumpstart the negotiations process that has been on hold since April last year, diplomats said.

They said Solheim's work was complicated by Tiger charges that the army provided sanctuary to a renegade Tiger commander to wage a covert war against them despite the ongoing truce that has been in place since February 2002.

The Tigers had warned that the "war or peace" option was with the government while security forces

and the police have been finding bombs and jackets of the type used by suicide bombers left in the capital.

The defence ministry has ordered the stepping up of security in key state institutions amid fears of attacks, but the government has also been keen to play down threats of a Tiger strike.

The Tigers on Saturday boycotted a meeting to review the truce and sort out problems with the police and security forces in the island's troubled eastern province, the Scandinavian truce monitoring team said.

A spokeswoman for the truce monitors said the Tigers gave no reason for the pull-out but the guerrillas had told local residents last week that their action was to protest military backing to a breakaway leader known as Karuna.



Turkish leftist protesters chant slogans yesterday at Kadikoy square "We don't want Nato", during a demonstration against the two-day Nato summit beginning today in Istanbul. Tens of thousands of protesters gathered yesterday in Turkey's largest city to demonstrate against the summit and the arrival of US President George W. Bush.

## Iraqi insurgents better coordinating their attacks: Powell

AFP, Washington

Coordination among insurgent fighters in Iraq is increasing ahead of the June 30 power handover, US Secretary of State Colin Powell said in a television interview yesterday.

"If you look at the insurgency and what they are doing in recent weeks ... there does seem to be a level of coordination, a level of command and control that we need to target and go after," Powell told the CBS News program "Face the Nation."

In the months after the fall of Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein officials, the US-led coalition authority dismissed the roadside bombs and sporadic ambushes aimed at coalition forces as the work of a handful of thugs and diehard Saddam loyalists.

"Earlier we did not see the kind of

## Assam minister asks Ulfa to set free his son

THE STATESMAN/ ANN, Guwahati

Running out of options, Assam hill areas development minister GC Langthasa today appealed to the Ulfa to release his abducted son Nirmalendu, who has been in the militants' custody since 27 April.

The minister's family lodged an FIR about the abduction only on 25 May after their efforts to secure Nirmalendu's release came a cropper. Police suspected that the minister's son was taken hostage for ransom.

But on 27 May, the outfit had demanded release of five of its senior leaders who, they alleged, were in custody of the Indian Army after being handed over by Royal Bhutan Army during its crackdown on Ulfa camps in the Himalayan kingdom in December.

Langthasa issued a statement asking the Ulfa to be humane and release his son without delay.

coordination that we're seeing now," Powell said, "but now we're seeing a higher level of coordination."

"It changes the nature of the enemy. We have to go after it."

Powell cautioned that not all the insurgents are part of one organization. Some of the fighters are linked to group of fugitive Jordanian Islamist Abu Mussab al-Zarqawi's group, while others belong to the militia of radical Shiite cleric Moqtada Sadr.

And whether the different organizations "are linked or not remains to be seen," Powell said.

"I wouldn't go that far. Certainly we're seeing a level of command and control and a level of coordination that seems to me is a little bit different than what we've seen months ago," he said.