

# Gunmen kill 3 sons of Abbas aide in Gaza

REUTERS, Gaza

Unidentified gunmen killed three sons of a Palestinian intelligence official loyal to President Mahmoud Abbas in Gaza yesterday, firing at the car as it dropped them at school, police and hospital officials said.

An adult bystander was also killed in the attack in Gaza City, amid growing tension between Hamas, the governing militant movement and Abbas's Fatah faction.

Angry mourners firing automatic weapons later stormed into the compound of parliament during a funeral procession for the boys, who were aged between 6 and 9. Witnesses said the mourners fired

at the building. It was unclear if anyone was hurt.

Some 2,000 people took part in the funeral march, including the boys' father, Colonel Baha Balousha, who was heavily guarded by gunmen. Relatives carried his three sons, whose bodies were wrapped in white sheets, in their arms.

The car taking the children to school was peppered with bullet holes, and blood stains covered the seats. Two school bags, one green and the other blue, still lay inside.

"Masked gunmen took off in a yellow car after they fired many bullets at the car. Children were screaming and weeping in fear," said a primary school boy who witnessed the attack.

Several other schools line the street, which was crowded with children at the time of the shooting.

Residents said the gunmen fled with Hamas policemen in pursuit. Hospital officials said the dead bystander was a 25-year-old man. Police said two other children were wounded.

Balousha, a senior intelligence official, was not in the car when it was attacked.

Unknown gunmen tried to kill Balousha when they ambushed his car in Gaza in September, one of several attacks on top intelligence officials loyal to Abbas in the strip this year.

A senior Palestinian intelligence official in the occupied West Bank condemned the latest attack.



PHOTO: AFP

A Palestinian man rides his bicycle past burning tires following the fatal shooting of three children in Gaza City yesterday. Three young boys and their driver Mahmud al-Habil, 25, were killed Monday in a drive-by shooting near a school in the Rimal district of Gaza City.

## Migrants face tough citizenship test in Australia

AFP, Sydney

Migrants who want to become Australian citizens will be forced to sit an English language test and sign a commitment to the country's laws and values, Prime Minister John Howard announced yesterday.

Howard, whose announcement comes one year after racial riots erupted on Sydney beaches when white mobs attacked Lebanese-Australians to "reclaim the beach", said there was popular support for a citizenship test.

The test will ensure immigrants have a working knowledge of English as well as an understanding of basic aspects of Australian society, culture and history, he said.

"It is designed, not as some kind of trivial pursuit, but is designed to ensure that people do understand and have a working capacity in the national language, which is English," he said.

The conservative prime minister, who has tightened immigration rules while in office to deter refugees from arriving here by boat from South East Asia, said the test was not intended to be discriminatory.

"It's not designed in any way to keep some people out and encourage others to come in, that's not the purpose of it," he said.

## Civilian casualties pour into Lankan hospital

AFP, Colombo

Dozens of civilians wounded in weekend shelling in rebel-held areas were evacuated yesterday for treatment, officials said, as the rebels placed civilian deaths at 41.

Some 3,000 civilians on Sunday were fleeing as heavy artillery duels

in Sri Lanka's restive northeast killed more than 110 people, including 41 civilians, according to rebels and security forces.

Medical sources in the Vakarai hospital inside territory held by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Ealam (LTTE) said 27 dead bodies of civilians were brought there.



PHOTO: AFP

An anti-riot water cannon vehicle disperses anti-Pinochet Chileans who were celebrating after the confirmation of Augusto Pinochet's death on Sunday behind La Moneda presidential palace in Santiago.

# US must try to engage Iraq, Syria

Say Baker report authors

AFP, Washington

The lead authors of a sweeping review of US Iraq policy stressed Sunday that Washington must engage Iran and Syria to help achieve peace and security in Iraq and the wider Middle East.

But James Baker and Lee Hamilton said they themselves were not convinced that at least Tehran was ready to join hands with Washington on Iraq, even if there are no preconditions set for talks.

Baker and Hamilton, who led the Iraq Study Group (ISG) in its call for the US to revise its approach toward Iraq, said in television interviews Sunday that Damascus and Tehran could contribute toward achieving peace not only in Iraq but between Israel and its neighbours.

"There are a lot of things that can be done in the region to support that road to peace in Baghdad," Hamilton told NBC's Meet the Press.

"Iran and Syria are major play-

ers. Now to try to isolate them, to shove them aside, to say they don't have any impact here, I don't think that gets you anywhere."

The ISG proposal that the US open direct talks with Iran and Syria, which Washington has branded supporters of terrorism, was one of the most controversial points in the report that recommended to US President George W. Bush that more responsibility should be placed on Baghdad for the country's security.

# Ex-rebel wins Aceh polls

AFP, Banda Aceh

Former rebel spokesman Irwandi Yusuf has won the first direct election for governor of Indonesia's Aceh province according to an unofficial quick count, the director of the local survey group that conducted the count told AFP.

"I'm certain there will not be a second round because it's a win by a large amount," said Denny Januar Ali of LSI (Indonesia Survey Institute).

Ali said Yusuf had received 39

percent of the vote.

LSI researcher Widdy said the result was a surprise as Yusuf and his running mate Muhammad Nazar won in almost every district of Aceh, while previous research had indicated they would only have strong support in former rebel strongholds.

"This is a major project for us to study. Why was this pair elected?" he said.

Muhammad Jafar, head of Aceh's independent election commission, said a candidate needed 25 percent plus one vote to win outright without

going to a second round.

The quick count was based on a sample of voting stations.

Yusuf is the leader of the "young Turks" within the former separatist Free Aceh Movement (GAM) and enjoys support from former combatants.

In 2003, he was sentenced to seven years for rebellion and had his sentence increased to nine years on appeal. He escaped when the tsunami struck on December 26, 2004 and flooded his prison.