

Teen-ager killed when bulldozers charge Palestinian territory

ap news capsules

By The Associated Press INTERNATIONAL

JERUSALEM — Israeli bulldozers charged into Palestinian-controlled territory today near the border with Egypt to destroy at least 10 buildings, and an ensuing clash killed a teen-ager, Palestinian officials said.

Brig. Gen. Abdel Razek el-Majaida, a Palestinian security commander, said Israeli tanks fired shells and machine guns at Rafah to cover the operation. Hospital doctors said Mahmoud Aqel, 17, was killed and at least 15 Palestinians were wounded.

Majaida called the Israeli move a "dangerous escalation." A new witness, agricultural engineer Ahmed Shaer, 39, said the bulldozers leveled farm land and greenhouses, and Palestinians fired anti-tank rockets at the Israelis.

The Israeli military said today it carried out a "pinpointed, defensive action" to put an end to heavy firing on its troops from the area on Tuesday.

"They were using civilian buildings to shoot on us and we had to prevent future shootings from these buildings," said army spokesman Lt. Col. Olivier Rafowicz. He would not give details on the operation other than to say it began and ended within a few hours early today.

NATIONAL
LOS ANGELES — Contract talks between Hollywood screenwriters and producers and studio heads extended past a deadline today, temporarily averting a strike that would halt TV and movie production.

"We're working very hard to reach an agreement," Cheryl Rhoden, spokeswoman for the Writers Guild of America, said shortly after the contract expired at 12:01 a.m.

Rhoden said the contract had not been extended and declined to comment on how long the talks could continue.

Barbara Brogliatti, spokeswoman for the Alliance of Motion Picture and Television Producers, joined Rhoden for the announcement.

Fears of a walkout have gripped the industry for months, but the writers guild has yet to call for a strike vote from its members. Progress has been difficult to gauge because both sides have maintained a strict news blackout since negotiations resumed April 17.

With no word of an agreement, the next step was anyone's guess.

Before the news blackout, the two

sides had yet to bridge a \$100 million gap between their demands. Failure to make a deal could mean a strike that would halt movie and television production, possibly delaying the fall TV season.

McALESTER, Okla. — A woman convicted in part on the testimony of a police chemist accused of wrongly linking defendants to crime scenes was executed by injection Tuesday for killing her husband in 1988.

Marilyn Kay Plantz was the second woman put to death in Oklahoma since it became a state in 1907. The first, Wanda Jean Allen, was executed in January.

In refusing to block Plantz's execution earlier this week, Gov. Frank Keating said she had confessed and that there was "no question about her guilt or innocence."

The attorney general's office is examining the convictions of 12 other death row inmates in which Oklahoma City police chemist Joyce Gilchrist testified or helped prepare evidence.

An FBI report said Gilchrist gave testimony "that went beyond the ac-

ceptable limits of forensic science" or misidentified hair and fibers in at least six criminal cases.

Plantz was pronounced dead at 9:11 p.m. Tuesday at the Oklahoma State Penitentiary in McAlester. She was convicted of having her husband killed by her lover, William Clifford Bryson, and an accomplice, Clinton McKimble. Bryson was executed in June. McKimble received a life sentence.

WASHINGTON

WASHINGTON — Changes to make the V-22 Osprey safe for flight could take as little as a year to put in place, but rigorous testing is needed before the troubled aircraft can begin daily use, says a Pentagon-appointed panel.

"The most important thing we could say is that there's no evidence of any fundamental flaw" in the V-22's unique helicopter-like design, said Norman Augustine, a member of a panel assigned to review the Osprey program after 23 Marines were killed last year in two fatal crashes.

Serious concerns about the aircraft's safety and design led the panel to recommend the program continue production at a "minimum sustaining level" until changes can be made.

The Marines want to build more than 450, but only eight have been built and the few still capable of flying have been grounded since last December.

"This is an aircraft that in terms of reliability and maintainability is not ready for operational use or production," Augustine said during his testimony Tuesday before the Senate Armed Services Committee.

Still, he and other panel members stressed that the Osprey was the best aircraft suited for Marine missions.

WASHINGTON — The White House is searching for a new FBI director following Louis Freeh's decision to retire next month. His successor will inherit a bureau recently beset by allegations that one of its own spied for Moscow and under scrutiny for its own security practices.

During Freeh's eight years on the job he bolstered the bureau's ranks and enhanced its influence worldwide. But he also was bedeviled by a string of controversies, including the recent arrest of Robert Hanssen, a senior FBI counterintelligence agent alleged to have passed U.S. secrets to Moscow for 15 years.

Freeh met with President Bush late Monday afternoon to tell him the news.

Though Freeh previously had indicated that he might leave before his 10-year term ended, Bush said, "It did catch me by surprise, and I'm disappointed."

The president said he thought Freeh had done a very good job and that he had hoped the 51-year-old director would stay on. But Freeh said he was ready for "new challenges" and also wanted to spend time this summer with his family. Otherwise, he announced no future plans.

White House officials said Bush wasn't close to naming a successor.

WASHINGTON — Republicans are hoping to push a final 2002 budget through Congress this week after settling for an 11-year, \$1.35 trillion tax cut that would give President Bush most of the tax reduction he has long fought for.

White House officials and GOP leaders seemed to resolve the two major remaining stumbling blocks to a House-Senate compromise on the budget today. They first reached the tax-cut deal. Then they tentatively agreed to let spending for many programs grow by 5.2 percent next year, said a Republican speaking on condition of anonymity, surpassing the 4 percent Bush had wanted.

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