

# Palestinian police killed by Israeli fire while manning checkpoint

**By the Associated Press INTERNATIONAL**  
**BEITUNIYA, West Bank** — Five Palestinian policemen manning a roadside checkpoint in the West Bank were killed by Israeli fire today, and Israeli helicopters rocketed Palestinian security targets in the Gaza Strip, destroying 10 armored vehicles.

The officers, ages 17 to 29, were killed by shots to the head and chest at a small Palestinian police outpost near the West Bank town of Beituniya, Palestinian officials said. Several bullets tore through the barrack walls.

Raanan Gissin, an adviser to Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, said shots were fired from the police station at Israeli soldiers who returned fire.

Gissin said he did not know whether the five men killed were the ones who opened fire. The Israeli army said the soldiers were engaged in an operation at the time and fired at "suspicious figures."

Across the Gaza Strip, Israeli helicopters and navy gunboats shelled 10 Palestinian security installations.

Four people were injured by shrapnel and one suffered from shock, doctors said.

Palestinian armored vehicles apparently were the main target of the raids.

**ROME** — Silvio Berlusconi's conservative forces had a slim lead in Parliament but it was unclear as returns trickled in today whether it was enough to make the media mogul premier of Italy again.

A chaotic vote in which Italians tore up their ballots and toppled over tables to protest long lines complicated both the count and the projections. Neither Berlusconi nor the incumbent center-

## ap news capsules

left claimed victory.

Such a tight margin could spell more political instability in Italy.

Interior Ministry results for the Senate released this morning gave Berlusconi's bloc 42.5 percent and former Rome Mayor Francesco Rutelli's center-left forces 38.7 percent, with 97.6 percent of precincts reporting.

Berlusconi, whose first stint as premier in 1994 ended when an ally pulled out of his coalition after seven months, went into Sunday's vote as the favorite. But Rutelli closed in during the waning weeks.

Berlusconi, 64, presides over a financial empire worth more than \$12 billion, including Italy's three main private TV networks.

He rebuffed all calls to divest himself of any assets if he becomes premier.

**MANILA, Philippines** — Ousted President Joseph Estrada voted from detention today as his successor cast her ballot on television in elections seen as a referendum on a government swept to power by street protests four months ago.

President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo was sworn in Jan. 20 as Estrada packed to leave the presidential palace amid a political crisis over corruption allegations that have dogged him since last fall.

Now, Arroyo needs a strong showing in the race for 13 of the Senate's 24 seats. Voters were also filling the entire House of Representatives and 17,600 municipal and provincial posts.

A win in the Senate "would be a quasi-mandate for Arroyo" and would probably enable her to co-opt opposition lawmakers and consolidate her power, said political analyst Calixto Chikiamco.

Results in the violence-filled election — at least 67 people were killed since January, including a congressman — won't be known for days. But it should indicate the depth of popular support for Arroyo and the fractious coalition that ran Estrada out of office and into custody.

### NATIONAL

**ATLANTA** — Gold Club managers boast the strip bar sells more champagne than any other club or restaurant in the nation.

Celebrities, athletes and platinum-card holding convention-goers are regulars at the flagship adult club where they sip \$500 bottles of bubbly and run up thousand-dollar tabs.

But prosecutors say the Gold Club was also selling sex in its gilded private rooms and today the government was to begin laying out its racketeering case against club owner Steve Kaplan and six associates.

Prosecutors in opening statements were to allege that Kaplan pimped club dancers to celebrities and sports stars and ran a massive racketeering conspiracy that included providing prostitutes and buying protection from the mob.

Charges against the defendants include obstruction, credit card fraud and loansharking.

A federal indictment also accuses

Kaplan of ordering the beatings of about 20 people who did not repay high-interest loans. He could face more than 40 years in prison if convicted on all counts. Others could face 20 years.

**SALT LAKE CITY** — Tom Green believes it's his outspoken nature more than his polygamist lifestyle that has led to his prosecution in Utah's first high-profile bigamy case in 50 years.

"You stick your head out of the hole, the government will shoot it off," said Green, 52, who lives with his five wives and 29 children near Trout Creek, 125 miles southwest of Salt Lake City.

Green has defended his lifestyle on "Dateline NBC" and "The Jerry Springer Show," and held news conferences despite a judge's warning not to do so.

His high profile caught the attention of Juab County Prosecutor David Leavitt, who will try him on charges of bigamy and criminal nonsupport. Jury selection was to begin today. Green could get 25 years in prison if convicted on all counts.

Green believes he is being singled out.

"That's been the unwritten rule for 50 years in Utah," Green said. "You'll pretend you don't exist and we'll pretend you don't exist."

**LOS ANGELES** — Perry Como, famous for hits including "Catch a Falling Star" and "Papa Loves Mambo," was a dedicated showman who never forgot his roots as a humble barber, his friends re-

called.

The fatherly crooner, known for his mellow style and cardigan sweaters, died Saturday at the age of 88 at his home in Jupiter Inlet Colony, Fla.

Como's daughter, Terri Thibadeau, said her father was with his caregiver when he closed his eyes and died while sitting in a chair in his bedroom. He had suffered from Alzheimer's for about two years, she said.

Born in Canonsburg, Pa., one of 13 children of Italian immigrants, Como left his job as a steel town barber in the 1930s to sing with big bands.

His songs became a mainstay of radio and jukeboxes in the late 1940s and he pioneered variety shows in the 1950s. In 1945, Como had his first million-selling hit, "Till the End of Time."

Rock 'n' roll eventually replaced the old-time crooners on the music charts, but Como continued performing on television.

His career saw a resurgence in the 1970s with songs like "It's Impossible," "And I Love You So," which was later performed by "American Pie" singer Don McLean.

### WASHINGTON

**WASHINGTON** — President Bush, stepping back into the gun-control debate, is renewing his pledge to help communities and states combat gun violence.

Bush was visiting Philadelphia today to highlight his efforts to catch gun offenders.

Bush has advocated "vigorously" enforcing laws involving gun crimes and said it should be a priority to keep juveniles from obtaining guns.

Underscoring the contentiousness of the issue, a gun-control advocacy

group was airing ads urging him to support mandatory background checks for customers at gun shows.

The 60-second ad was being run in Philadelphia today by Americans for Gun Safety of Rosslyn, Va.

Bush said during the presidential campaign that he supported closing gun show loopholes.

**WASHINGTON** — President Bush, preparing a plan to address the country's energy needs, sees no short-term fixes for consumers facing big electric bills and \$2-a-gallon gasoline.

Instead, Bush views long-term energy development as the answer, and he is certain to face a battle in Congress over his plan, which is to be released later this week.

The administration hoped to garner support today from labor leaders whose union members would benefit from energy development and power-plant construction.

Among those meeting with Vice President Dick Cheney was Teamsters president James Hoffa.

If this summer's high fuel prices turn into soaring home heating costs next winter, Bush's focus on long-term solutions could become a political problem not only for the White House, but also for congressional Republicans facing reelection in 2002, say some political analysts.

On Sunday, California Gov. Gray Davis accused the White House of ignoring "the greed of ... Texas energy companies" by refusing to call for temporary price caps on soaring electricity costs in California and elsewhere across the West.

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