

Palestinians shoot, kill Israeli teen-ager near Jewish settlement

By Associated Press INTERNATIONAL
JERUSALEM — Israeli tanks shelled Palestinian police posts in the West Bank early today, after Palestinians shot and killed an Israeli teen-ager near a Jewish settlement.

The victim was identified as 17-year-old Ronen Landau, from Givat Zeev, north of Jerusalem. The shooting took place near the settlement.

In response, Israeli tanks shelled two Palestinian police posts in Surda, north of the town of Ramallah, the Palestinian political and commercial center in the West Bank.

Then tanks targeted a checkpoint run by Force 17, an elite Palestinian police unit, in Beitunia, east of Ramallah, the military said. No serious injuries were reported.

Earlier Thursday, three bombs exploded near Israeli vehicles in the northern part of the West Bank. No one was hurt.

SEOUL, South Korea — On his first visit to Seoul as secretary of state, Colin Powell said today there are many avenues to advance peace talks between North and South Korea.

"There are opportunities with the North that we couldn't have dreamed of 25 to 30 years ago," Powell said before meeting with top South Korean leaders. "We have to make sure we try and seize those opportunities."

Powell arrived in South Korea after a flight from Hanoi, Vietnam, where he attended an Asian regional security forum.

He was meeting in Seoul with President Kim Dae-jung and Foreign Minister Han Seung-soo before leaving early Saturday for Beijing.

The South Koreans are eager to make the most of a reconciliation process with North Korea but the talks stalled after the election of President Bush.

In central Seoul some 300 anti-American protesters chanting "Stop the Star Wars madness!" rallied against the United States for pursuing a high-tech missile defense system that they say has disrupted relations between the two Koreas.

NATIONAL
JACKSON, Wyo. — Firefighters

ap news capsules

braced for another day of heat and wind as they attempt to turn back a blaze that has surged toward homes and forced the evacuation of hundreds of residents in this pristine mountainous area.

Flames forced crews to abandon their firebreaks and scramble to save themselves Thursday as the blaze increased to more than 3,000 acres. The forecast today called for more wind and dry heat, setting up another potential advance once afternoon gusts pick up.

The fire moved past a natural firebreak and was just a half-mile from one house Thursday. More than 100 homes in two subdivisions were at risk, but none had burned.

Still, firefighters weren't making any promises.

"I'm not going to guarantee we'll save any structures if this blows and goes," structural protection expert Jim Reinhardt said.

Smoke thickened in Jackson Hole, a 40-mile-long valley surrounded by three mountain ranges and gateway to Grand Teton and Yellowstone national parks. The Tetons, which lie north of the blaze, were hazy.

NEW YORK — Mayor Rudolph Giuliani has moved out of the city's official mayoral residence, a judge has revealed, meaning he must pay \$1,800 a month in temporary child support while his divorce case proceeds.

In her Thursday order, State Supreme Court Justice Judith Gische noted that Giuliani no longer lives in Gracie Mansion, which is occupied by wife Donna Hanover and the couple's two children. The judge said this makes Hanover "the custodial parent, entitled to child support."

Giuliani reportedly has been living with two friends and political supporters.

The child support battle is the latest development in the couple's bitter divorce case. Hanover has already won a court order banning Giuliani's girlfriend, Judith Nathan, from Gracie Mansion.

CHARLESTON, W.Va. — Water gushed into homes, washed away at least five bridges and cut off access to two towns as heavy rainfall pelted parts of southern West Virginia still reeling from record floods earlier this month.

Rain fell sporadically across the state Thursday, with some areas getting more than 1.5 inches in a one-hour period.

"We were just in the process of trying to recover from the initial one and now here we go again," said David Neal, deputy director for emergency services in Fayette County.

Access to the towns of Pax and Mount Hope was cut off Thursday night by high water, according to the state Office of Emergency Services.

The National Guard and Mount Hope firefighters evacuated 50 families from the Kilsyth area after their homes were flooded for the second time this month, Neal said.

In Boone County, heavy rains sent water polluted with coal, known as blackwater, from an Elk Run Coal Co. preparation plant near Sylvester into

the Big Coal River, the OES said.

WASHINGTON
WASHINGTON — Despite personal lobbying by President Bush, Republican moderates may force GOP leaders to compromise on patient lawsuits when the House takes up patients' rights legislation next week.

The president even went to Capitol Hill on Thursday to push publicly for a bill that would curb most lawsuits. But in private talks, White House negotiators already were considering concessions.

"I'm feeling pretty good about things," Bush told reporters after leaving a meeting with House Speaker Dennis Hastert, R-Ill., and other lawmakers on both sides of the issue.

The closed-door meeting came hours after Hastert announced that an expected vote on patients' rights would be put off until next week.

GOP leaders tried unsuccessfully to draw party moderates from a Democrat-backed bill that expands the medical treatments patients must get from their health plans. The bill also gives wronged patients access to federal or state courts and generous jury awards.

The GOP version places more re-

strictions on damages, and in the case of federal punitive awards, doesn't allow them at all. It is sponsored by Rep. Ernie Fletcher, R-Ky.

WASHINGTON — Republicans are promising more delays against Mexican truck safety standards that the White House has threatened to veto, despite an overwhelming Senate show of support for the restrictions.

Senators voted 70-30 Thursday to end a GOP filibuster — parliamentary delays — that was aimed at forcing a weakening of the proposed rules. The regulations would cover Mexican trucks driving across the United States, which President Bush wants to allow beginning Jan. 1.

The vote was an embarrassment to Bush, who has made free trade and better relations with Mexico top goals. All 50 Democrats were joined by 19 Republicans and one independent.

Despite pressure by Republican leaders and the White House, truck industry and big-business lobbyists, the 70 votes exceeded the 67 needed to overturn any future Bush veto and clearly showed Senate sentiment on the issue.

WASHINGTON — Chandra Levy's family may consider a lawsuit against Rep. Gary Condit, hoping to force him to answer more questions about his relationship with the missing federal intern, the family lawyer says.

"It is clearly an option, and it is one the family will consider at the appropriate time," attorney Billy Martin told The Associated Press.

The suit would allow Levy's family to seek answers in court about their daughter's disappearance, but it won't be considered while the police search for Levy continues, the lawyer said.

Martin, who represents Robert and Susan Levy, said the family is not accusing Condit of wrongdoing but still isn't convinced Condit had no involvement in Levy's disappearance.

Police have said repeatedly they do not consider the California Democrat a suspect in the woman's disappearance. Condit admitted an affair with Levy, 24, during his third interview with police this month, police have said.

Marina Ein, a Condit spokeswoman, would not respond to Martin's comments. She said Condit is cooperating with police.

Pentagon employees rang up \$9 billion in debt

WASHINGTON (AP) — Here's what a Pentagon infamous for buying overpriced toilets and hammers produced when it handed out credit cards to its employees: 10 million purchases, \$9 billion in debt and plenty of examples of fraud.

The fraud ranged from a soldier who spent \$3,100 at a nightclub to an Army reservist's wife who went on a \$13,000 shopping spree in Puerto Rico, according to documents obtained Thursday by The Associated Press. Congress intends to make the materials public next week.

In the past two years alone, there have been more than 500 purchase fraud cases filed involving military credit cards, according to information gathered by Sen. Charles Grassley's office. One bank company has been forced to write off \$59 million in

fraudulent debts from military cards.

"In the past, Pentagon employees needed a phony invoice to trigger a fraudulent government check, but that obstacle is gone," Grassley, R-Iowa, said. "Credit cards provide a shortcut to the cash pile. The Pentagon is giving everyone a big scoop shovel and telling them to rip into the national money sack at both ends."

Reviews by Grassley; Rep. Steve Horn, R-Calif., chairman of the House Government Reform subcommittee on government efficiency; and the General Accounting Office found the Pentagon has inadequate controls on the cards it issues for official purchases or travel and also is slow to respond even in the face of fraud.

Grassley said purchase credit cards, many with limits from \$20,000 to \$100,000, are being issued without

credit checks on the employees receiving them and purchases are not being checked for legitimacy. "There are no controls, no responsibilities, and no accountability," he said.

The Pentagon, along with other federal agencies, began issuing credit cards to employees in the 1990s to make purchases more efficient. So far, 1.8 million cards have been issued to defense workers, according to the GAO.

Defense officials say the cards have significantly sped up purchases and eliminated red tape, and the idea shouldn't be judged solely by instances of fraud. They promise to be responsive to problems that will be discussed Monday at a hearing by Horn's subcommittee.

"This administration, and specifically Secretary (Donald H.) Rumsfeld, has made fiscal responsibility a hall-

mark," Pentagon spokeswoman Susan Hansen said Thursday. "We will have representatives attending the hearing so we can hear the committee's concerns, answer their questions and make sure that any concerns are fully addressed."

Documents gathered by Grassley from the Bank of America, which handles Pentagon travel credit cards, detail the case of a Marine sergeant who ran up \$20,000 in charges, then left the service — and the bill unpaid.

The Marine's credit card for travel, issued in March 2000, was restricted because he had a questionable credit record. His bosses soon quadrupled its limit from \$2,500 to \$10,000, the documents show.

The bank issued a fraud warning in August 2000 after suspicious activity on the card, but the Marines raised the credit limit twice more to \$25,000.

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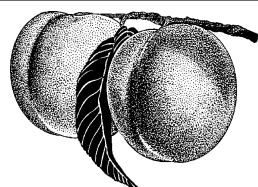
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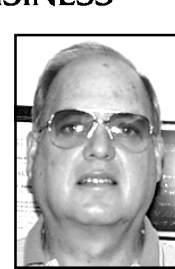
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