

Israeli police seize control of Palestinian centers in east Jerusalem

By The Associated Press
INTERNATIONAL

JERUSALEM — Israeli police seized control of Palestinian centers in east Jerusalem early today and warplanes demolished a security building in the West Bank, in retaliation for a Palestinian suicide bombing in a Jerusalem pizzeria that killed 15 and injured nearly 100.

In raids that focused on driving the Palestinians out of key buildings in disputed east Jerusalem, police took over Orient House, the Palestinian political center, arresting seven guards, and closed nine other offices. In the West Bank town of Ramallah, Israeli F-16 warplanes destroyed a Palestinian police building, the Palestinians said. Early today, Israeli tanks and bulldozers leveled a Palestinian police outpost in the Gaza Strip.

Thursday's bombing at the crowded New York-based Sbarro restaurant in Jerusalem was the second deadliest attack in the more than 10 months of fighting.

"We are in a war," Jerusalem's Mayor Ehud Olmert said. "We will act together with the government of Israel to reach every one of those who is responsible for terror, to hit them and kill them."

The militant Hamas group claimed responsibility, calling it retaliation for Israel's assassination of its leaders.

SKOPJE, Macedonia — An army truck hit a land mine close to Skopje today, killing at least eight Macedonian soldiers and injuring six, government sources said.

The explosion occurred six miles north of the capital, near the village of Ljubanci, when a convoy of army trucks drove over three land mines, a government source said on condition of anonymity.

The incident further jeopardizes a tentative peace plan reached Wednesday.

Speaking in Sofia, Bulgaria, U.S. envoy James Pardew said he was optimistic that a peace deal would be signed Monday in Skopje, as agreed to by Macedonia's rival parties, despite the violence.

"No one supports the Albanian extremists, certainly not the United

ap news capsules

States, nor any of our European allies," he said today. "The use of force by the Albanian extremists in Macedonia is unacceptable and totally rejected by the United States."

NATIONAL

Bev Hanover gladly obliged when New York's governor lifted admission fees at state parks with beaches to offer residents relief from the roasting heat. She got to the beach early with lunch and a book and didn't plan on leaving until it closed.

"I'm staying in the water until I shrivel," said Hanover, who was swimming at Buttermilk Falls State Park near Ithaca, where the temperature soared to 99 degrees. With the humidity, it felt like 119 degrees.

Hanover was like many others in the Northeast on Thursday who did anything they could to elude the sizzling temperatures that have overwhelmed the eastern half of the nation this week.

A cold front moving east promised to provide a respite from the heat wave, which has contributed to more than a dozen deaths.

Temperature records were broken across the region Thursday. The thermometer climbed to 105 degrees in Newark, N.J., surpassing the previous August record of 103 set in 1946. In New York's Central Park, it was a record-breaking 103.

Hartford, Conn., and Philadelphia broke records at 101, while Raleigh, N.C., broiled at an all-time high of 100 degrees.

National Weather Service meteorologist Anthony Gigi said the cold front was expected to bring scattered showers and thunderstorms today night into Saturday in parts of the Northeast.

LOS ANGELES — A judge rejected a record \$3 billion damage award against tobacco giant Philip Morris as excessive and offered a dying smoker \$100 million instead — still the largest award in an individual lawsuit against a tobacco company.

Superior Court Judge Charles W. McCoy's ruling Thursday was in response to a motion by Philip Morris

arguing that the punitive award was excessive. McCoy said the company will get a retrial only if the cancer-stricken plaintiff won't accept the \$100 million settlement.

McCoy denounced Philip Morris' actions as "reprehensible in every sense of the word, both legal and moral."

The firm "refused to accept even a scintilla of responsibility for the harm it has done," the judge wrote in a 27-page ruling.

But the punitive damages a jury granted to Richard Boeken, 56, in June were far above the usual ratio of punitive to compensatory damages, he ruled.

Boeken, a lifelong smoker with lung cancer, was given until Aug. 24 to agree in writing to accept the \$100 million settlement. The judge upheld an additional \$5.54 million in compensatory damages for Boeken's medical expenses and lost earnings.

Philip Morris said the entire case would be appealed.

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. — Thunderstorms delayed space shuttle Discovery's launch to the international space station and threatened to foil today's try, too.

Forecasters said there was a 70 percent chance that storms would prevent Discovery from lifting off late today afternoon on a mission to deliver fresh supplies and a new crew to the space station. The outlook is no better for this weekend.

NASA halted Thursday's countdown at the nine-minute mark when it became clear the weather would not improve.

Space station astronaut Jim Voss asked Mission Control to pass on this message to the shuttle crew: "We will be just as happy to see them a day later and good luck tomorrow."

Voss added: "There's nothing wrong with another day in space."

The postponement clearly disappointed the space station crew's replacements. The next station commander, Frank Culbertson, threw up his hands when he emerged from Dis-

covery. He was the first one out, followed by his two Russian crewmates and then the four shuttle astronauts.

MIAMI — A plane owned by a company that offers couples the chance to see Key West from the air — and have sex while doing so — crashed after a couple tried to hijack it to Cuba, the pilot said.

A Cuban man and woman in their 60s chartered a single-engine plane Thursday belonging to Fly Key West and then demanded to be taken to Cuba after takeoff, pilot Thomas P. Hayashi told FBI investigators.

Hayashi said he fought with the man, who fell into the plane's throttle, causing it to crash, FBI spokeswoman Judy Orihuela said.

The Piper Cherokee plunged into 3,600 feet of water 40 miles south of Key West, Coast Guard officials said.

Coast Guard spokesman Luis Diaz said Hayashi issued a distress radio call saying he was ditching into the ocean. A Coast Guard plane located him and dropped a life raft, which he boarded, Diaz said.

A Navy helicopter crew pulled Hayashi from the raft, Diaz said. He was treated for minor injuries.

A Coast Guard cutter and helicopter searched the crash area for about five hours, but found nothing, Diaz said the

couple is presumed dead. No recovery effort was planned.

The company's Web site lists prices and descriptions of "Mile High Club" flights.

WASHINGTON

WASHINGTON — Organized labor is pressing for legalization of millions of immigrants living illegally in the United States, criticizing a temporary work program the Bush administration is considering.

"It's a nonstarter and we have said as much to the United States Congress and the Mexican government," said Eliseo Medina, executive vice president of the Service Employees International Union. "Our first and second priority is making sure everyone here now is legalized."

Union leaders' comments came after Secretary of State Colin Powell and Attorney General John Ashcroft spent two hours Thursday talking with Mexican officials on issues including immigration. The event was partly aimed at laying the groundwork for next month's meeting between President Bush and Mexican President Vicente Fox, when a plan could be announced.

Bush is weighing task force recommendations to grant guest-worker status and eventually legal residency to some of the 3 million Mexicans in this country illegally. Bush has said he also

would consider extending the proposal to people from other countries. About 7 million illegal aliens live in the United States.

WASHINGTON — Scientists upped the ante for Americans on the East and Gulf Coasts, increasing their forecast for the number of tropical storms this season.

The new outlook is for as many as a dozen tropical storms, including up to eight hurricanes, as conditions over the tropical Atlantic Ocean increasingly favor storm development, forecasters at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration said.

The peak of the Atlantic hurricane season generally comes in late August and September, and the season ends Nov. 30.

"These systems are more likely to become major hurricanes, and pose a threat to both the U.S. and the region around the Caribbean Sea, as they move westward across the tropical Atlantic," Gerry Bell, a hurricane specialist at NOAA's Climate Prediction Center, said Thursday.

In May, government forecasters had predicted an average hurricane season, calling for up to 11 tropical storms, including as many as seven hurricanes. Now they are boosting the prediction by one in each category.

Fight is on against wheat fungus

TOPEKA (AP) — Three women sit at small desks in a small room, bent over microscopes, examining slides. It can take five minutes, or sometimes half an hour, to read one.

Amid the dots, squiggles and small circles, the women in the state Department of Agriculture laboratory are looking for a big, brown, fuzzy circle with a gold ring around it — a Karnal bunt spore.

Karnal bunt is a fungus that makes wheat unmarketable. It reduces yields and the quality of the grain, causing flour made from bunted kernels to have a sour, fishy taste.

The possibility that the women in the lab will find one spore in the dozens of slides they'll examine causes agricul-

ture officials, farmers and seed sellers to shudder.

In Kansas, annually the nation's biggest wheat producer, it represents a potential disaster and well worth the time the women spend trying to find a single spore.

"As far as we know at this point, they can survive up to five years in the soil," explains Tom Sim, in charge of the agriculture department's weed control division. "The only way to break the cycle is to not plant wheat."

The Department of Agriculture has been testing wheat samples from Kansas and other states for Karnal bunt for eight years and has recently started testing samples of seed sold commercially. At the lab's offices near Forbes Field

airport, sticky mats pick up dirt on people's shoes as they walk into and out of the lab. The area has a "hard ceiling," meaning there's no panels in which spores and bugs can hide.

Since farmers began harvesting grain earlier this summer, the lab has been testing samples from elevators, about 1,000 in all. Samples from each of the state's 105 counties are tested.

The lab also is processing samples from 13 other states for a regional federal government survey on Karnal bunt. Only once — in a sample from Texas — has the lab found a potential Karnal bunt spore.

The work will continue for weeks. All 2,200 wheat seed merchants in Kansas have been ordered to submit samples for testing.

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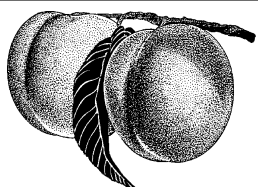
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