

Terrorists charged

By Associated Press
INTERNATIONAL

MADRID, Spain — A judge in Spain filed formal charges against eight alleged al-Qaida members suspected of helping with the terrorist attacks on New York and the Pentagon. The suspects “were directly linked to the preparation and carrying out of the attacks perpetrated by ‘suicide pilots’ on Sept. 11, 2001,” Judge Baltasar Garzon said in his order Sunday.

The move followed more than 12 hours of questioning by the judge, who will prepare a case against the men and present it to a court for trial. Court officials said the process could take several years.

Garzon formally charged the men with membership in a terrorist organization — al-Qaida — and with document falsification, robbery and weapons possession.

He said they were guilty of “as many terrorism crimes as there were victims on Sept. 11.” The men denied the charges.

Garzon said the accusations were based on telephone conversations of the group’s alleged leader — Imad Eddin Barakat Yarkas, whose alias is Abu Dahdah — before and after the attacks.

Entries in a diary found in Germany also linked him to Mohammed Atta, one of the hijackers, Garzon said. The judge did not provide further details of the evidence.

NATIONAL

TULSA, Okla. — Phillips Petroleum Co. has agreed to buy Conoco Inc., creating the world’s sixth-biggest oil and gas company at a time of tremendous industrywide consolidation.

The \$35 billion deal to create ConocoPhillips was jointly announced Sunday. It would make the new company the third largest in the United States, based on reserves and production, behind Exxon Mobil Corp. and ChevronTexaco Corp.

“This is really a growth story for Conoco and Phillips,” said Conoco chairman Archie W. Dunham, who is delaying a planned retirement to serve as chairman of the combined company.

Phillips Chairman James Mulva, named chief executive and president of the new company, said consumers will benefit from the \$750 million in operating savings expected from the merger.

“We pass on the efficiencies, the sharing of those efficiencies, to the consumers,” he said without specifying how much less consumers could pay at the pump.

The Conoco-Phillips marriage, approved by the boards of both companies Sunday, is subject to approval from shareholders and regulators, and is expected to close in the last half of 2002.

The new firm would be based in Houston, home to Conoco.

news capsules

MILWAUKEE — Hiring will stay flat nationwide during the first three months of next year, nearing levels not seen since the last two recessions, according to a survey released today.

Sixteen percent of the firms interviewed said they planned to add jobs during the first quarter of next year, while another 16 percent said they anticipated cutting staff during the same time, according to Manpower Inc.’s quarterly survey of 16,000 American businesses.

That compares with 27 percent who planned to increase employment and 10 percent who anticipated cutbacks a year ago.

The other firms said they would maintain staffing levels or were uncertain about hiring activity.

The figures continue a decline in hiring strength that began last spring. They approximate those of the recessionary years of 1982 and 1991, when hiring levels reached historic lows in the survey’s 25-year history, said Jeffrey Joerres, chief executive and chairman of Glendale-based Manpower, the nation’s largest staffing company.

“While we don’t like the results, they’re not coming as much of a surprise,” Joerres said. “We’ve been heading down for some period of time, and it will take some period of time to reverse this.”

MINNEAPOLIS — State health officials are investigating the sudden deaths of three men after elective knee surgery and have asked all hospitals and surgery centers to suspend such operations for one week.

Brian Lykins, 23, and Wayne Hulterstrum, 78, died Nov. 11 after having surgery at St. Cloud Hospital, local officials said. A man in his mid-60s died on Friday at Douglas County Hospital, three days after surgery. The identity of the third man was not immediately known.

Preliminary tests show that the bacteria clostridium may have been identified in the blood of one of the men, state epidemiologist Harry Hull said on Sunday. A small amount of the rare bacteria can cause major illness. Final test results would not be available until later this week, he said.

Drugs used in treating the two patients at St. Cloud Hospital also were being tested by the Health Department and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta, Hull said.

Hull said health officials did not suspect foul play, adding: “We have no reason to believe this is bioterrorism.”

He said the request Sunday for the surgery halt was “a precaution” and that public health officials in bordering states had been advised.

Hearing great wisdom ...



Reading to an older person can be fun was the discovery of sophomore students from Tony Diehl’s English II class. Ethel Straughn, 99, was very attentive and interested in the story being read to her by Branda Beckner, Jared Doke, Tim Gittinger and Leonard Johnson. She told the students she had never been a teacher, but they would get along fine as a class. The students were reading a portion of a story by Annie Dillard “An American Childhood,” which had recollec-

tions of her own mother. Diehl said the students enjoyed the exercise, and several were thinking about making it a regular practice. “I wanted the students to have more real life experiences outside the classroom,” Diehl said. He said the students were excited and did not want to leave. Another of the residents, who is 97, shared her experiences with the students, and Diehl said she shared “great wisdom” with them.

Photo by Tom Betz / The Goodland Daily News

Health officials limited their request to elective knee surgeries since that is the only common link in the deaths, Hull said.

WASHINGTON

WASHINGTON — President Bush is dramatically expanding the federal government’s role in aviation security, eager to reassure jittery passengers heading into the Thanksgiving week travel crush.

Bush was signing a sweeping package of legislative changes today at Reagan Washington National Airport.

The federal government will assume control of passenger and baggage screening operations, now run by private security firms contracted by airlines, and put all 28,000 screeners on the federal payroll. Bush wanted most of them to remain employees of private companies.

The measure also moves toward 100 percent inspection of checked bags and seeks to ensure that a potential hijacker who gets into a plane will be stopped by air marshals in the cabin and rein-

forced cockpit doors. Few signs of change will be evident immediately.

The government will have a year to take control of passenger and baggage screening operations. Among the more immediate effects of the new law will be a heightened law enforcement presence. The package requires at least one law enforcement officer at every screening post at major airports.

WASHINGTON — Secretary of State Colin Powell renewed his call for a reduction in Mideast violence, urging Israel and Palestinians to stick to terms of a cease-fire plan.

Powell said he would not be unveiling any new U.S. policy in a widely anticipated speech today to University of Louisville students in Kentucky.

“People keep asking for a new plan. We have a plan. It’s a solid plan. It’s called the Mitchell committee report,” he said on “Fox News Sunday.” He referred to a proposal by former Senate Majority Leader George Mitchell and others that calls for a cooling-off

period free of violence and other confidence-building measures before any settlement talks could begin.

Powell said reducing violence is the only way to begin negotiations, including talks for a Palestinian state.

In Israel, Prime Minister Ariel Sharon refused Sunday to soften demands for the violence-free period — one full week — before resuming peace talks.

Powell said Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat must do what he can to reduce tension in the conflict.

“He needs to make 100 percent effort to end all the violence. And we need to see results that reflect that 100 percent effort,” he said.

WASHINGTON — As lawmakers take a Thanksgiving week break, two of the three Senate office buildings are set to reopen after being swept for anthrax contamination, but the third will remain shut.

Lt. Dan Nichols of the Capitol Police said the Dirksen and Russell build-

ings would reopen today. The Hart building, closed last month after an anthrax-tainted letter was found in the office of Senate Majority Leader Tom Daschle, D-S.D., remains shut.

The Dirksen and Russell buildings were closed Saturday after a letter mailed to Sen. Patrick Leahy, D-Vt., similar to the one sent to Daschle was discovered in one of the 280 barrels of mail quarantined after the contaminated Daschle letter was opened.

Nichols said Sunday the letter to Leahy was being analyzed at the Army’s Fort Detrick in Maryland. T

The envelopes addressed to Daschle and Leahy were similar, except for the name and address. They both had block printing with a slight slant to the right; an Oct. 9 postmark from Trenton, N.J.; and the same, nonexistent school listed as the return address.

No Senate or House member or aide has contracted anthrax, and congressional business largely returned to normal before this week’s Thanksgiving recess.

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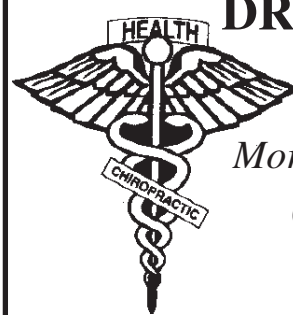
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