

Israeli troops arrest seven suspected militants

By Associated Press
INTERNATIONAL
JERUSALEM — Israeli troops arrested seven suspected Islamic militants during an incursion into the West Bank town of Hebron early today.

The raid came a day after Israel eased some travel restrictions on Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, and Israeli soldiers killed a Palestinian man in an hours-long battle in Palestinian territory.

Also Wednesday, Palestinian and Israeli security commanders met for the first time in a week. Israel agreed to reopen the Rafah border crossing from Gaza to Egypt, ease roadblocks on the main highway running the length of the strip, and allow Palestinians to repair damage to the runway at the Gaza airport.

Israeli bulldozers had dug up a section of the runway, putting it out of commission, as part of its reprisal for Palestinian suicide bombing attacks. Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat's helicopters were also destroyed in Israeli air strikes, marooning him in the West Bank town of Ramallah.

Raanan Gissin, spokesman for Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, said that despite the airport reopening, Arafat would not be allowed to travel until Palestinian police arrest the assassins of an Israeli Cabinet minister gunned down in October.

KABUL, Afghanistan — Echoing comments from Afghanistan's new leader, the country's foreign minister

ap news capsules

said the American military will leave "when the objectives of the eradication of terrorism and of al-Qaida forces have been met."

Dr. Abdullah said Wednesday he expects final agreement soon on the details of how foreign forces — both American troops and international peacekeepers — will operate.

"I wouldn't say there are disagreements ... Some points need further discussions," Abdullah said in his first news conference since taking office Saturday with the country's new interim government.

Asked when there would be an accord, he said, "It will be very soon ... I'm talking about days."

Afghanistan's government is spending its first week trying to organize the daunting task ahead. The country, wracked by war for more than two decades, is in tatters, and the new coalition government of ethnic groups that succeeded the Taliban militia faces obstacles from keeping the peace to avoiding the infighting that characterized pre-Taliban regimes.

The new prime minister, Hamid Karzai, said Wednesday Afghans are happy to have peacekeepers in their nation despite a long tradition of resisting foreign fighters.

LONDON — The leader of a south London mosque, whose members once included a man now suspected of try-

ing to detonate explosives aboard an airliner, says police failed to act on repeated warnings that radicals were recruiting young Muslims.

Richard C. Reid, who formerly attended the Brixton mosque, was overpowered by flight attendants and passengers after he allegedly tried to detonate explosives in his sneaker aboard an American Airlines flight from Paris to Miami on Saturday.

Abdul Haqq Baker, leader of the mosque, said Reid — also known as Abdel Rahim — drifted away from the Brixton community after falling under the influence of radicals.

"We have been in contact with the police numerous times over the last five years to warn of the threat posed by militant groups operating in our area," Baker was quoted as saying in today's editions of The Times.

"Only now are they bothering to follow it up. My fear is this is all too little too late."

Reid has been charged with intimidation or assault of a flight crew and could face 20 years in prison. He is being held in jail under suicide watch pending a psychological examination.

NATIONAL
NEW YORK — Shoppers rushed to stores for post-Christmas sales Wednesday, taking advantage of merchants' need to cut prices even more, unload their wares and put behind them the weakest holiday season in at least

a decade.

Michael P. Niemira, vice president of Bank of Tokyo-Mitsubishi Ltd., said he expects an anemic average gain of 1.5 percent to 2 percent in holiday season sales, compared with last year's, for the 88 stores he tracks. That matches his forecast, reduced earlier in the season, and is the poorest performance since 1990, when the increase was 2 percent.

And sales don't equal profits, which Niemira believes could be down as much as 10 percent, weaker than the 5 percent decline he had anticipated.

CRAWFORD, Texas — The last time President Bush vacationed at his ranch, he wrestled with the thorny issue of embryonic stem cell research. He arrived at his Texas home this week faced with decisions that make last summer seem like a simpler time.

Even before he landed in Texas on Wednesday, Bush was working the phone on Air Force One to confront a crisis. With the economy skidding toward collapse in Argentina, Bush called the leaders of three Latin American countries — Mexico, Chile and Uruguay — to discuss the matter. Once on the ranch, he took a happy-holidays call from Russian President Vladimir Putin.

The president must consider the next target in the war on terrorism, the fate of American Taliban fighter John Walker Lindh and how to jump-start the economy.

And he's starting work on framing

his first State of the Union address to Congress next month. Beyond that, he will have to propose a budget for government spending squeezed by the recession and demands of fighting terrorism.

The president plans to keep a low profile on the ranch for the remainder of the holidays, when many Americans are absorbed in family gatherings.

SILSBEE, Texas — A 6-year-old boy whose body was recovered from a lake after he disappeared during a family hike was described as an outspoken and fearless kindergartner who enjoyed climbing trees and playing video games.

Family members had puzzled for days over Ira Clutter's disappearance because he wasn't one to run off, his father, Randy Clutter said.

"We just kept thinking we would find him," Clutter said. "Nobody thought he was in the water."

Hundreds of volunteers spent days searching the rocky, brushy terrain and dirt trails in Possum Kingdom State Park, about 130 miles west of Dallas. Clutter, who is legally blind, searched alongside those who came from across the state to help.

Divers recovered Ira's body Wednesday from the lake where family members least suspected he would be found.

"It appeared like he fell from a large rock. He was found in 24 feet of water near the bottom," said Kristin Everett, a spokeswoman for the Texas Department of Parks and Wildlife. "Investigators found a skid mark real close to where he was found. We believe he was exploring the shore line and he fell in."

WASHINGTON — U.S. military officials are making it clear publicly that Afghanistan isn't the only country where American forces are fighting — or planning to fight — terrorist networks.

They won't say where, but other areas known as hide-outs for terrorists Osama bin Laden's al-Qaida network include Somalia, Yemen, Sudan and the Chechnya region of Russia. All are predominantly Muslim, with vast, war-ravaged areas under little or no central government control.

The Afghanistan war's commander, Army Gen. Tommy Franks, gave one of the strongest indications yet about the shadowy aspects of the U.S. military campaign. Speaking to The Associated Press Tuesday on the USS Theodore Roosevelt aircraft carrier, Franks said overt and covert U.S. military operations are "going on in a great many places."

Those operations "are designed to do away with these pockets of terrorism," Franks said without giving details.

"I think General Franks was being vague for an obvious reason," said Army Col. Richard Thomas, spokesman for U.S. Central Command, which Franks heads. "There's a lot of stuff going on. Some of it you get to report, some of it you don't."

Family endures illness and misfortune with grace

ELVES, from Page 1

one got out safely. The next day their car's engine blew up. With no money, no job, no transportation and no insurance, they turned to family. Church friends helped them move to Kathrine Bice's parents' home in Idaho.

But even deeper troubles were beginning.

Within a year, Kathrine's mother died. From her death a medical mystery was revealed. Doctors finally were able to diagnose what was wrong with Rishonn. She had a genetic disease called Mitochondrial disorder, the doctors said, explaining that her body's cells were breaking down instead of transforming energy. The disease would steal her body, introducing her to wheelchairs, seizures, paralysis, tube feedings. Finally, her abbreviated life would end.

But before the Bices were over that shock, they learned their oldest daughter, Chambris, had the disease, too. Now 13, she is in a wheelchair. And then Mishayla, now 7, tested positive. Two other children, Branson and Talaessa, were healthy. Kathrine Bice learned she was the carrier of the disease.

Three-year-old Rishonn, who was born on Valentine's Day, died within months of her diagnosis in 1999.

"We talk about Rishonn a lot," Perry Bice says. "She's like an angel looking out for us."

As the Bices tell their story on Christmas Eve, they have no idea what is taking place a few miles away in Gardner. Teams of elves are working in shifts at the home the family recently bought in Gardner, a run-down dwelling in need of repairs.

Stinky carpet was pulled up and hauled off. New rugs and floors were installed. Twenty-six painters rolled and brushed the first coat of paint. Hours later, 26 more painters put on another coat. Eight finishing carpenters nailed in baseboards. Another building crew constructed a wheelchair ramp into the home. Gifts were wrapped. A trampoline was set up.

A Christmas tree was decorated with twinkling lights and ornaments. An elf who is also a car dealer donated a new van. Another elf who is a successful businessman donated several months of mortgage payments. Yet another elf added more payments, bringing the total to more than \$16,000. Each month's payment was tied on a little note that dangled from the tree's branches.

One last loving touch was nestled inside the Christmas tree — a tiny card specially printed by an elf who had kept his printing shop open late on Christmas Eve.

By 6:30 a.m., as the etchings of Christmas morning streaked pink across the sky, the gifts were finally ready.

At mid-morning on Christmas Day, someone knocks at the Bices' door in Olathe. Wearing a green knit hat with the embroidered words "Rookie Elf," a girl about 11 years old stares up at Perry Bice and holds out a key.

"Hi there," says Perry Bice. "What is this? A key? To what?"

The elf only smiles, then softly wishes them a Merry Christmas and runs off.

"Wait. A key to what?" says Bice, puzzled. "A house key?"

It dawns on him that perhaps the elves left the gifts for his children at the Gardner house. He and Kathrine bundle up all their children and carry Mishayla and Chambris out to the van.

The Bices had closed on the home just two days ago, but were not given the key. (The elves had worked with the Realtor, too.)

But now with the key, they opened the door to their new home and its sun-splashed walls, fresh berber carpets and vinyl-tiled floors. Gifts were waiting under the tree. Twinkling lights of a Christmas tree drew them closer until they saw the mortgage payments, and were again overwhelmed with emotion.

Then Perry Bice noticed the tiny envelope.

Inside was the last gift. Three words that reveal the best Christmas gift of all:

"God loves you."

Bice smiled, then nodded and placed it on the very top branch.

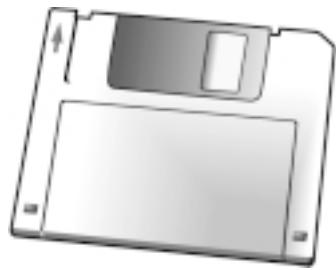
Ready to explore the wide world of the Web?

What do you have to do?

nwkansas.com is your key to the Internet. We offer reliable service, fast modems and full access to the Internet, the World Wide Web and E-mail all in one package for one low monthly fee*. We have reliable customer service to help you get connected, and plenty of lines to take your calls. We are the local Internet Service Provider with people who can answer your questions. In most cases, you can be hooked up today. We have the latest, fastest modems, and plenty of lines to answer your call. (We try to keep our customer ratio at 8 to 1.)

*Special rate offer

With a payment of \$99.80 (four months base service) we give you a month free service and no set-up fee (\$19.96 per month average rate. We are offering an annual rate of \$178 (\$15 per month average).



nwkansas.com

Local Tech Support • Same-Day Connection* • Friendly People to Help

The Goodland Daily News • 1205 Main, Goodland, Kansas, 67735 • 785 899-2338

*In most cases; we'll try anyway.



We can connect you tonight... not next week!

Infinite variety on the 'Net

There's a whole new world waiting out there. Whatever you're interested in, the Internet, with its millions of postings and services, has it. Weather, time of day, art, archives, news, hobbies . . . If you can imagine it, someone has put it on the Internet.

Use it for business. Use it for school. Use it for pleasure. Use it just to find out what's out there. Pick a topic and search the entire World Wide Web for it ... in just seconds.

E-mail for fun and profit

E-mail is fast, affordable and inexpensive. From your computer, you can send and receive messages anywhere in the world . . . for no charge . . . once you have an Internet connection.

