

Warplanes continue bombing of hideouts

INTERNATIONAL

KANDAHAR, Afghanistan — U.S. warplanes kept up heavy bombing raids today on terrorist hide-outs in eastern Afghanistan, hoping to smash Osama bin Laden's die-hard supporters, while a second batch of prisoners was flown under cover of darkness to Cuba.

Aerial attacks against a deep complex of tunnels at Zawar, in the rugged hills of Paktia province near the border with Pakistan, have been under way for nearly two weeks. U.S. ground forces are also operating in the area, the last main battleground in Afghanistan.

The first group of international peacekeepers arrived today in Ghazni province, to the west of Paktia, and U.S. helicopters were seen flying over the highway linking Ghazni to Kabul, the capital, as the country's new authorities extend their control, the Afghanistan Islamic Press agency reported.

JERUSALEM — A Palestinian militia leader, who admitted killing Israelis and survived an Israeli missile attack on his car last year, was killed in an explosion outside his West Bank hide-out on Monday.

Palestinian security officials accused Israel of planting the bomb, and Israel's military had no immediate comment.

Raed Karmi, 27, had admitted involvement in shooting attacks on Israelis, including the killings of two Tel Aviv restaurant owners a year ago in the West Bank town of Tulkarem.

Karmi was the Tulkarem leader of the Al Aqsa Brigades, a group of gunmen linked to Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat's Fatah movement.

He had just left his Tulkarem hide-out, near the local cemetery, when a bomb hidden near a tree went off, one of Karmi's friends said, speaking on

ap news capsules

condition of anonymity.

The tree and the wall of the cemetery were damaged. Clamoring for revenge, Karmi's friends carried his body through the streets and shot in the air.

ISLAMABAD, Pakistan — Pakistani police on Monday arrested hundreds more militants belonging to outlawed Islamic groups and sealed dozens of offices in an ongoing crackdown on religious extremism and violence, authorities said.

More than 1,500 extremists have been arrested since Saturday, when President Gen. Pervez Musharraf banned five militant organizations — including two accused of terrorism in Indian-controlled Kashmir, said an interior ministry official speaking on condition of anonymity.

About 800 activists were arrested in the heavily populated Punjab province, with other arrests occurring in Sindh and the North West Frontier provinces, the official said.

Musharraf announced his crackdown as tensions remained high between Pakistan and India, which accuses Pakistani intelligence and two banned groups — Lashkar-e-Tayyaba and Jaish-e-Mohammed — of carrying out a Dec. 13 attack on the Indian parliament that killed 14, including the five attackers. Pakistan denied any role.

NATIONAL

MEMPHIS, Tenn. — A Harvard University biologist whose body was found in the Mississippi River last month died accidentally in a fall from a bridge, a medical examiner said.

Don Wiley, 57, fell from the

Hernando DeSoto Bridge after a minor motor vehicle accident there, Shelby County Medical Examiner O.C. Smith said Sunday.

Wiley had been missing since Nov. 16, when his rental car was found abandoned on the bridge with the keys in the ignition.

The body was discovered Dec. 20 snagged on a tree near a hydroelectric plant at Vidalia, La., about 300 miles south of Memphis. A wallet containing Wiley's identification was found on the body, which was identified through dental records, police said.

No evidence of foul play was found in the car.

Wiley had been in Memphis for a scientific conference.

Wiley's disappearance raised concerns about a possible terrorist connection since he had done research on a number of potentially deadly viruses, including Ebola, a highly contagious and lethal fever.

CAMARILLO, Calif. — Gas prices crept up 3 cents in the past three weeks, ending a 15-week price crash that began with the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks, according to a newly released industry analysis.

Gas prices Friday at about 8,000 gas stations nationwide averaged \$1.12 a gallon for self-serve regular, analyst Trilby Lundberg said Sunday.

The weighted price per gallon for all grades and taxes was \$1.15, up 3.27 cents from Dec. 21, the date of the last Lundberg Survey.

The weeks to come could see additional moderate, but not extreme, price increases, Lundberg said.

WASHINGTON

WASHINGTON — President Bush fainted briefly after choking down a pretzel while watching a football game, a type of spell doctors say they see often but is nothing to worry about.

White House physician Dr. Richard Tubb said Bush quickly recovered from the episode Sunday, apparently brought on by a temporary decrease in heart rate while coughing.

Bush, 55, suffered an abrasion on his left cheek the size of a half-dollar and a bruise on his lower lip from falling onto the floor from a couch. He was reported doing well.

A nurse on duty at the White House was summoned at 5:40 p.m. EST. Tubb was paged eight minutes later. Bush, under his own power, used an elevator to go downstairs to the doctor's office.

Tubb, an Air Force colonel, examined Bush, including monitoring his heart, and found nothing abnormal.

Bush has a rigorous exercise regime that keeps both his blood pressure and heart rate at low levels — a healthy plus that in this case appeared to be a factor in the fainting spell. The pretzel-caused coughing apparently stimulated a nerve that further slowed Bush's heart rate, Tubb said.

In medical terms, it's called vasovagal syncope. The body sends a signal to the heart slowing it enough that the person briefly loses consciousness.

WASHINGTON — Shaking off a choking incident that made him briefly unconscious, President Bush planned to go ahead with a two-day trip to push his campaign for expanded trade he says could help pull the nation from recession.

The president's itinerary was tracing the movement of farm goods south through the Midwest en route to overseas markets.

His first scheduled stop Monday was

a John Deere plant in Moline, Ill., followed by a feed mill in Aurora, Mo., and the Port of New Orleans, the last stop for many agricultural goods destined for export markets.

The schedule remained in place even though Bush fainted briefly in the White House residence Sunday, apparently brought on by a decrease in heart rate during a coughing spell caused by choking on a pretzel. He suffered minor facial injuries after falling from a couch.

The president badly wants authority to negotiate "fast-track" trade agreements, which Congress could reject but not change.

The Republican-controlled House passed such trade promotion authority by a deeply partisan, 215-214 vote last month after the White House and Republican leaders persuaded GOP holdouts to change sides. The Democratic-controlled Senate is due to vote early this year.

WASHINGTON — The timing of an accounting firm's memo directing the destruction of documents raises the serious possibility of obstruction of justice, says the chairman of a Senate committee investigating Enron Corp.'s collapse.

Sen. Joseph Lieberman, D-Conn., said Sunday he was troubled that a lawyer at Arthur Andersen & Co., Enron's accounting firm directed the destruction of Enron documents. The memo from a lawyer was dated Oct. 12, 2001, when Andersen and executives of the energy giant "knew that Enron was in real trouble and the roof was about to collapse on them," Lieberman said.

Rep. John Dingell of Michigan, senior Democrat on the House Commerce Committee, said today that panel's investigation will focus on allegations of insider trading, "payoffs

for the company executives who were permitted to sell" their Enron stock and "most importantly, the fact that papers were destroyed and there were instructions to do so."

"There's pretty strong evidence of insider trading, there's clear evidence of failure to file honest and correct reports," Dingell said on CBS' "The Early Show." "False accounting appears to be a very major problem."

Two Cabinet members, meanwhile, said they had seen no need to inform President Bush of telephone conversations they had with Enron Chairman Kenneth Lay in late October and November as Enron was struggling to maintain its credit rating.

Commerce Secretary Don Evans said Sunday he discussed the calls with Treasury Secretary Paul O'Neill, who also had been contacted by Lay, and later told Andrew Card, White House chief of staff, but that Card never informed the president.

Presidential spokesman Ari Fleischer said the White House was not determining whether any other Bush aides had been contacted about the Enron situation.

WASHINGTON — Lengthy lines at airport security checkpoints are almost certain to get longer next weekend when airlines are required by law to inspect all checked baggage for explosives.

Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison of Texas, the top Republican on the Senate aviation subcommittee, said Sunday that passengers should be ready for more delays when airlines begin inspecting checked bags.

The new aviation security law, passed in response to the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks, requires airlines by Friday to have systems in place to inspect all checked bags for explosives.

Legislators blame economic woes on outside forces

BUDGET, from Page 1

decisions did play some role, they pin the blame for the state's problems on economic problems outside the Legislature's control.

Kerr said the problems are bad but not dire. Asked to elaborate, he acknowledged the difference is hard to define.

"It's kind of like it's bad when my neighbor loses his job, it's dire when I lose mine," he said.

Lean and fat years run in cycles, and the economy has invariably been hurt by the aftereffects of Sept. 11. But the problems the state now faces have been

developing since 1999, after years of healthy tax cuts and spending increases.

Democrats are upset with what they see as an attempt to blame the problems on the terrorist attacks. The mantra Feleciano and Hensley tried on reporters is that Republican mismanagement blew a "surplus" in good times and turned it into a hole.

In good years, Democrats did propose paying down the state's bonded debt to save some money later, but they also argued for new spending. They're still proposing new spending, even in the face of budget problems, in the form of an expanded prescription drug

program.

They also aren't giving direct answers when asked about solving this year's problems.

On the matter of a tax increase, for example, Garner said: "We've got to wait and see what's proposed by the governor. I think we need to establish what our priorities are."

Conservative Republicans over the years made cutting taxes their political priority. They understood the state eventually might have to rein in spending — and saw nothing wrong with that.

They argue Kansas government faces problems now because it went on

a spending binge. They note since 1995, general fund spending has grown from \$3.3 billion to \$4.5 billion.

"The thinking is we are where we are today because of irresponsible spending," said Rep. Carlos Mayans, R-Wichita. "We are not convinced the proper cuts have been made in the proper places."

But Sherrer asked the obvious question. If the budget still has too much fat, how did it get past the conservatives?

They were a strong force in Kansas politics throughout the 1990s and controlled the House leadership for four years.

Conservatives argue they haven't

been able to overcome alliances of moderates, Democrats, government agencies and advocates.

But meetings of the House Appropriations Committee over the past decade tell another story. Conservative members sometimes added money to budgets of the agencies they reviewed, then fought hard to defend the spending.

As for Graves, he has professed no major regrets about his seven years in office.

Sherrer contends Graves prevented even larger, more reckless tax cuts when money was plentiful and legislators couldn't see the wisdom of set-

ting aside rainy day funds because of their desires to spend it.

But Graves is an awkward position. He won re-election in 1998 portraying himself as a champion tax cutter.

But everybody had some role in bringing the state to its current budget crunch. Apportioning the blame is likely to be one of the major preoccupations of the 2002 session.

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