

Israeli accord could unravel

around the world

By the Associated Press
INTERNATIONAL

BETHLEHEM, West Bank — Palestinian police were back on the streets of Bethlehem early today after Israeli forces left the town as part of a trial that could lead to further Israeli withdrawals in the West Bank.

In the first security accord between the two sides in more than a year, Israel agreed to hand control of Bethlehem and parts of the Gaza Strip back to the Palestinians. Israel said it would pull out of other West Bank population centers if Palestinian police prevent terror attacks from being launched from the test areas.

But the understandings could quickly unravel.

The violent Hamas and Islamic Jihad groups, responsible for dozens of suicide bomb attacks against Israelis during two years of fighting, rejected the agreement and pledged to step up their attacks.

In fresh violence today, an Israeli was killed by Palestinian sniper fire near the Jewish settlement of Neve Dekalim in the Gaza Strip, paramedics said. Hamas took responsibility for the killing.

In the West Bank, one armed Palestinian was killed and at least one injured in an exchange of fire between Israeli troops and local militiamen in the Tulkarem refugee camp, the army said. The fighting erupted during an Israeli army raid of the camp.

MOSCOW — Ninety-nine servicemen were reported killed and 33 injured when a troop transport helicopter fell into a minefield in what Russian media called the nation's biggest military helicopter crash and the biggest single-day casualty count in the Chechen war.

Salvage workers have completed their search for victims at the site outside Khankala, Russia's military headquarters for its nearly three-year old campaign in Chechnya, where the Mi-26 crashed on Monday, RTR state television reported Tuesday.

Defense Ministry investigators have begun their probe into what caused the crash: a missile, which rebels claim, or a technical malfunction. Prosecutors have opened a criminal case for murder and terrorism, Russian news agencies reported.

The helicopter was carrying 132 servicemen from Mozdok, another regional military base, to Khankala, RTR reported, citing military headquarters in Chechnya.

The five crew members all survived. About half the passengers were officers, and the rest were conscripts and contract soldiers returning from leave or traveling to Chechnya to relieve units rotating out of the region, RTR reported. Military headquarters said early today that 99 of the people aboard the helicopter were killed and 33 injured, RTR reported.

NATIONAL

NEW YORK — While cautioning that it wasn't being called the final number, the medical examiner's office turned over a list of 2,819 victims' names to officials at City Hall to be used as part of the memorial service at the World Trade Center site next month.

Four names were cut from the death toll that had remained unchanged for months. The new list released Monday includes those whose remains have been identified; those presumed dead whose families have obtained a court-issued death certificate; and about 90 people who are still classified as missing.

The names will be read by former Mayor Rudolph Giuliani, other dignitaries and victims' family members at a ground zero memorial ceremony on Sept. 11.

City officials in charge of the massive effort said they are not ready to call 2,819 the complete count. Both the medical examiner's office and the police department could still adjust the tally.

The city's official count of victims includes passengers and crew on the doomed jetliners, but not the five hijackers aboard each plane.

SANJOSE, Calif. — A fire on Monday gutted a six-acre section of Santana Row, an expansive \$500 million retail, commercial and residential development.

The blaze spewed 100-foot-high flames and billowing black smoke that could be seen for miles.

The blaze destroyed the largest of nine buildings which was to open next month and include 36 retail shops and 246 rental housing units, said Tom Miles, a spokesman for Federal Realty Investment Trust.

The rest of the 40-acre project, which was slated to resemble a lushly landscaped San Francisco street, was designed to include 1,200 luxury residences, a shopping area the size of 14

football fields, a hotel, a farmer's market and many outdoor cafes.

GRANTS PASS, Ore. — Crews made more progress in battling Oregon's huge wildfire, fire-hardening containment lines designed to keep flames away from a hamlet that caters to Rogue River whitewater rafters and fishermen.

But after three weeks of the fire in their back yard, the roughly 150 residents of the community of Agness weren't ready to celebrate. They continued to thin trees and cut weeds and brush around their homes.

The fire has grown to 448,857 acres — two-thirds the size of Rhode Island — since it began last month. It was 40 percent contained Monday.

Fire spokeswoman Rochelle Desser said firefighters will soon be shifting from the east side of the fire to the west side.

"We would not want to characterize things as all buttoned up yet, but things are looking very good," she said Monday.

On the west side, evacuation alerts remained in effect for Agness, nearby Oak Flat, the upper Pistol River drainage, and the Wilderness Retreat subdivision on the Chetco River.

However, the danger to those settlements diminished as containment lines grew and burnout operations continued, officials said.

CHAPEL HILL, N.C. — New students at the University of North Carolina took part Monday in discussions of a primer on the Quran after a federal appeals court refused to halt the summer reading program.

Attorneys for a conservative Christian group had asked the 4th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in Richmond to stop the discussions. Members of the Virginia-based Family Policy Network and three unidentified freshmen contended the assignment was unconstitutional.

Monday's discussion groups drew extensive media attention, with journalists squeezing into rooms with students.

"I'm excited to read the headlines tomorrow: 'Students Read Books, Discuss Ideas.' That's some real sensational stuff," quipped religious studies professor Carl Ernst.

About 4,200 incoming freshman and transfer students had the assignment.

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