

News Digest

By The Associated Press

W. Bank Palestinian mayor killed Arabs, Israelis view assassination as setback to peace

NABLUS, Occupied West Bank — A moderate Palestinian recently appointed by Israel as mayor of Nablus, the West Bank's largest city, was fatally shot 30 yards from City Hall on Sunday as he walked to work, authorities said.

The Israeli said the assassin escaped into a crowded market.

The killing of Mayor Zafer al-Masri was condemned by both moderate Arabs and Israelis as a setback to Middle East peace efforts.

Two Syrian-backed Palestinian factions that reject a negotiated settlement with Israel claimed responsibility.

Al-Masri, 44, known for his pro-Jordanian views, was the only Arab so far to accept Israeli appointment as a mayor in the West Bank, which Israel captured from Jordan during the 1967 Arab-Israeli War.

He took over from an Israeli military officer as head of Nablus, a city of 100,000 people, on Dec. 19 with the

tacit support of Jordan's King Hussein and of Yasser Arafat, chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organization.

Al-Masri was shot at 8 a.m. as he approached the front door of City Hall. Authorities said he died a short time later in a hospital.

An Israeli army officer, who insisted on anonymity, said al-Masri was shot twice in the chest and once in the thigh with a 7.65mm pistol. The army first said he was shot in the back.

The Israeli army imposed a curfew that was expected to stay in force until the funeral Monday. Black flags were hung from City Hall.

Soldiers set up roadblocks at entrances to Nablus and rounded up Arab youths for questioning. One group of 20 Arabs was seen being held at gunpoint before reporters were ordered from the area. Authorities did not report any arrests.

Prime Minister Shimon Peres told

his Cabinet Sunday he hoped a replacement for al-Masri would be found.

Deputy Mayor Hafez Tukan meanwhile will be named interim mayor, said city council member Ezzat Alul.

Peres was quoted in a Cabinet communique as saying, "The murder will not deter the Israeli government from proposing to the residents of the territories (that they) administer their own affairs."

The U.S. consul-general in east Jerusalem, Morris Draper, called the killing "mindless brutality."

Elias Freij, the Palestinian mayor of Bethlehem told The Associated Press, the shooting was "a serious criminal act which can only have an adverse effect on the peace process."

Freij is the only elected Palestinian mayor on the West Bank who has not been dismissed by Israel, which last held elections in the occupied territory in 1976.

Magnanimity 'not absence of justice'

Aquino restores basic legal right

MANILA, Philippines — President Corazon Aquino on Sunday abolished the government's power to detain people without charge, a practice her ousted predecessor used in an attempt to quell a growing communist insurgency.

She told more than 1 million cheering Filipinos at an outdoor rally that the practice was "not warranted" and had helped rather than hindered the guerrillas.

Aquino also said Sunday that all but four of 484 political prisoners incarcerated under Marcos "have been released or are in the process of being released," and the remaining ones will have their cases reviewed this week.

Top military officers objected to their being freed without further investigation.

Aquino has ruled out any attempt to extradite Ferdinand Marcos, forced into exile last Wednesday in a nearly bloodless "people power" revolution, for any illegal acts committed during his 20 years as president.

But she said on Sunday that did not mean that those who committed serious

crimes during his regime would escape punishment.

"Magnanimity does not mean an absence of justice," the president said. "We are gathering evidence and will set up the government structure that will try those who have committed grave crimes against the people, like human rights abuses and stealing."

Aquino ran against Marcos in a Feb. 7 presidential election. The National Assembly, dominated by Marcos' New

Society Movement party, declared him winner Feb. 15, although foreign observers cited massive ballot fraud.

New Society scheduled a meeting today at which it was expected to nullify the assembly's proclamation declaring Marcos the winner.

The public gathering Sunday in bay-side Rizal park was the largest since the 1983 funeral of Benigno Aquino, slain husband of Aquino, which attracted nearly 2 million people.

Pentagon report estimates \$8 billion to move bases

WASHINGTON — The Pentagon estimates relocation of the two huge U.S. military bases in the Philippines would cost upwards of \$8 billion and put American military forces a long distance from potential hot spots, sources say.

A classified report containing the estimate is to be sent to Congress today, less than one week after the fall of Ferdinand Marcos and the installation of Corazon Aquino as president of the longtime U.S. ally.

The Philippines is home to Subic

Bay Naval Station and Clark Air Base, the largest American bases outside the United States. The leases on those bases run out in 1991 and Aquino has refused to say whether she will let them stay.

The Pentagon report says that if those two bases are lost, the most stable potential spots to relocate would be Guam and Tinian islands, according to the sources, who spoke only on the condition they not be identified.

Both islands are under the control of the United States and are already home to U.S. military installations.

Officials unaware that teen who shot dad was abused

SELDEN, N.Y. — Classmates sometimes saw black-and-blue marks on Cheryl Pierson's body, but she told them they were nothing to worry about.

Now authorities say those bruises were the only indication that the 16-year-old cheerleader had suffered five years of incestuous abuse at the hands of her father.

The situation didn't come out into the open until her father, 42-year-old James Pierson, was shot dead in the family driveway. Miss Pierson and her boyfriend were arrested and accused of paying a 17-year-old schoolmate \$400 to kill him. Miss Pierson and the schoolmate were charged with the death: the boyfriend with conspiracy.

"If a kid comes into school and is banged up, I would think it would come to somebody's attention," said John G. Ehrlich, chief of the family crime bureau of the Suffolk County district attorney's office.

But Miss Pierson had never been mentioned in any complaint to his office. Ehrlich's staff has increased from two to six in the past four years, while the number of child abuse complaints increased tenfold.

Miss Pierson's lawyer, Paul Gianelli, said she now realizes there were alternatives, and regrets her father's death. Police say the destruction of Miss Pierson's home life intensified when

her mother got sick several years ago with kidney disease.

Gianelli said Miss Pierson considered leaving home, but remained for the sake of her 8-year-old sister. Then one day she saw her father "roughhousing" with her sister and feared that he had found another prey.

According to police, Miss Pierson planned the shooting over several months, and asked friends at school if anyone would kill her father for a fee. Officers say 17-year-old Sean Pica agreed, and Miss Pierson's boyfriend, Robert Cuccio, 19, paid him \$400.

On Feb. 5, as Pierson left his home in this Long Island community to go to his job as an electrician, he was shot five times with a .22-caliber rifle.

Police who interviewed Miss Pierson said they found inconsistencies in her story, and that she confessed eight days later.

Miss Pierson and Pica pleaded innocent to second-degree murder, while Cuccio pleaded innocent to conspiracy. Pica remains in jail in lieu of \$100,000 bond; the other two were released on bail. No trial date has been set.

Since Miss Pierson's arrest, Gianelli said he received offers from strangers who wanted to help pay her \$50,000 bail.

In Brief

Cocaine said to cause leukemia

WASHINGTON — Half of the cocaine seized in Florida late last year contained benzene, a carcinogen that has been banned from consumer products because it has been shown to cause leukemia, a federal official said Sunday.

"We see the potential as extremely dangerous for lung damage or worse," said Robert H. Feldkamp, a spokesman for the Drug Enforcement Agency.

The agency in January asked the Centers for Disease Control in Atlanta to evaluate the possible effects of benzene used in manufacturing cocaine "before we put all the red flags out that people who use cocaine may be in danger. We have not yet determined that," Feldkamp said in a telephone interview. The CDC study is expected in April or May, he said.

Poll: Majority favor paramilitary outlaw

LINCOLN — A majority of Nebraskans believe paramilitary camps should be outlawed in the state, according to a statewide poll.

Sixty-five percent of the 449 people questioned in the mid-February survey conducted for The Lincoln Star favored the Legislature's LB772, which would outlaw paramilitary training camps in Nebraska. Twenty-four percent opposed the bill, and 11 percent were undecided. The poll was conducted Feb. 14-19 by Research Associates of Lincoln.

The camps were described to respondents as training camps that teach participants how to use or develop firearms and other war materials to promote civil disorder.

NASA does majority of work via phone

SPACE CENTER, Houston — With 20 centers in 11 states, NASA does much of its work by telephone and in telephone conferences — forcing officials to reach decisions without the benefit of reading one another's body language and gestures.

"Telecons" — linking experts in at least five states — played a key role in the decision to launch the space shuttle Challenger.

The presidential commission investigating the shuttle explosion conducted extensive hearings on the conduct of the pre-launch telephone conferences and declared NASA's launch-decision process "clearly flawed."

Most don't object to lie detector test

NEW YORK — A majority of Americans believe lie detectors should be used in the courtroom, but they don't believe they should be used by businesses in most circumstances, according to a Media General-Associated Press poll.

The nationwide telephone poll of 1,512 adult Americans found that 72 percent believed the machines should be used in court to test people accused of crimes, and 63 percent said witnesses in court should also be tested.

The poll also found that eight in 10 respondents thought lie detector tests should be given to government employees who have access to classified information.

Three-quarters also thought it was appropriate for employers to test workers suspected of stealing, but most objected to the use of polygraphs by businesses in general.

Big-name stars earn big-buck salaries

NEW YORK — Barbra Streisand has earned nearly \$100 million during her life, but Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev makes a more modest salary of \$18,700 a year, People magazine reports.

Some stars earn huge salaries for little work, while others toil for every penny, the magazine says in its March 10 issue.

One example of the hard workers, People says, is broadcaster Larry King, who earns \$600,000 a year.

King airs a nightly four-hour talk show on Mutual Radio, does five interviews a week on the Cable News Network, makes weekly appearances during football season for NBC Sports and writes regular columns for USA Today and The Sporting News.

People compares hard-worker King with Marlon Brando, who earned \$8.4 million for 13 scenes totaling less than 50 minutes in three movies, "Superman," "The Formula," and "Apocalypse Now."

Gorbachev celebrates 55th birthday

MOSCOW — Soviet leader Mikhail S. Gorbachev turned 55 Sunday, but the official news agency Tass gave no details on how he observed his birthday.

Gorbachev was named Communist Party leader March 11. He was the youngest party general secretary named since Josef V. Stalin, who was 42 when named to the post in April 1922.

Tass reported that Gorbachev met Sunday with Cuban President Fidel Castro. Delegates to the 27th Communist Party Congress, which began last Tuesday, on Saturday wished Gorbachev "every success" for his birthday.

Police think Palme killer 'shadowed' him

STOCKHOLM, Sweden — The man who killed Prime Minister Olof Palme apparently had him under surveillance for some time before he shot him with a powerful American-made revolver, police said Sunday.

Police Commissioner Hans Holmer told reporters that two bullets recovered at the scene of the late Friday night shooting, a downtown sidewalk, were fashioned from an unusual combination of metals and may have been handmade, making it harder to track down the sources of the bullets.

Sweden's two-day-old caretaker government meanwhile held its first session and discussed arrangements for the funeral of Social Democratic leader Palme, who was shot once in the back Saturday while walking with his wife.

TWA to buy Ozark Air Lines

NEW YORK — Ozark Air Lines, a St. Louis-based air carrier that earned only \$636,000 last year, has agreed to be acquired by Trans World Airlines for \$250 million, the companies said.

The merger agreement signed Saturday comes against a backdrop of rapid consolidation and intense competition in the U.S. airline industry, and was the second big airline merger announced in a week.

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