

Israeli fighting intensifies despite disarmament

JERUSALEM — Israel disarmed a few extremist Jewish settlers Wednesday and ordered others to stay out of Palestinian areas to reduce tension following the massacre in a Hebron mosque.

Clashes with Israeli soldiers broke out in Hebron again when the army eased the curfew for two hours to allow people to shop, and a 17-year-old Palestinian was killed by a bullet in the neck.

Radical Muslim groups called for revenge attacks on Israelis. A leaflet from the Hamas movement urged Palestinians to "let the gun and machine gun speak."

The youth in Jericho was killed by soldiers when 400 people calling for the deaths of Jews attacked army vehicles and a police station with stones. As his body was carried away, Arabs chanted "Revenge, revenge!" and shouted "The start of killing the pigs has begun."

At least 50 Palestinians were wounded or injured while fighting with Israeli troops in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, hospitals reported.

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—Peres,
foreign minister

While a few militant Jews were being disarmed, Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin's adviser on terrorism, Yigal Pressler, urged Israelis to carry their weapons with them at all times to guard against revenge attacks.

Israel radio said seven settlers from communities around Nablus in the north were disarmed and given orders to stay out of Palestinian areas. Several dozen settlers from Hebron and nearby areas on the West Bank have also been given orders limiting their movements.

Police took away the settlers' gun permits and weapons found at their homes. But disarmed militants would have little trouble obtaining guns from hard-line sympathizers if they wanted.

Roughly one in 10 Israelis — 220,000 civilians and 250,000 soldiers and police officers — have permits for firearms.

Although the seizure falls far short of Palestinian demands that all settlers be disarmed, the action is the harshest since Jews began moving

into the territories after their capture by Israel from Jordan and Egypt in 1967.

Shai Bazak, spokesman for the settlers' council in the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip, complained that some of those targeted "have not done anything wrong."

Some 120,000 Jews live in 144 settlements in the territories, which are home to 1.8 million Palestinians.

Palestinians have called for the closing of all Jewish settlements and deploying an international force to protect Arabs in the occupied lands.

But the Israeli government remained adamant it would not bow to Palestinian demands for dismantling Jewish settlements — or even discuss the issue.

"We don't have to punish people who are peaceful and who support peace," Foreign Minister Shimon Peres told reporters. "What we really have to do is to prevent this small group of terrible, opinionated people who may cause another problem."

Officials start welfare study; may cap disability payments

WASHINGTON — The Social Security Administration is counting families who collect federal disability benefits for more than one child with an eye to cap assistance to children with disabilities.

The agency's investigation is the latest twist in an emotional controversy about Supplemental Security Income since the Supreme Court made it easier for children to qualify for SSI disability benefits.

The inspector general at the Department of Health and Human Services is looking into allegations that parents coach their children to misbehave or fall behind in school so they can qualify for "crazy checks" or "crazy money."

Sen. David Pryor, D-Ark., joined Rep. Blanche Lambert, D-Ark., to request an investigation by the General Accounting Office, the congressional watchdog agency.

"There's a lot of smoke on this issue," Pryor said. "I'd like to know how big the fire is."

A high-ranking HHS official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said Social Security recently launched a study to count the number of households with more than one child on SSI, "with the possibility of recommending some type of family maximum for SSI benefits."

SSI pays a maximum of \$446 a month. The program limits payments for married couples to \$669, but it has no similar maximum for families with several children collecting SSI disability.

That means a family with three children on SSI could receive more than \$16,000 a year in tax-free benefits, in addition to Medicaid and food stamps. Some families with children on SSI may also receive housing assistance or Aid to Families with Dependent Children.

The Social Security Administration caps Social Security benefits to families with minor children of retired, disabled or deceased workers.

Congress disagrees on future of balanced budget amendment

WASHINGTON — Supporters of a balanced budget amendment to the Constitution say that despite its defeat by the Senate, they believe Congress will eventually approve the measure, perhaps even this year.

But foes say the Senate's 63-37 roll call for the proposal — four votes short of the two-thirds majority required for approval — buries it for the year.

The plan, a perennial favorite of conservatives and a few liberals, was thwarted by opponents led by President Clinton and Democratic leaders. It was the third time since 1986 that Congress has rejected a balanced budget amendment by a slender margin.

Nonetheless, House supporters planned a vote for later this month in that chamber, where the amendment is expected to pass. Their hope is that as this year's congressional re-election campaigns heat up, some senators can be pressured into changing their votes, and the Senate will reconsider the issue.

"Strange things can happen," said Rep. Charles Stenholm, D-Texas, one of the amendment's chief House proponents. "It's not inconceivable that the House could pass it, and the Senate would have a second

thought during the year."

But Senate Majority Leader George Mitchell, D-Maine, a leading foe, pledged to do all he could to block a new vote this year.

"Absolutely not," he told reporters. "Under no circumstances over which I have any control will this matter come up again."

Forty-one Republicans and 22 Democrats voted for the amendment Tuesday, while three Republicans and 34 Democrats voted against it.

The measure, sponsored by Sen. Paul Simon, D-Ill., would require an end to annual budget deficits by the year 2001 unless both chambers of Congress voted by three-fifths majority to allow them. Red ink would be permitted during major armed conflicts.

Simon and his allies had hoped that the anti-deficit fervor voters exhibited in 1992 would finally encourage lawmakers to muscle the plan through Congress. The power of the Constitution is needed, they argued, to force legislators to end the government's 25-year string of budget shortfalls.

"We ought to stop this before we get to the edge of the cliff," Simon warned.

Court denies Packwood's request to withhold diaries until appeal

WASHINGTON — Chief Justice William H. Rehnquist Wednesday denied Sen. Bob Packwood's request to withhold his diaries from the Senate Ethics Committee while he appeals the panel's subpoena.

Rehnquist said the senator's argument that the subpoena was overly broad "has been seriously undermined by the evidence, presented to the district court, that his diary transcripts and tapes have been altered."

"The evidence of tampering very likely renders all of the requested diary entries relevant to that investigation," the chief justice wrote.

Rehnquist also rejected Packwood's arguments that the ethics committee's subpoena violated his right to privacy under the Constitution's Fourth Amendment as well as his Fifth Amendment protection against self-incrimination.

The chief justice noted that Packwood's lawyers did not quarrel with the legal standard used by the district court in denying his Fourth Amendment argument.

The Supreme Court recently denied review to a separate case that asked whether the Fifth Amendment protected people from having to produce their private papers, Rehnquist added.

Packwood's lawyer, Jacob Stein, did not immediately return a call seeking comment. The senator's press secretary, Bobbi Munson, said she did not know whether Packwood would make any further legal attempts to keep the diaries from the committee.

Packwood's lawyers argued in court papers that personal diaries "are at the core of the right to privacy" protected by the Constitution.

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