

Kidnapping by militant group threatens Palestinian peace

JERUSALEM — A frightened Israeli soldier, only months out of high school, stood beside a masked gunman and pleaded Wednesday for the release of Palestinian prisoners.

"If not, they will kill me," 19-year-old Cpl. Nachshon Waxman, who holds dual American-Israeli citizenship, said in a televised appeal.

The young soldier's abduction by the militant Islamic group Hamas shocked Israel and thrust the Middle East peace process into its deepest crisis yet.

Hamas, the leading opponent of the Palestinian autonomy accord, said it would kill Waxman unless 200 imprisoned Palestinians are freed by Friday.

Waxman is the 10th Israeli to have been kidnapped by Islamic militants since 1989. All the previous captives were killed.

Israeli leaders said they held Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat responsible for the soldier's safety, and threatened to freeze talks on expanding Palestinian self-rule if Arafat did not act decisively to win his release.

In a videotaped appeal Wednesday, a dazed-looking Waxman urged Rabin to comply with his captors' demands. "I ask you to do all you can so I get out of here alive," Waxman said.

A militant holding an assault rifle, a red-checked headress covering his face, prompted Waxman several times with questions in Hebrew and placed a hand on the soldier's shoulder at the end of the tape.

"What do you have to say to your mother?" the gunman asked.

"If my parents are watching me, I am all right now, and I hope to return to you if Rabin decides to release the prisoners," Waxman replied. The thin, dark-haired teen-ager spoke in clipped military terms and appeared to try to steady his voice.

It was not known when or where the tape, broadcast on Israel's Channel Two, was filmed. Waxman disappeared Sunday night, and it is be-

lieved he was abducted somewhere in central Israel while hitchhiking.

In Jerusalem, his tearful mother Esther, 47, who immigrated from New York City 25 years ago, called on the U.S. government "to save my son who is an American citizen."

She also pleaded with the kidnapers: "We have the same God ... and I hope they return him safe and sound, for God's sake."

Secretary of State Warren Christopher, who returned to Jerusalem Wednesday night after stops in Syria and Jordan, said the United States would do everything possible to assist Israel.

Rabin, speaking to Arafat by telephone Wednesday, said Israel had proof Waxman was being held in the PLO-controlled Gaza Strip and stressed Arafat's "absolute responsibility" for the soldier's safe return.

A statement from Rabin's office said the Israeli leader "rejected out of hand Palestinian attempts to deny this."

Israel Radio later quoted Rabin as saying he was certain Waxman was still alive.

Arafat's spokesman said Arafat met Wednesday with three Hamas leaders and asked them for help in finding the hostage. But, said Marwan Kanafani, Arafat's top press aide, "we do not have any proof that the kidnapped soldier is in the Gaza Strip."

Rabin and Arafat reportedly will share the Nobel Peace Prize to be announced Friday. Word of their selection by the prize committee stirred controversy even before the abduction was disclosed.

Palestinian police combed Gaza's Bureij refugee camp Wednesday looking for fugitive Islamic militants and searched Hamas strongholds in southern Gaza.

Israeli government ministers, speaking after an emergency Cabinet session, said that if Arafat didn't try to catch the kidnapers, Israel could

Expanding autonomy and elections threatened

Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin is holding Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat responsible for negotiating the release of an Israeli soldier taken hostage by Muslim militants on Sunday. Israel threatened to stall negotiations on autonomy and hold up elections.



not be expected to negotiate expanding self-rule to the West Bank or holding Palestinian elections.

"If the autonomous areas turn into a shelter for murderers, Israel cannot be asked to expand these areas," said Education Minister Amnon Rubinstein.

"The way this matter is handled will have grave implications for the future," Foreign Minister Shimon Peres said.

Rabin suspended talks with the Palestinians when news of the kidnapping broke Tuesday and ordered Gaza sealed, barring 30,000 laborers from reaching jobs in Israel.

Nations unite against Hussein

KUWAIT — As Iraqi troops retreated from the Kuwait border, the United States and its allies turned their focus Wednesday to heading off future crises that might be provoked by Saddam Hussein. Thousands of U.S. troops continued to stream into the region as insurance.

Six Persian Gulf countries committed their own troops to the allied effort after a meeting in Kuwait with Secretary of State Warren Christopher.

One option that Christopher pursued with the Gulf ministers and with British Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd involved establishing through the U.N. Security Council a zone near the Kuwaiti border that would be off-limits to Iraqi tanks and other heavy military equipment. Iraqi flights already are banned in the area.

Defense Secretary William Perry was expected to continue those discussions when he arrived in the region Thursday. Facing resistance from some allies, the White House was not publicly pushing the idea on Wednesday.

Although U.N. Ambassador Madeleine Albright said she had raised the idea at the United Nations, White House press secretary Dee Dee Myers told reporters, "That is not a proposal that we have shopped around."

Two French Cabinet ministers said Iraq had not violated any agreements

and the West should not over-react.

Christopher said, "We are resolved and committed that Saddam should not be permitted to project the world into crisis at his own whim."

Saudi Arabia and five smaller oil nations — Oman, Bahrain, United Arab Emirates, Qatar and Kuwait itself — agreed to deploy part of their 19,000-man "Peninsula Shield" in Kuwait along with additional troops from each of the six. The total was not announced.

A senior military official said at the Pentagon that a majority of the Iraqi forces that had been massed near the Kuwaiti border were moving away.

"Portions of all but one brigade have moved," the official said, though he cautioned that it was not known where the troops might be going. It will be several days before that can be learned with certainty, so no hold is being placed on the flow of U.S. troops into the region, he and other officials said.

The Pentagon said Iraq in recent days had increased the number of tanks in the vicinity of the Kuwaiti border from 650 to 1,090.

Iraq's foreign minister, Mohammed Saeed al-Sahhaf, said his country had indeed withdrawn its forces.

"All troops whose deployment had caused such an uproar in the United States have completed their retreat to

rear positions this evening," he said in a statement carried by the state-run Iraqi News Agency.

President Clinton and other U.S. leaders have discounted such statements in recent days.

In Baghdad, Saddam met privately with Russian envoys while military attaches from Moscow and Beijing headed south to see if Iraq had withdrawn its forces from the Kuwaiti border.

Christopher said that if Saddam plunged the region into war again he would face "the full fury of the finest military organization in the world."

Their presence, Christopher told the troops at the Doha base, was designed "to stop Saddam Hussein in his tracks."

Christopher flew to Israel to resume his diplomatic effort to promote a peace treaty between Israel and Syria.

There are nearly 20,000 U.S. soldiers and marines in Kuwait, an additional 44,500 deployed or on the way to the area, and 156,000 on alert. Hurd said a British battalion arrived Tuesday and France was sending air and naval forces.

Spc. Albert Vadnais, an Army mechanic from Wenatchee, Wash., said he was not worrying whether Saddam would send his army across the border.

"We'll take him out," Vadnais declared.

News... in a Minute

More Nobels for Americans

STOCKHOLM, Sweden — An American and a Canadian who developed a method for studying the building blocks of matter won the Nobel physics prize Wednesday, and an American whose research led to more efficient and cleaner fuel won the chemistry prize.

The physics prize will be shared by Clifford G. Shull of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Bertram N. Brockhouse of McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario.

Both researchers, pioneers in the field of neutron scattering, developed neutron spectroscopy, a method of studying atoms, the elements that make up all matter.

The sole winner of the \$930,000 award for chemistry was George A. Olah, 67, of the University of Southern California.

Olah revolutionized the study of hydrocarbons, the ingredients of oil and natural gas, and uncovered new ways to use them.

Haitian regime dismantled

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti — The last pillar of Haiti's military regime fell Wednesday, and once-persecuted officials of Jean-Bertrand Aristide's elected government gingerly slipped back into their old offices.

Pressured by a huge American military presence, the army-installed figurehead president, Emile Jonassaint, lived up to his word and announced his resignation and that of his government.

Hours later, joyous Haitians carrying handmade musical instruments danced outside the hillside mansion of Lt. Gen. Raoul Cedras as the former military strongman made final arrangements for exile. A pickup truck carrying boxes left Cedras' home at mid-afternoon.

Late Wednesday, Panama offered Cedras asylum.

Visa lottery announced

WASHINGTON — The Clinton administration announced plans Wednesday to distribute 5,000 to 6,000 immigration visas to Cubans by a lottery, giving a chance at resettlement to Cubans who thus far have been excluded.

Until now, visas have been largely restricted to Cubans who qualify for refugee status or those with close relatives in the United States who are American citizens.

Details of how the lottery will be run will be announced by Nov. 1. The State Department announcement said Cubans selected through the lottery will be allowed to bring their spouses and minor children with them to the United States.

As a result of the new policies, Havana will become the largest U.S. visa issuing office in the world, Skol said.

Pesticide ban pending

WASHINGTON — The government will review and possibly ban several pesticides that show up in processed food and may cause cancer, under a tentative agreement announced Wednesday.

Both the Environmental Protection Agency and the Natural Resources Defense Council hailed the agreement, part of a court settlement that must be approved by U.S. District Judge William Schubb in Sacramento, Calif.

The agreement could be signed as early as Dec. 2 if not challenged by industry.

At issue are pesticides that show up in processed foods such as raisins, cooking oil, tomato paste and flour in greater concentrations than in their raw ingredients: grapes, soybeans, tomatoes and wheat.

A 1992 court ruling said those processed foods can have no trace of pesticides found to cause tumors in animals or people, regardless of how small the actual risk of cancer.

Jury candidates weren't asleep

LOS ANGELES — Lawyers in O.J. Simpson's trial questioned prospective jurors in court Wednesday for the first time and the judge warned he will be "very suspicious of a Rip van Winkle" claiming to know nothing about the case.

Superior Court Judge Lance Ito said possible jurors' exposure to the case doesn't bother him. The goal, he said, is to find jurors who can set aside their opinions and judge Simpson on evidence presented in court.

None of 84 prospective jurors called into court said they have missed the intense publicity since Simpson's ex-wife, Nicole Brown Simpson, and her friend, Ronald Goldman, were found stabbed to death June 12.

Many of the potential jurors said in written questionnaires they were glued to television watching a white Bronco carrying Simpson meander along Southern California freeways followed by police cars on June 17.

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