

African bombings lead to tighten security at embassies worldwide

Press leaks defended by Starr

WASHINGTON (AP)—Huddling in the White House Situation Room with his top foreign policy team, President Clinton was briefed today on the embassy bombings investigation as Secretary of State Madeleine Albright undertook the sad mission of returning the remains of U.S. victims.

A White House spokesman said American investigators expected to question suspects newly arrested in Kenya. The president would ask Congress for emergency supplemental funds to rebuild the embassies in Kenya and Tanzania and beef up embassy security worldwide, added spokesman P.J. Crowley.

"It's a clear statement we want to make, both to the perpetrators of this attack and to the world that we're not going to create a fortress America. We're not going to retreat from the world," Crowley told reporters following Clinton's private meetings.

He spoke as Kenyan officials announced that a number of people were arrested in Kenya for questioning.

"If this is true, these are not the first suspects that have been detained. We have had and would expect to have access to all of the suspects that have been detained," Crowley said.

Albright arrived at Ramstein Air Base in Germany this afternoon and planned to visit 10 hospitalized Americans and Kenyans injured in the bombing of the U.S. Embassy in Nairobi. She was then to fly directly home today with the remains of 10 of

the 12 Americans who were killed. Three Americans injured in Tanzania were sent to South Africa and London for treatment.

"I go secure in the knowledge that America will never be intimidated or back down in the face of terrorists," she declared just before leaving Andrews Air Force Base, Md.

She said those she will escort home today represent "the very best of Americans. They were typical of the extraordinary people who protect our interests and promote our values in American diplomatic outposts around the world."

Albright said Tuesday she planned to go to Kenya and Tanzania as soon as she could be sure her presence would not hamper rescue and recovery efforts.

President and Mrs. Clinton will attend a ceremony at Andrews today honoring the victims.

On the eve of Albright's departure, the State Department announced "there may be a threat to U.S. interests in Egypt, Malaysia and Yemen that could include attacks on buildings."

Americans in the three countries were advised to be careful. A senior U.S. official told The Associated Press the statement was based on "credible information," but declined to provide further details.

Diplomats working in outlying buildings were moved into the fortified embassy in Cairo, Egypt. In Kuwait, the U.S. Embassy closed for a day for a review of security. And there was evidence of heightened security at other

posts around the globe.

Operations at the embassies in Yemen and Cape Verde were reduced to provide only emergency services, a U.S. official said Wednesday. The official said the aim was to lower the U.S. profile temporarily.

Nearly simultaneous attacks Friday at the U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania claimed at least 250 lives and injured nearly 5,000. Investigators suspect the powerful explosive Semtex was used in the attacks, but no link has been found to any particular group, another senior U.S. official told The Associated Press.

Responding to increased threats, American ambassadors have temporarily suspended operations at about half a dozen embassies, and Undersecretary of State Thomas Pickering said Tuesday some embassies would have to be relocated to guard against terrorist attacks.

"We have to make sure all our embassies can meet an adequate standard," Pickering told The Associated Press. After going to Congress for the necessary money, "This is going to require relocating some embassies right away, and putting the rest in appropriate locations."

The embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, which sustained massive damage in Friday's attacks, will have to be rebuilt as well.

Pickering said he had no "clear insight" into what FBI and other investigators may have turned up. "They aren't telling us," he said. "I don't think at this stage they are ruling anything in or out."

The veteran diplomat, who has served as U.S. ambassador to Russia, India and the United Nations, said the United States intended "to stay open for business and to protect its people."

He likened the struggle with terrorists to "a kind of battle, a kind of war. It's like battling with cancer."

Assistant Secretary of State Patrick Kennedy said, meanwhile, that about half a dozen embassies had suspended operations after the attacks in Kenya and Tanzania. American ambassadors are authorized to suspend embassy operations, based on their judgment.

"We are not shutting the embassies down in a permanent sense," Kennedy said. "We are not leaving. We are taking, in effect, a brief time-out in order to make the security adjustments that are necessary to be responsive to a threat."

Kennedy did not identify any of the closed embassies, but it is known that the U.S. Embassy in Swaziland was evacuated for several hours Tuesday morning after a caller phoned in a bomb threat. A subsequent search found nothing, an official said.

The U.S. Embassy in Kampala, Uganda, remained closed for a second day Tuesday, and Ugandan and U.S. security personnel were on high alert.

In Malaysia, the U.S. Embassy closed its iron gates for all but emergency services for U.S. citizens, and armed guards on 24-hour watch circled the U.S. diplomatic compound in Kuala Lumpur.

WASHINGTON (AP)—Trying to halt a judge's investigation into whether he leaked grand jury evidence to the news media, Independent Counsel Kenneth Starr suggested that his contacts with reporters be treated the same as those with confidential informers.

Starr argued that he could not disclose evidence of his office's contacts with reporters "without revealing confidential investigative information," court documents now made public show.

To bolster the argument, the prosecutor cited a 1981 court case that established an "informers privilege" that allows the government to keep secret the identity of a person who furnished information about criminal activities to protect them from possible retribution.

"Long recognized at common law, the informer's privilege serves important individual and societal interests in protecting the anonymity of citizens who cooperate in law enforcement," Starr wrote in quoting the 17-year-old case.

He was seeking to block a judge's order that he turn over evidence of his office's contacts with reporters.

Sections of Starr's arguments were redacted in the court papers released last week that detail the secretly fought battle over alleged leaks. Charles Bakaly, Starr's spokesman, declined comment Wednesday.

But legal sources outside the prosecutor's office familiar with the proceedings said Starr specifically applied the argument to reporters, saying he wanted to keep confidential the information received from reporters and their identities. The legal sources demanded anonymity.

Starr's suggestion was criticized by two former independent counsels. It also raised concerns among news media experts.

President Clinton's lawyer, who is battling Starr in the leaks case, scoffed at the argument in his own reply to the court. Attorney David Kendall said most of the examples that Johnson found were evidence of improper leaks occurred at a time early in the Lewinsky investigation when prosecutors, not reporters, possessed the most information.

"A number of the most egregious apparent violations occurred in the very early days of the investigation and suggests little prospect that the press was providing to" Starr's office, Kendall wrote.

Starr has denied violating court rules that prohibit prosecutors from disclosing the evidence and proceedings of a grand jury investigation. He said while he did not violate those rules, his office needed to talk to reporters at times to correct misinformation that could affect the investigation.

But Johnson ruled that there was evidence of "serious and repetitive" disclosures of secret grand jury information from his investigation and ordered Starr to face a hearing to argue why he shouldn't be found in contempt of court.



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