

News Digest

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 27, 1998

PAGE 2

Death tests peace accord Israeli settler murdered in divided town

HEBRON, West Bank (AP) — The body of the young Israeli settler lay sprawled in a pool of blood on the dusty street, one foot clad only in a sock. Angry Jewish settlers and grim-faced Israeli soldiers milled about nearby.

Monday's execution-style killing in the divided town of Hebron was the first slaying of an Israeli in the West Bank since the signing of the new land-for-security agreement. And it also marked a key first test of the accord.

Hard-line Jewish settlers, who say ceding more West Bank land to the Palestinians endangers their very existence, reacted with fury, staging a noisy demonstration Monday night outside Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's residence.

Chillingly, the Hebron killing also might have led to tit-for-tat reprisal: Hours later, a Palestinian olive farmer was found dead under mysterious circumstances in the northern West Bank.

Netanyahu condemned the killing of 29-year-old settler Danny Vargas and said it showed the need for an all-out war on terror by Yasser Arafat's Palestinian Authority. Under the accord signed last week at the White House, Palestinian police are to actively hunt Islamic militants who stage attacks on Israelis.

In this case, early signs were that they were trying hard to do so.

“Seventeen months of no security relationship between us and the Israelis is not an easy thing.”

MOHAMMED DAHLAN
Palestinian security official

Gunmen pumped at least three shots into Vargas, a security guard, leaving his bleeding body in an Israeli-controlled neighborhood not far from the Jewish settlement of Kiryat Arba, where he lived and the power station where he worked.

Both Israeli and Palestinian forces launched an immediate manhunt. Palestinian police found Vargas' white Mitsubishi abandoned in an arid field, its passenger seat soaked with blood and the dead man's missing sneaker inside.

The car was in a Palestinian-run area, where Israeli troops are not allowed to go under existing agreements. But Palestinian officials quickly escorted them to the scene.

Together, a knot of officials from both sides — Israeli police officers, plainclothes agents, Palestinian intelligence officers, Israeli soldiers —

inspected the car, searching it and taking photographs.

During the past year and a half, such a scene would have been almost unthinkable. As a deadlock in the peace talks dragged on, Palestinian security forces had suspended such cooperation with Israeli counterparts.

Mohammed Dahlan, head of Palestinian preventive security in the Gaza Strip, acknowledged it would take time for the two sides to re-establish the kind of working partnership envisioned under the accord.

“Seventeen months of no security relationship between us and the Israelis is not an easy thing,” he told the Palestinian newspaper al-Ayyam.

“We committed to start this process with a positive attitude — but if this is not met with a positive attitude by the Israelis, we shall return to the period before the agreement.”

Troops vacate Kosovo posts

PRISTINA, Yugoslavia (AP) — In convoys of rumbling tanks and trucks, Yugoslav troops and Serb police vacated some heavily fortified positions in Kosovo on Monday, the eve of a NATO deadline to comply with a peace agreement or face punishing airstrikes.

The withdrawal was President Slobodan Milosevic's eleventh-hour attempt to convince NATO he was fulfilling the agreement he reached two weeks ago with U.S. envoy Richard Holbrooke to defuse the eight-month Kosovo conflict.

Throughout the day, lines of green army tanks, artillery trucks and blue police in armored vehicles were seen moving toward military and police barracks in Pristina, the provincial capital, and other cities.

In the Drenica region, 18 miles west of Pristina, a steady drizzle filled

freshly gouged tracks made by tanks withdrawing from roadside positions they assumed Oct. 18.

Several police checkpoints were vacant, including one in Malisevo — the last front line in fighting that virtually halted last month. All that remained was a tattered Yugoslav flag hung over a pile of bricks.

At another checkpoint in Dragobilje, which was occupied by heavily armed police a few days earlier, a uniformed ethnic Albanian guerrilla stood holding an automatic rifle.

The guerrilla, who refused to give his name, said he and other separatist fighters were checking to see if it was safe for civilians to come back because there was a minefield in the area.

Police remained at a few checkpoints in the area as dusk settled, and there was no indication that anyone had returned to the heavily damaged

villages nearby.

Ethnic Albanians, who fled during the Serb offensive that began Feb. 28, say they'll only come home once all police and soldiers have left. The return of an estimated 300,000 refugees, including up to 10,000 believed living in the woods, is a key provision of the Holbrooke-Milosevic plan.

In Washington, White House spokesman Joe Lockhart said there appeared to be “a lot of movement,” but that President Clinton would wait before judging whether Milosevic had done enough to satisfy Western demands.

NATO sources in Brussels, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the NATO ambassadors would probably wait until shortly before today's deadline before declaring whether Milosevic met the conditions.



Hurricane Mitch swirls toward Honduran coast

LA CEIBA, Honduras (AP) — People fled their coastal homes and the Honduran government sent air force planes to pluck residents off remote Caribbean islands Monday in the face of the most powerful hurricane in a decade to threaten Central America.

Hurricane Mitch became a Category 5 hurricane — the strongest category there is — on Monday with winds of 180 mph. At 4 p.m. EST, Mitch's center was 35 miles southeast of Honduras' Swan Island and was moving west-northwest at 8 mph.

Hurricane Mitch posed no immediate threat to the United States. The storm was expected to remain in the northwest Caribbean for the next five days, the center said.

President Carlos Flores Facusse declared a state of alert and told coastal residents to leave their homes for safer ground farther inland.

“We're ready for whatever situation occurs,” said Vice President Billy Handal. “I ask God to be benevolent with Hondurans.”

Peru, Ecuador sign treaty ending border dispute

BRASILIA, Brazil (AP) — Peru and Ecuador ended a half-century dispute Monday by signing a peace treaty that settles ownership of a slice of Amazon jungle the neighboring countries fought two wars to control.

The presidents and foreign ministers of both countries signed the accord at a ceremony in Brazil's capital, where most of the peace talks took place.

The United States, Brazil, Argentina and Chile brokered the treaty, which delineates the border in a 48-mile section of the Andean foothills. Peru and Ecuador both claimed the area, which was left undefined after a 1941 border war. The two countries fought over the strip of land in 1981 and 1995.

The peace treaty draws the border along the heights of the Cordillera del Condor mountain range, as Peru wanted.

But it grants a hill within Peruvian territory to Ecuador's government.

Student default loan rate falls to 9.6 percent

WASHINGTON (AP) — The default rate on student loans fell into single digits for the first time, the Education Department reported Monday, citing an agency and congressional crackdown as well as an improved economy.

The drop to a 9.6 percent default rate for fiscal year 1996 was the sixth annual decline since rates peaked at 22.4 percent in 1990.

Congress passed legislation in 1990 and 1992 to crack down on borrowers and trade schools such as beauty colleges and truck-driving schools that promised more job training than they delivered. And the country began to pull out of a recession in early 1991.

The department noted that the default rate has declined even though the volume of loans has risen dramatically, from about \$14 billion in 1992 to \$38 billion in the 1998 fiscal year. Because of the volume, actual dollar savings aren't as dramatic as they could have been.

Microsoft deal with AOL discussed in court

WASHINGTON (AP) — Microsoft Corp. challenged a rival's claims Monday that the computer giant illegally wielded its influence to win exclusive deals to distribute its Internet software with America Online and Compaq Computer Corp.

AOL, the nation's largest Internet provider with about 13 million customers, chose in early 1996 to distribute Microsoft's browser rather than Netscape's because it was technically superior, said Microsoft lawyer John Warden.

But James Barksdale, chief executive officer for Netscape Communications Corp. and the government's most important witness, said Microsoft won the important contract because it agreed to include AOL's own software as part of its Windows 95 operating system, used by tens of millions of people.

The government alleges that Microsoft illegally sought to leverage its monopoly power as the maker of Windows to extend its reach into new markets, such as for Internet software.

Law said to target homosexuals

■ Gays and lesbians protest a Louisiana statute against oral and anal sex.

NEW ORLEANS (AP) — Gay men and lesbians who must break a state law to have sex went to court Monday to overturn Louisiana's sodomy law, saying it is unconstitutional and legitimizes hatred of homosexuals.

At the start of a long-awaited civil trial challenging the law, a lawyer claimed state legislators are afraid to repeal it because they would be labeled “pro-gay.”

But the lawmakers have ended up perpetuating anti-homosexual discrimination and violence, said John Rawls, the attorney who filed the lawsuit on behalf of seven homosexuals and the Louisiana Electorate of Gays and Lesbians.

“This law is maintained by the Louisiana Legislature strictly as a measure of bigotry,” Rawls said.

Louisiana is one of 13 states that makes consensual oral and anal sex between heterosexual or homosexual couples a crime, even if the sex takes place behind closed doors in a home. Six other states have sodomy laws banning such sex between homosexual couples only.

The Louisiana law dates to the early 1800s, shortly after France sold the state to the United States, and makes the crime a felony punishable by up to five years in prison.

About 2,000 heterosexuals and homosexuals were arrested for violating the law between 1988 and 1994, Rawls said. However, he said homosexuals risk being targeted more because legal intercourse is not one of their sexual options.

The law has not been enforced since the lawsuit was filed in 1994, and a judge halted prosecution of sodomy cases. The injunction also prevented a nationwide boycott of Louisiana by gay groups.

The injunction will no longer be valid if Civil Judge Carolyn Gill-Jefferson finds that the law is constitutional.

Lawyers for the state have indicated in court papers that they will argue Louisiana has the right to deter immoral conduct and impose penalties, but they gave no opening statement as the trial opened. Assistant Attorney General Thomas Halligan, the lead attorney, declined to comment later.

In 1986, the U.S. Supreme Court upheld Georgia's sodomy law, saying bans against such conduct have ancient roots.

Daily Nebraskan

Editor: Erin Gibson
Managing Editor: Chad Lorenz
Associate News Editor: Bryce Glenn
Associate News Editor: Brad Davis
Assignment Editor: Kasey Kerber
Opinion Editor: Cliff Hicks
Sports Editor: Sam McKewon
A&E Editor: Bret Schulte
Copy Desk Chief: Diane Broderick
Photo Chief: Matt Miller
Design Chief: Nancy Christensen
Art Director: Matt Haney
Online Editor: Gregg Stearns
Diversions Editor: Jeff Randall

Questions? Comments?
Ask for the appropriate section editor at
(402) 472-2588
or e-mail dn@unl.edu.

General Manager: Dan Shattil
Publications Board: Jessica Hofmann, (402) 466-8404
Chairwoman: Don Walton, (402) 473-7248
Professional Adviser: Nick Partsch, (402) 472-2589
Advertising Manager: Andrea Oeltjen
Asst. Ad Manager: Marni Speck
Classified Ad Manager:

Fax number: (402) 472-1761

World Wide Web: www.unl.edu/DailyNeb

The Daily Nebraskan (USPS 144-090) is published by the UNL Publications Board, Nebraska Union 34, 1400 R St., Lincoln, NE 68588-0448, Monday through Friday during the academic year; weekly during the summer sessions. The public has access to the Publications Board. Readers are encouraged to submit story ideas and comments to the Daily Nebraskan by calling (402) 472-2588.

Subscriptions are \$55 for one year.

Postmaster: Send address changes to the Daily Nebraskan, Nebraska Union 34, 1400 R St., Lincoln NE 68588-0448. Periodical postage paid at Lincoln, NE.

ALL MATERIAL COPYRIGHT 1998
THE DAILY NEBRASKAN