

U.S.: Terrorists may be to blame in Yemen blast

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON - In a sinister slip through Navy security, suicide bombers in a small boat tore a gaping hole in a U.S. warship Thursday at a refueling stop in a Yemeni harbor on the Arabian Peninsula, U.S. officials say. The blast killed six members of the crew, injured 35 and left 11 missing.

The crippled ship was tilting slightly in the harbor at Aden, Yemen, but the Navy said it was not in danger of sinking.

No one has claimed responsibility, Defense Secretary William Cohen told a Pentagon news conference.

President Clinton said the attack on the USS Cole, one of the world's most advanced warships, appeared to be an act of terrorism, the worst against the U.S. military since the bombing of an Air Force barracks in Saudi Arabia in 1996 that killed 19 troops.

"We will find out who was responsible and hold them accountable," Clinton pledged.

He dispatched to Yemen investigative teams from the FBI, the State Department and the Pentagon. Clinton also ordered a heightened state of alert for all U.S. military installations around the world.

After the attack, ambulances rushed to the port, and Americans working with Yemeni authorities cordoned off the area. Yemeni police sources said without elaboration that a number of people had been detained for questioning; it was not clear whether any were suspects.

The State Department issued a worldwide alert, saying it was extremely concerned about the possibility of violence against U.S. citizens and interests. Americans were urged to maintain "a high level of vigilance."

In a parallel travel warning, Americans were advised to defer all travel to Israel, the West Bank and Gaza, and those already

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Bill Clinton
president

there were told to stay at home or get to a safe location. Americans were warned not to go to Yemen.

Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh talked with Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, pledged his cooperation in the investigation and visited some of the injured who were hospitalized locally. He insisted in a CNN interview that his country did not harbor "terrorist elements" and said, "I don't think it's a terrorist attack."

The Pentagon said it was contacting families and would not release victims' names until Friday. But the parents of sailor Craig Wiberley, 19, of Williamsport, Md., confirmed Thursday night that their son was killed in the bombing, according to The Herald-Mail of Hagerstown, Md.

It was the first attack targeting the U.S. military in Yemen since the Pentagon pulled out all 100 American military personnel based there in January 1993 after bombings outside the U.S. Embassy and at hotels where some Americans were staying. U.S. intelligence has blamed Osama bin Laden's Al-Qaida organization for some of those bombings.

The Cole is a \$1 billion guided missile destroyer home-ported at Norfolk, Va. It had sailed through the Red Sea and was en route to the Persian Gulf where it was to perform maritime intercept operations in support of the U.N. embargo against Iraq. The ship has a crew of about 350 people.

Navy medical teams were en route to the scene Thursday to treat those injured in the 5:15 a.m. EDT explosion, Pentagon officials said. U.S. aircraft capable of evacuating the injured

were also scheduled to fly to Aden.

The incident was all the more stunning given that U.S. forces in the Middle East have been on a heightened state of alert in recent days and security plans for a port visit like the Cole's are drawn up in advance.

The Cole had just arrived in the harbor and was scheduled to leave in about four hours, officials said, suggesting the attackers may have known the ship's schedule and the procedures for a refueling stop.

Adm. Vern Clark, the chief of naval operations, said he could not fault the Cole's crew for not preventing the midday attack that apparently was carried out by two men in a small harbor craft that was helping tie up the ship's mooring lines at a fueling facility in the middle of the Aden harbor.

As a participant in normal harbor operations, the small boat's presence did not raise suspicions, Clark said.

"I have no reason to think this was anything but a senseless act of terrorism," Clark said.

After helping the Cole moor, the small boat came alongside the warship and apparently detonated a high-explosive bomb, killing themselves in the process. Some reports said the two men in the boat stood at attention as the bomb exploded, although Clark said he could not verify such details based on early information.

The explosion ripped a hole 20 feet high and 40 feet wide in the midsection of the ship, flooding the main engine compartment. Clark said the flooding was brought under control, and the ship was not in danger of sinking.

Chinese writer gets Nobel prize

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

BAGNOLET, France - Gao Xingjian burned his early writings to save himself from communist zealots, was denounced by his own wife and eventually went into exile. On Thursday, the 60-year-old survivor of China's upheaval and oppression became its first Nobel Prize laureate for literature.

The Swedish Academy cited the novelist and playwright for the "bitter insights and linguistic ingenuity" in his writings about the "struggle for individuality in mass culture."

Gao, "very, very surprised" at the honor, declared writing to have been his salvation, even during Mao Tse-tung's brutal 1966-76 Cultural Revolution, when intellectuals were silenced and he had to burn "kilos and kilos" of his writings lest they fall into the wrong hands.

"In China, I could not trust anyone, not even my family. The atmosphere was so poisoned, people were so brainwashed that even someone from your own family could turn you in," he told The Associated Press.

That actually happened, according to his friend and fellow Chinese exile, poet Bei Ling. "His wife told people from the government that he had been writing literary things at home, and writing literature then was very dangerous," said Bei. Gao did not go into specifics in the interview, but it was not uncommon during the Cultural Revolution for people, driven to extremes to save themselves, to divorce loved ones targeted by the zealots.

Gao went on to become a

leading cultural figure in China but fled in 1987 after one of his plays was banned and he was put under police surveillance. After the 1989 blood bath at Tiananmen Square in Beijing, he wrote "Fugitives," set against the background of the slayings. The Communist regime declared him "persona non grata" and banned his works.

Gao's novel, "Soul Mountain," a complex narrative based on his travels in China, was published in English translation last year and was singled out by the Swedish Academy as "one of those singular literary creations that seem impossible to compare with anything but themselves."

Gao has lived in France for 12

years, speaks flawless French and holds French citizenship. He is an authority on modern French drama but leads a humble, spartan life. After the Nobel announcement, he received visitors at his two-room apartment in a blue-collar Paris suburb wearing a sweat shirt and slippers.

Gao said he started keeping

"When you use words, you're able to keep your mind alive."

Gao Xingjian
China's first Nobel literature prize winner

a diary when he was 8 and now writes or paints up to 16 hours a day on a glass table, the only furniture in the room.

"Writing eases my suffering," he said. "When you use words, you're able to keep your mind alive. Writing is my way of reaffirming my own existence."

Having survived the Cultural Revolution, he saw his dramas fall victim in the 1980s to a government campaign against what it called "spiritual pollution." "Bus Stop" (1983) and "The Other Shore" (1986) were banned. After leaving China he wrote "Between Life and Death" (1991), and "Weekend Quartet" (1995) which critics say gracefully combines poetry, comedy and tragedy to portray life's grim realities.

Memorial tells story of bombing

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

OKLAHOMA CITY - The sounds of pounding hammers and buzzing saws fill the air at the old Journal Record building.

Workers are finishing the Oklahoma City National Memorial Center, which will lead visitors through a timeline of events surrounding the April 19, 1995, bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building. The bombing killed 168 people and injured more than 500.

"It tells a very powerful and difficult story, but I think we're telling it with a great deal of sensitivity and grace," said Bob Johnson, chairman of the memorial trust.

"We're telling it strong enough so people will always remember what happened here."

Although many of the walls are bare, Johnson said the museum is on track for its Feb. 19 opening.

The museum tour encompasses 10 chapters of the timeline since the bombing.

Each chapter is labeled with a description of the feeling organizers hope to impart to visitors - words like chaos, impact, remembrance and hope.

About 400 photos of the Murrah building, the Journal Record building and scenes from the res-

cue effort will be scattered throughout the museum.

So too will artifacts from the rescue efforts, like a firefighter's protective coat and a woman's shoe and tattered dress taken from the area.

The chaos room will be built a little off kilter to give the impression of the moment just after the bombing, Johnson said.

Dented file cabinets and broken light fixtures will be placed in the room.

A portion of the Journal Record building will be preserved as it was after the bombing to show the impact.

Johnson said he hoped people would experience some of the feelings of shock, chaos and fear caused by the bombing. But he also wants the museum to reflect the outpouring of support that came in the days afterward.

One room will be wallpapered with greeting cards sent from people all across the country, and the path leading to the children's area will be paved with pennies representing fund-raising efforts of elementary school students.

"We want people to be inspired when they leave this museum knowing that a lot of good came out of a horrible thing," he said.

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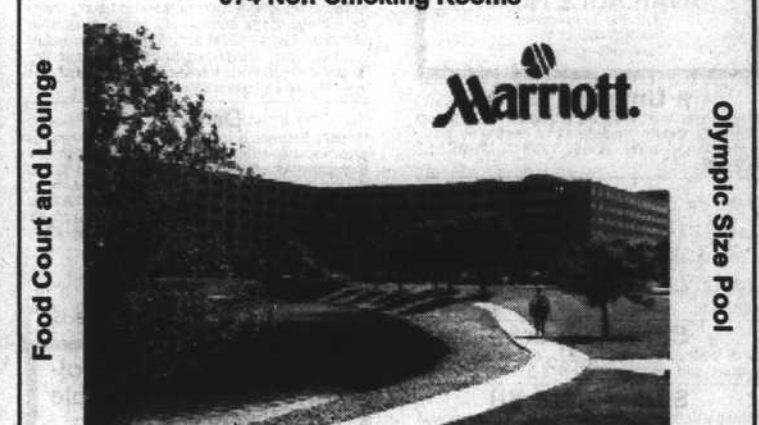
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