

Suspect links USS Cole bombing to bin Laden

■ The confession adds to the evidence that the terrorist's organization was involved.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

ADEN, Yemen — A key suspect in the attack on the USS Cole told authorities in his confession that he believes the suicide bombers acted on the orders of Osama bin Laden, Yemeni sources close to the investigation said Monday.

The suspect's comments provide another in a series of circumstantial links between the Saudi exile and the deadly attack on the U.S. warship.

The sources did not identify the man, but described him as one of the three chief suspects in custody.

He and up to seven others are expected to be tried, perhaps as early as this month, in the Oct. 12

bombing of the American destroyer that killed 17 U.S. sailors and wounded 39 during a refueling stop in Aden.

Yemen's prime minister has said authorities have identified one of the bombers and were close to identifying the second.

Authorities have yet to establish a firm connection between the attack and bin Laden, but U.S. law enforcement officials have said several threads link the suspects held in Yemen to the bin Laden organization.

Bin Laden, who is living in Afghanistan, has virtually declared war on what he sees as the anti-Islamic United States, and U.S. officials consider him their No. 1 terrorism suspect.

The jailed Yemeni man's brother was described as a prominent Arab Afghan, as Islamic fighters who helped push Soviet forces out of Afghanistan in the 1980s are known.

The sources, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the suspect confessed that he helped his brother run one of two safe houses where visiting fellow Arab Afghans would meet.

Authorities were searching for the brother, the officials said.

The brother's safe house, they said, was in Sa'da province, near the Saudi border, and the other safe house is in Saudi Arabia, though the sources did not say where. The two brothers' home is elsewhere in Sa'da, they said.

The suspect in custody told authorities that an unidentified Syrian man supervises bin Laden's activities in Yemen and Saudi Arabia.

The Syrian, he told police, is among 12 to 20 Saudis, Yemenis, Egyptians, Syrians and other Arabs who are close to bin Laden and live with him in Afghanistan. According to the sources, the

suspect said all the Afghan Arabs who came to his brother's safe house worked for the Syrian.

The two alleged suicide bombers were among a group that the suspect told investigators visited the safe house before the attack on the Cole, the sources said.

It was not clear when the visit took place, and the identities of the two bombers have not been released.

The suspect said that the Afghan Arabs who came through his safe house were all either preparing attacks or hiding out from authorities, so it was natural for him to assume the two who authorities believe were the suicide bombers were planning something.

He told authorities he had not known what the target would be, sources said.

Bin Laden, who is of Yemeni descent, recruited Arabs in

Yemen to the war in Afghanistan in the 1980s and is believed to draw on them and other Arab Afghans to support a global militant Islamic terror network.

According to the sources, the suspect also provided details about bin Laden's network. They described his confession as saying that:

■ If a member of the inner circle drops out of sight, an attack is being planned or carried out. Even within the group, nobody is allowed to ask questions about where the missing man has gone.

■ Only the most trusted of bin Laden's associates are allowed to train in using C-4, the plastic explosive used in the Cole bombing.

It was unclear whether the suspect had signed the confession. Prosecutors in Aden and police ministry officials refused comment on what the sources said.

Study suggests weight worries many children

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

CHICAGO — Influenced by their parents and the media, a disturbing number of children and teenagers are worrying about their weight in hopes of looking model-thin or bodybuilder buff, a study says.

A second study linked being overweight with low self-esteem in girls as young as 5, while a third suggests that watching TV at mealtime may contribute to children's unhealthy eating habits.

The reports, published in the January issue of the journal Pediatrics, come amid growing concern about the number of overweight youngsters — 25 percent and rising by some estimates.

The first study, from Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston, is based on questionnaires given to 12,057 children ages 9 to 14 in 1996 and 1997.

Weight concerns were found in children who weren't overweight. In the first year, 9 percent of the girls and 4 percent of the boys had extreme weight concerns, such as worries over gaining 2 pounds.

An additional 6 percent of girls and 2 percent of boys became highly weight-conscious during the study.

Girls have been encouraged "to form unrealistically thin body ideals" by the mass media, said Alison E. Field, who led the study.

A similar message about sculpted male bodies "is taking its toll on boys, making them more susceptible to being overly concerned about weight," she said.

The responses suggested that parents who were dieters or valued leanness strongly influenced their children.

In addition, youngsters who reported spending lots of time trying to emulate popular media figures were more prone to chronic dieting and extreme weight concerns.

Another study suggests that even very young children are aware of society's fixation on thinness. The study of 197 5-year-old girls included 48 who were overweight.

Those who were overweight reported significantly lower body self-esteem than those of normal weight.

Such girls may be prone to early dieting, which could impede their growth, said the study's authors Kirsten Krahnstoever Davison and Leann Lipps Birch of Pennsylvania State University.

While parents should not ignore a child's weight problem, they should avoid negative messages and seek constructive solutions, the authors said.

One solution might be turning off the television during meals, a third study suggests.

It found that children whose families routinely watched TV at mealtime ate more salty snack foods and sodas, and fewer fruits and vegetables than those who turned the televisions off.



Ariel Sharon, second from left, the leader of Israel's right-wing opposition Likud party, and Likud parliamentarian Yehoshua Matza admire a campaign photo of Sharon as he campaigns in Jerusalem's Mahane Yehuda produce market Monday for the upcoming February 6 elections.

Israelis protest peace plan's terms

■ At least 100,000 rallied against the Clinton proposal to give up a disputed holy site.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

JERUSALEM — Israelis turned out in force Monday against the concessions required by President Clinton's Mideast peace plan, surrounding the high stone walls of Jerusalem's Old City to protest a proposal to cede its disputed holy site.

"Jerusalem, I pledge my allegiance to you," banners and light projections on the walls declared, looming over a crowd of at least 100,000 that included many wrapped in or waving Israel's Star of David flag.

Thousands of police mobilized to keep order, and the guardian of an Islamic shrine at the site, fearing an incursion by the demonstrators, denounced the rally as "provocative."

The chief Palestinian negotiator, meanwhile, objected to efforts to formulate a "declaration of principles" that would be based on the Clinton formula and guide future talks.

"We will not accept any kind of pressure," negotiator Saeb Erekat

insisted, a day after Clinton urged the Palestinians to compromise and not hold out for the impossible.

Erekat said U.N. resolutions calling for an Israeli withdrawal from war-won land and a return of Palestinian refugees must remain the basis of talks.

In Cairo, a meeting of Israeli and Palestinian security officials with CIA chief George Tenet broke up without result, Palestinian officials said.

The Palestinians had demanded that in exchange for a resumption of security cooperation, Israel lift its blockade of Palestinian towns and villages in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Israel refused, the Palestinians said.

In the Gaza Strip, a 34-year old Palestinian was killed by Israeli fire close to the Netzarim junction.

The army said soldiers opened fire because the man carried a "suspicious" bag and came too close to the soldiers.

A clash between stone-throwing Palestinians and Jewish settlers at the West Bank village of Hares left a 27-year-old Palestinian dead. Palestinians said he was shot in the chest in a confrontation that started with villagers stoning a settler's car.

Gunmen ambushed an Israeli car in the West Bank, north of Jerusalem,

"We will not accept any kind of pressure."

Saeb Erekat
negotiator

hitting a 12-year-old passenger in his thigh and elbow, settler spokesman Yehoshua Mor-Yosef said. The army confirmed the attack.

More than three months of Israeli-Palestinian violence has killed 362 people — most of them Palestinian.

Clinton was sending mediator Dennis Ross to the region Tuesday for separate talks with Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak and Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat.

Clinton, pressing for at least an understanding before he leaves office Jan. 20, has proposed that Israel accept a Palestinian state in 95 percent of the West Bank and all of Gaza.

Israel would cede control over the Old City hilltop shrine revered by Muslims and Jews, and in exchange the Palestinians would drop a demand that nearly 4 million Palestinian refugees and their descendants be granted the right to return.

Bush defends cabinet nominee

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

AUSTIN, Texas — President-elect Bush defended his embattled nominee for labor secretary Monday despite learning she'd sheltered an illegal immigrant in her home.

Bush also said he wasn't considering pardoning President Clinton because he hasn't been indicted for anything.

"I've got confidence in Linda Chavez," Bush said of his choice for the Labor Department. "I strongly believe that when the Senate gives her a fair hearing, they'll vote for her."

At the same time, he said his team was continuing to review information on Chavez, as on all his nominees.

Asked whether he would pardon Clinton, Bush said: "No, I wouldn't pardon somebody who's not been indicted."

Some Republicans, even those who have been sharply critical of Clinton in the

aftermath of his impeachment, have suggested Bush pardon him to move the country beyond the scandals of his presidency.

The independent counsel investigating Clinton's conduct in the Monica Lewinsky matter has said a decision about whether to pursue the case against him will come shortly after he leaves office Jan. 20.

Clinton, a lawyer, is facing disbarment proceedings in Arkansas over his sworn testimony in which he denied having sex with Lewinsky.

Bush indicted a reluctance to let Clinton's legal troubles cloud his own presidency, saying "I think it's time to get all of this business behind us" and let Clinton "move on and enjoy life and become an active participant in the American system."

But "the suggestion that I would pardon somebody who has never been indicted, that doesn't make any sense to me," Bush added.

World/Nation

The Associated Press

■ Nebraska

Judge throws out confession by woman accused of murder

BROKEN BOW — A judge threw out the confession of a local woman accused of killing a Loup County rancher.

The woman told police that she did not remember killing her sometimes boyfriend but that she had a dream where she saw herself beside his bed with a revolver.

District Judge Ronald Olberding ruled that Maxine Betts was illegally coerced by State Patrol investigators to confess to killing Ralph Quador, who lived alone on his ranch 10 miles east of Taylor.

The judge said police officers made false statements and false promises to Betts to get to her make comments that the prosecution cited as a confession.

Quador was shot six times in his bedroom last January.

Betts was the last known person to speak to Quador, and she reported his death to authorities.

Betts was arrested in May on the day she mentioned her dream to police.

However, the gun and ammunition she said were in her dream did not match those used in the killing, court records said.

■ Louisiana

Former governor sentenced for taking payoffs for licenses

BATON ROUGE — Former Gov. Edwin Edwards was sentenced to 10 years in prison and fined \$250,000 today for extorting payoffs from businessmen applying for riverboat casino licenses.

Edwards, 73, showed little emotion as the decision was read. His daughters and wife sobbed behind him.

"A long sentence is effectively a death sentence," said Edwards' lawyer Dan Small, who immediately filed notice of appeal.

■ Italy

Congressional Gold Medal awarded to Pope John Paul II

VATICAN CITY — Pope John Paul II was awarded the Congressional Gold Medal on Monday, joining a select list that also includes George Washington, Bob Hope and Mother Teresa.

U.S. House and Senate leaders presented the medal to the pontiff during a ceremony in the Apostolic Palace's fresco-covered 17th-century Clementine Room.

The legislation to award John Paul the medal hails the 80-year-old, Polish-born pope for using "his moral authority to hasten the fall of godless totalitarian regimes."

■ Texas

Court orders Ford, Firestone to release internal documents

CORPUS CHRISTI — A woman paralyzed in a rollover crash of a Ford Explorer with Firestone tires reached a settlement Monday under which Ford and Bridgestone/Firestone agreed to make public thousands of pages of internal memos and reports.

"We're talking about an incredible, locked-up vault of information," said Mikal Watts, a lawyer for 43-year-old Donna Bailey.

"This case will go a long way toward uncovering some of the secrets around these tire failings."

Bailey, a former rock climber and weight lifter who was paralyzed from the neck down in a wreck last March, had sued the companies for more than \$100 million.

Under the settlement, she also received an undisclosed sum of money — "enough to take care of her for the rest of her life," Watts said.