

U.S. remains cautious with North Korea

■ President Bush says he still views the communist nation as a threat.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — President Bush told South Korean President Kim Dae-jung on Wednesday that the United States views North Korea as a threat and would not immediately resume negotiations with the communist regime.

Even as Kim engages in peace negotiations with his northern counterparts, Bush said he is skeptical of the North Korean leadership and wary of the regime's abilities to build and spread weapons of mass destruction.

"I... told the president that we're looking forward to, at some point in the future, having a dialogue with the North Koreans, but any negotiations would require complete verification of the terms," Bush said at a question-and-answer session between meetings with the president.

Secretary of State Colin Powell, briefing reporters while the meetings were under way, said negotiations will wait until the administration completes its review of U.S.-North Korean rela-

tions. He said Bush would not be "fooled" by North Korea.

Bush called the Oval Office meeting with Kim "frank and candid," a signal that the two countries are taking slightly different approaches to the same goal of a peaceful peninsula.

Under the Clinton administration, the United States came close to normalizing relations with North Korea in exchange for North Korea's ending its missile program. Until the end of his term, President Clinton held out hope of visiting the communist nation.

In advance of their meeting, Kim had signaled his intention to sign a peace "declaration" with his North Korean counterparts.

Senior administration officials have said privately they are wary that Kim's peace efforts may be moving too quickly, with too few concessions from North Korea. They said Bush was making that point with Kim, though the president went out of his way to tell reporters that the South Korean leader is a "realist."

"I am concerned that the North Koreans are shipping weapons of mass destruction around the world," Bush said. "We want to make sure their ability to develop and spread weapons of mass destruction was in fact stopped."



U.S. President George W. Bush greets South Korean President Kim Dae-jung in the Oval Office at the White House on Wednesday in Washington, D.C.

World/Nation

The Associated Press

Washington

Officer dies in shooting after stopping three teen-agers

DES MOINES — A police officer was shot and killed early Wednesday after stopping four teen-agers walking along a highway, police said.

The suspects, believed to range in age from 15 to 18, remained at large, Police Sgt. Steve Wieland said. The search for them involved officers from jurisdictions extending from Tacoma to Seattle, he said.

No weapon was found, and Wieland said he didn't know if any bullet casings were recovered.

The 33-year-old officer, a veteran of six years on the force, apparently stopped the pedestrians about five miles south of Seattle-Tacoma International Airport. He told a dispatcher by radio that he recognized one of them from an earlier felony case, Wieland said.

A second officer arrived shortly afterward and found the officer by the road.

The wounded officer, who was married and had a 2-year-old child, died at a hospital, police said.

New York

Cabbies find minivans don't hold up under workload

Send them back to the soccer moms.

The minivan, symbol of suburbia, can't cut it on the mean streets of New York, say a number of taxi fleet owners who are phasing out the vehicles.

The minivan, they say, breaks down too often under pothole-pounding and round-the-clock cab driving.

"They just flat-out haven't worked out," said Michael Woloz, a spokesman for the Metropolitan Taxi Cab Board of Trade, which represents 18 fleet owners. "Minivans can't hold up on city streets."

Allen Kaplan, vice president of Team Systems, one of the larger fleet owners with more than 300 cabs, said the minivans' frames "are not made for this type of work. We also have a lot of trouble with the doors and the hinges."

Kaplan, whose company bought 20 minivans in 1998 and has already retired six, said the remainder will be off the street in the next few months.

Arkansas

California couple gives up fight for twins' adoption

LITTLE ROCK — The California couple who fought a British couple for the right to adopt 8-month-old twin girls bowed out of the fight Wednesday to concentrate on regaining custody of a 2-year-old boy.

Richard and Vickie Allen of Highland, Calif., lost custody of the boy, whom they are trying to adopt, after Allen was accused last week of molesting two family baby sitters.

Allen, 49, pleaded innocent. On Tuesday, the Arkansas judge who had approved the British couple's adoption of the little girls nullified his decision, saying the adoption was obtained fraudulently.

Until Wednesday, the Allens had been battling Alan and Judith Kilshaw of Britain for custody of the girls, who had been put up for adoption over the Internet.

Richard Allen said in a telephone interview Wednesday that he and his wife will no longer fight for the twins.

Illinois

Coach fired after argument led to using meat cleaver

ROCKFORD — A coach has been fired because she tried to take a meat cleaver into school after an argument at a junior high volleyball game.

Toni Gay, a teacher's aide at the Rockford Environmental Science Academy, was arrested Saturday and charged with unlawful use of a weapon on school property and disorderly conduct.

"We never would accept such behavior from students, and we shouldn't accept such behavior from staff who are here to set an example," said Rockford Public School spokesman Jim Jennings.

Week's second school shooting wounds one

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WILLIAMSPORT, Pa. — A 14-year-old girl shot a female classmate in the shoulder Wednesday in the cafeteria of their parochial school but dropped the gun at the urging of another student, authorities said.

A witness said the shooter fired at the floor and the bullet ricocheted into the victim, a classmate she had feuded with in the past.

"This is a situation of a student who was upset with another student," police officer David Ritter said. "This is not a random act of violence and as far as understand there are no other targets for this violence."

The shooting happened around noon during lunch in the cafeteria filled with about 120 students at Bishop Neumann Junior-Senior High, a Roman Catholic school.

Police said freshman Brent Paucke, 14, was able to persuade the girl to drop the gun.

Paucke said he ducked under a lunchroom table when the girl came in screaming and fired two shots, but then recognized her from his school bus.

"She was saying, 'I don't want to live. I should just commit suicide right here.' And she pointed the gun at her head," Paucke said. "I got up and started talking to her. I didn't want anyone to get hurt."

Paucke said the girl pointed the gun at him from about five feet away, and his principal told him to back away. But he said he kept talking because he feared more people would be hurt.

"You could tell she was really mad, and she looked like she was about to go off on everybody," Paucke said. He said the girl eventually placed the gun on the floor and he kicked it away.

Ritter called Paucke "very courageous." "We were very proud that a student would take such a serious risk," Ritter said.

Students return after shootings

■ Santana High School was back in session after two were killed and 13 others injured on Monday.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

SANTEE, Calif. — Students and teachers returned to Santana High School Wednesday, two days after their world was upended by a fellow student with a handgun and a reservoir of rage.

About 150 counselors were on campus — one for every classroom — and walls were patched to cover the bullet holes left by Monday's shooting.

"It's going to be a tough day," said senior Brian Finkel, 18.

The school's 1,900 students will spend the day talking with teachers, administrators, counselors and each other. There are no immediate plans to resume regular classes.

"The first priority will be to begin the healing process," said Granger Ward, superintendent of the Grossmont Union High School District. "There's a lot of anger. There's a lot of grief. There's a lot of sadness."

Two students died and 13 people were wounded in the attack. Another was injured while driving away in a car. Three victims who remained hospitalized Wednesday were reported in good condition.

Charles Andrew Williams, 15, was scheduled to be arraigned on murder and other charges Wednesday afternoon in San Diego.

Three students who might have known about Williams' alleged plans were kept out of classes while district officials investigate, Ward said.

Among them is Vanessa Willis, a 15-year-old neighbor of Williams who heard his threats to start a shooting spree but

thought they were a joke.

She said she didn't care if students were upset that she has spoken up about classmates teasing Williams.

"I feel bad for everyone that was hurt and everything, but they want to be mad at me. ... They don't know the whole story," she said.

Few signs remain of the deadly gunfire that erupted two days ago.

Bullet holes that riddled a bathroom where the massacre began have been patched and covered with paint, and all traces of blood have been scrubbed from the floors.

"I want to talk to a lot of friends that I haven't talked to because I'm worried. A lot of my friends saw everything, and they are pretty upset about it," said freshman Ashley Hart, 14. "I'm not afraid, I'm fine. What upsets me is when my friends are crying."

Investigators said Williams, known as Andy, was filled with anger when he was arrested.

Friends have said he was constantly picked on and was so skinny that some people called him "Anorexic Andy."

Such harassment doesn't excuse the shooting, said freshman Jake Clarke, 14.

"You know everybody gets picked on," he said.

Williams' older brother also told The Atlanta Journal-Constitution that the 15-year-old was often teased.

"He has big ears and he's real skinny," said Michael Williams, 20, a student at the Art Institute of Atlanta. "People like to pick on him. It was like that as long as I could remember."

But Michael Williams said he never imagined his brother would react by shooting anyone.

The suspect, whose parents were divorced 10 years ago, lived with his father, while Michael Williams stayed

"People like to pick on him. It was like that as long as I could remember."

Michael Williams
shooter's brother

with their mother in South Carolina before leaving for college.

He said he last saw his brother during the winter holidays.

"Everything was fine. I don't know what happened after Christmas," he said.

The shooting also surprised friends in Brunswick, Md., where he lived before moving to Southern California last summer.

"I've never seen Andy get mad at anyone," his best friend, 16-year-old Scott Bryan, told the Los Angeles Times.

He recalled Williams watching news of the 1999 Columbine shootings: "He thought it was terrible, that it was just so sad."

Art Fairweather, principal of Brunswick Middle School, said Andy Williams was on the honor roll there.

"His grades were always good," he said. "He seemed to have a lot of friends, and he appeared to be well-adjusted."

Kathleen Seek said the family left Maryland after someone broke into their home, fired a BB into the boy's television and wrecked his backyard tree house.

The teen-ager allegedly opened fire Monday morning, shooting indiscriminately at the passing students in an open yard.

According to authorities, Williams used a .22-caliber long rifle revolver that belonged to his father, who told investigators it was kept in a locked cabinet.

Sharon ready to begin quest for peace

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

JERUSALEM — Ariel Sharon took over as Israel's prime minister Wednesday with a mandate to end months of bloodshed.

He said his broad-based coalition was ready to make peace with the Palestinians if they "abandon the way of violence, terrorism and incitement."

Sharon, the nation's fifth prime minister in six years, heads a large and unwieldy government that inherits the Palestinian uprising, a broken-down peace process and an anxiety-ridden Israel.

In a speech to the Knesset, Sharon said his coalition would be ready for "painful compromises" toward peace with the Palestinians, but not "under the pressure of violence and terror."

Later, parliament approved Sharon's "national unity government" by a vote of 72 to 21.

Immediately afterward, Sharon rose to the podium and declared his allegiance, officially taking office, to an unusual round of applause from the floor.

In his speech before the vote, Sharon promised his government would work with the Palestinians.

"If the Palestinians choose the path of peace ... they will find me and my government a sincere and true partner," he said.

Sharon noted that he has promised to build no more settlements on disputed lands — a departure from his past as a hard-line patron of the settler movement. But he did not outline how he would make good on campaign promises to restore stability to a land rattled by five months of violence.

In recent weeks, his low-key pronouncements have focused on dealing with the immediate problems of halting the fighting with the Palestinians and establishing a government sturdy enough to withstand the constant buffeting of Israel's unruly politics.

A former general who won glory and notoriety for repeated confrontations with Israel's Arab neighbors, Sharon rejects the grand ambitions of his predecessor, Ehud Barak, whose government crumbled amid his failed attempt to strike a comprehensive peace deal with the Palestinians.

Sharon, who has consistently opposed major Israeli concessions to the Palestinians, says the most he would countenance is a long-term interim agreement. A final peace deal is years, perhaps even a generation away, he has often said.

Sharon, who has never shaken

"If the Palestinians choose the path of peace ... they will find me and my government a sincere and true partner."

Ariel Sharon
Israeli prime minister

hands with Yasser Arafat, blames the Palestinian leader for inciting his people to violence and failing to curb the militants. The Palestinians, meanwhile, remain deeply suspicious of Sharon.

"The new Israeli government must choose between continuing in the policy of talks or continuing its recent policy of blockades and siege and escalation," said Nabil Aburdeneh, a spokesman for Arafat.

Sharon "wants to achieve a series of interim agreements (with the Palestinians), which is not really a peace agenda," said Hanan Ashrawi, a Palestinian spokeswoman. "We don't expect to see any progress on the peace front, and I hold no hopes for this government."

Hamas, a militant Islamic group, threatened to greet Sharon with an onslaught of bombs.

The group claimed responsibility for one of two fatal attacks in the past week.

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Weather

TODAY	TOMORROW
Sunny	Sunny
high 44, low 18	high 57, low 28