

Battalion Classifieds

World and Nation

Israeli bus set afire, clashes scar border

JERUSALEM (AP) — Palestinian protesters set fire to a bus and an Israeli civilian shot and wounded an Arab stone-thrower in clashes in the West Bank on Thursday.

Two Israeli soldiers and a Palestinian guerrilla died in a foggy, pre-dawn skirmish on the Lebanon border.

In the West Bank, Arab reports said seven Palestinians suffered gunshot wounds in clashes with Israeli soldiers. The army said two Arabs were wounded, and soldiers shot three others, including a 10-year-old boy who was in serious condition, in an overnight clash near the village of Burka.

On Israel's northern border, Israeli paratroopers battled with a three-man guerrilla squad that cut through a fence and planned to attack a civilian settlement, army officials said. A guerrilla and two Israeli soldiers were killed, one guerrilla was captured and another one escaped back to Lebanon.

Nine Israelis have been killed in four infiltrations since November. Israeli leaders saw the stepped-up raids as an attempt by Yasser Arafat's Fatah guerrillas to recover lost prestige in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

"The PLO is trying to demonstrate its ability to participate in and even to influence the events in the (occupied) territories," Lt. Gen. Dan Shomron, armed forces chief of staff, said on Israel Radio. "The influence is actually very small. And they try to act in the way that they know — against civilians."

Israel also protested a PLO-sponsored plan to send 100 Palestinians deported activists back to Israel on a Greek-owned ship scheduled to leave Feb. 10.

Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir toured two Gaza Strip refugee camps and vowed to improve living conditions in the squalid areas, which have been a spawning ground for recent violence.

On Thursday, the army said border police shot and wounded one

Palestinian in the leg after he was thrown at a patrol while few were briefly lifted in the refugee camp near Nablis. Reports said three were wounded.

The army said another Palestinian was wounded when Arab strikers in the village of al-Banah smashed the windshield of a car, and an Israeli suffered cuts from shattered glass. Ager in the same car got out and at demonstrators, wounding the army said.

Hospital officials said four were wounded, one seriously.

An army spokesman said a car was suspended after violators on the use of live ammunition in the village of Silwad where Arabs were wounded Thursday. An enlisted man was sentenced one month in jail for stealing rettes from a store in Ramallah.

Arab youths halted a bus carrying Palestinian workers to jobs at a removed the workers and driver set the vehicle ablaze near Qalqilya, the army spokesman said.

Hospitals boost new 'arms race,' researchers say

CHICAGO (AP) — Hospitals with the most competition have been most likely to let surgical patients stay longer, boosting America's "medical arms race" and adding to high costs, a study has found.

Doctors and patients prefer longer stays for major surgical procedures, to ensure adequate preparation before an operation, adequate recovery afterward and to reduce the nursing burden on family members, the study says.

But researchers who studied 1982 data on almost 500,000 patients were unable to find medical reasons for longer surgical stays at high-competition hospitals, they said in Friday's Journal of the American Medical Association.

"Classic economic competition would lead you to believe that the more competition, the lower the cost," said Harold S. Luft, health economist of the University of California at San Francisco.

"In fact, what we found was the more competition, the higher the cost," he added in a telephone interview Thursday.

The study adds to previous evidence that hospitals respond to competition largely by adding fancy equipment, extra beds and other amenities — in effect, participating in a "medical arms race" that duplicates services and drives costs up, the researchers said.

The American Hospital Association, which represents more than 6,000 hospitals nationwide, had no immediate comment on the study, spokesman Andrea Mannman said.

The picture has changed since their study, the researchers acknowledge, because new spending limits set by the Medicare program starting in 1983 and similar pressures from private health plans have "dramatically reduced" lengths of stay.

But overall costs still are going up, and the researchers now are investigating "whether there is still a differential between competitive and non-competitive" markets, said James C. Robinson, assistant professor of health economics at the University of California at Berkeley.

Robinson and his colleagues found that in 1982 "hospitals in the most competitive markets reported average lengths of patient stay 16.9 percent higher . . . than comparable hospitals that had no nearby neighbors."

They studied 747 non-federal, short-term hospitals around the nation, dividing them into four groups according to the number of other hospitals within a 15-mile radius and measuring that against stays for 10 types of surgery.

Lengths of stay increased with increasing competition for all 10 procedures.

Union members' arrest linked with Dupont Plaza hotel fire

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico (AP) — Two former Teamsters Union leaders and a union member were arrested Wednesday in connection with the disastrous Dupont Plaza Hotel fire after the man who set the blaze agreed to testify against them.

The fire on New Year's Eve 1986 killed 97 people and injured more than 140. It was the second most deadly fire in U.S. history after the 1946 Winecoff Hotel fire in Atlanta that killed 119.

The arrests came after Common-

wealth prosecutors reached agreement with Hector Escudero Aponte, 36, hours before the former hotel maintenance worker was to go on trial on 97 counts of first degree murder and one count each of arson and conspiracy.

Escudero Aponte, who confessed to setting the fire, was allowed to plead guilty instead on Wednesday to reduced charges of second degree murder, arson and conspiracy. He was sentenced to concurrent terms totaling 30 years.

San Juan District Attorney Hector Betancourt said Escudero Aponte agreed to testify against three other arrested Wednesday.

Puerto Rico's Justice Dept. identified the three as Manuel Santiago Rios, vice president of Teamsters Local 901 at the time of the fire; Luis M. Muniz, former steward and butcher at Dupont Plaza; and Luis Elmo Rios, a former utility employee.

Agency examines possible link between nuclear plants, cancer

WASHINGTON (AP) — The National Institutes of Health has quietly initiated a study of cancer deaths among populations near nuclear power plants, according to a letter released Thursday by Sen. Edward M. Kennedy.

The letter, which was sent to the Massachusetts Democrat from Dr. James B. Wyngaarden, director of NIH, said that the studies were started as a result of "leukemia clusters around the Pilgrim power plant in Massachusetts and several plants in the United Kingdom."

The findings, said Wyngaarden,

"have led us to initiate a large-scale evaluation of cancer deaths occurring among persons living near the over 100 reactors operating in the United States."

Don Ralbovsky, a NIH spokesman, acknowledged that the letter was sent on Jan. 28, but said Wyngaarden was out of town and others who could comment were not reachable.

In the letter, Wyngaarden said the NIH also is collaborating in a Swedish study of 40,000 patients who have received low doses of iodine-131 for medical diagnostic reasons.

Iodine-131 is described as "one of the major radioactive isotopes emitted during nuclear power operations and from nuclear weapons testing."

"We have also evaluated extensive mortality data regarding possible cancer risks in the general population living downwind of Nevada nuclear test site," he said. "While many reported associations are unsupported by the small increase in leukemia in southwest Utah cannot be ruled out at this time."

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