

Hamas makes truce resumes peace talks

GAZA CITY, Gaza Strip (AP) — The newly released spiritual leader of Hamas — the militant Islamic group whose trademark is the suicide bomb — made a tentative truce offer Tuesday, saying the group would halt such bombings if Israel stops "attacks against our civilians."

Sheik Ahmed Yassin's offer, cautiously welcomed by Israel, signaled a potential shift in his group's dedication to the destruction of Israel.

The blind, wheelchair-bound cleric made his comments at his Gaza home, where he received Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat, who kissed the 61-year-old Hamas leader repeatedly.

Yassin's overture came as Israel and the Palestinians resumed peace negotiations Tuesday after a seven-month hiatus. Lower-level committees met to discuss relatively minor issues, but U.S. envoy Dennis Ross said the new start meant both sides wanted "to see a new page turned."

The renewed peace talks and Yassin's triumphant return to Gaza after eight years in an Israeli jail have been all but overshadowed by scandal: an Israeli official confirmed Tuesday that Israel received

a cease-fire proposal from Hamas two days before Israel's botched assassination attempt on a Hamas leader in Jordan.

That bungled hit two weeks ago has damaged relations with Jordan, Israel's staunchest ally in the Arab world, and forced Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to make concessions — including Yassin's release — that have undermined his get-tough stance toward terrorism.

Netanyahu has been harshly criticized for approving the operation.

Ross held separate meetings Tuesday with Netanyahu and Arafat following three-way talks Monday night with Israeli Foreign Minister David Levy and Arafat's deputy Mahmoud Abbas.

Israel radio and television reported the U.S. envoy was trying to arrange a meeting Tuesday night between Netanyahu and Arafat, but those reports could not be confirmed.

Yassin, who returned to a hero's welcome in Gaza on Monday, said any halt to attacks would be conditioned on a full Israeli withdrawal from occupied lands.

David Bar-Illan, a senior aide to

Netanyahu, called the terms acceptable — but he said the Yassin's overture was made represented "a positive change."

Yassin and other Hamas are not endorsing the idea of a comprehensive peace settlement, only a limited cease-fire was after which fighting would resume.

In the past, Hamas leaders spoken of a "holy war" to establish an Islamic state in all of Israel. The group has carried more than a dozen suicide bombings in the Jewish state since 1987.

"We would like to hope that means that he (Yassin) will seek peace rather than violence," said Ian told The Associated Press. "There is no question he has lowing and charisma."

That following — demonstrated by a huge flag-waving Monday — has not gone unnoticed by Arafat.

As Israel's prime partner in a peace process, Arafat has distanced himself from the most hard-line positions, does not want to alienate group's supporters.

Cuban congress reasserts socialism

HAVANA (AP) — The last time Cuba's Communists held a congress, their party appeared on the ropes: The Soviet Union was collapsing, shortages of food and fuel were spreading and a defiant Fidel Castro vowed to save the country.

Six years later, food and fuel are still scarce and the economy's recovery from crisis is slowing, but the Communists sit firmly in control as they prepare to meet again Wednesday, setting policy that will guide the country until 2002, when President Castro will be 76.

Judging from party statements, big changes are not in store.

"There are no new proposals" of significance, said Phillip Brenner, a Cuba specialist at the American University in Washington, D.C.

Draft statements for the Fifth Party Congress reaffirm a single-party socialist system, reject foreign claims of human rights violations and insist on a state-dominated socialist economy.

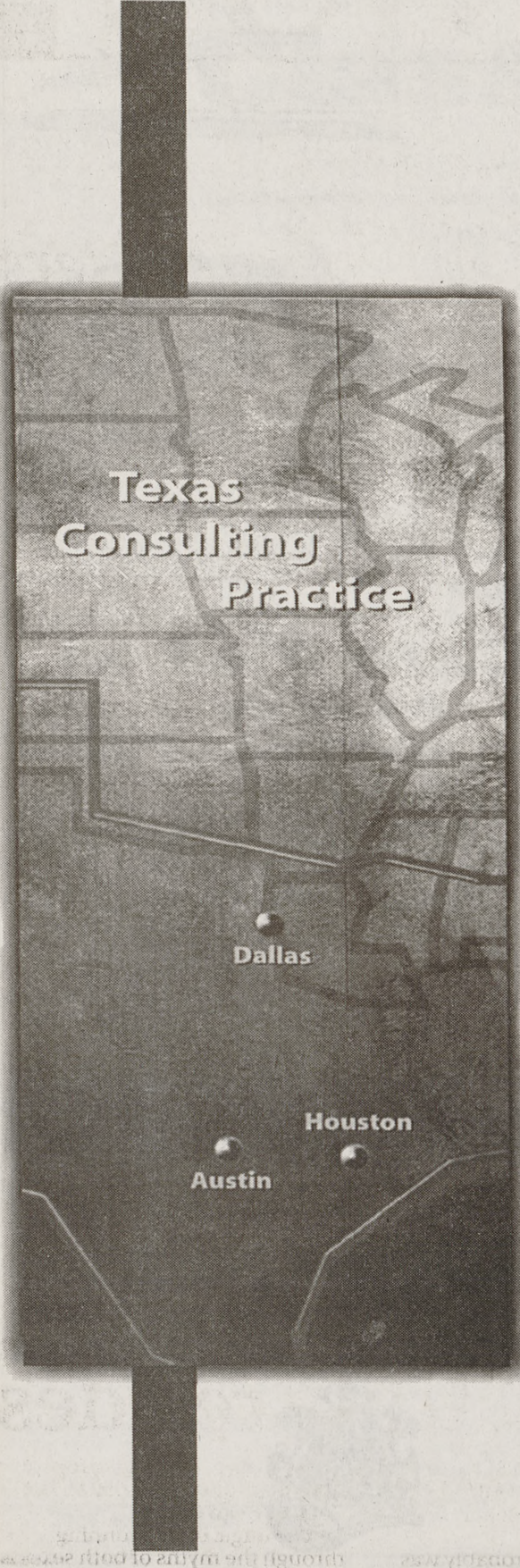
The 1991 congress was held in an atmosphere of crisis. The socialist bloc that aided and traded Cuba had crumbled, and the Soviet Union itself was collapse within weeks.

Cuba's economic output plunged by at least 35 percent over the next three years, and the country eventually embraced a series of market-oriented reforms to create jobs and attract foreign investment and tourism.

The government has slowed the pace of reform, last year clamped down on domestic dissent as relations with the United States became even more embittered.

The party's meeting this week also appears to assert Cuba's socialist system will survive the chaos created by the fall of its allies.

The congress, held roughly every five years since 1975, should see the president's most important speech in months. Castro recently has shunned the spotlight, making only one major appearance in early August.



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1.21	K	SI3	\$4150 ⁰⁰
1.04	I	SI1	\$5100 ⁰⁰ EGL CERT
.94	K	SI1	\$2915 ⁰⁰
.87	D	SI2	\$3475 ⁰⁰ UGA CERT
.83	H	SI1	\$3465 ⁰⁰
.73	G	SI3	\$2365 ⁰⁰ EGL CERT
.49	F	SI1	\$1736 ⁰⁰
.49	J	SI2	\$1155 ⁰⁰
.44	F	SI1 / VS2	\$1250 ⁰⁰
.31	I	SI1	\$475 ⁰⁰

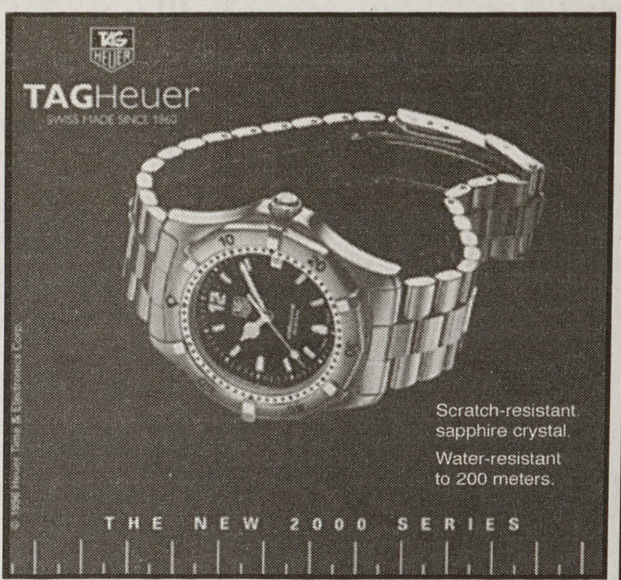
Princess Cut			
Carat	Color	Clarity	Price
.93	H	VS2	\$3800 ⁰⁰ EGL CERT
.65	H	SI2	\$1340 ⁰⁰
.57	H	SI2	\$1050 ⁰⁰
.52	G	VS1	\$1635 ⁰⁰ EGL CERT

Emerald Cut			
Carat	Color	Clarity	Price
2.12	L	VVS2	\$8000 ⁰⁰

Oval			
Carat	Color	Clarity	Price
1.07	I	VS1	\$4850 ⁰⁰ EGL CERT
.93	I	SI2	\$3146 ⁰⁰ UGA CERT
.75	D	SI1	\$2990 ⁰⁰ UGA CERT
.66	K	VVS2	\$1439 ⁰⁰
.32	H	SI1	\$550 ⁰⁰

Round Cut			
Carat	Color	Clarity	Price
1.07	H	SI1	\$5700 ⁰⁰ EGL CERT
1.07	H	SI2	\$3700 ⁰⁰ EGL CERT
.93	J	SI2	\$3070 ⁰⁰
.91	J	SI2	\$3250 ⁰⁰
.71	H	VVS2	\$2985 ⁰⁰ IGL CERT
.33	H	VVS2	\$790 ⁰⁰ IGL CERT

Pear Shape			
Carat	Color	Clarity	Price
1.02	J	SI1	\$3575 ⁰⁰
.92	K	VS2	\$2550 ⁰⁰
.79	K	SI1	\$1850 ⁰⁰
.71	D	SI1	\$2830 ⁰⁰ UGA CERT
.49	H	SI1	\$1375 ⁰⁰



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