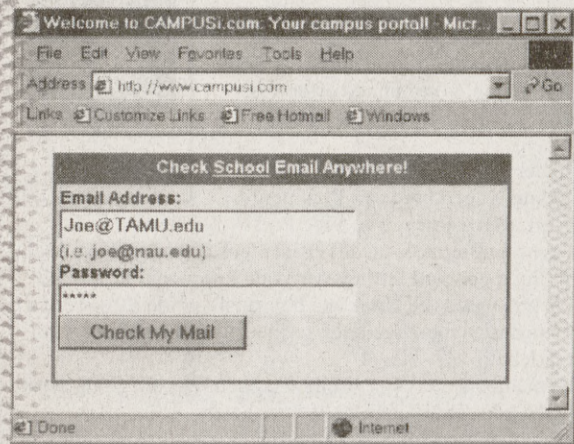


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WORLD

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THE BATTALION

Friday, May 5, 2000

Protesters cleared from training site

VIEQUES, Puerto Rico (AP)—The Navy wasted no time in announcing new bombing exercises at its prized Atlantic training ground Thursday, after federal agents ousted 213 protesters to end their defiant yearlong occupation.

Backed by helicopters and ships, 200 FBI agents and 100 U.S. Marshals swept across Puerto Rico's Vieques Island at dawn, detaining the activists, several lawmakers, a bishop and nuns.

Pentagon officials said the Navy intends to resume training within two weeks using dummy bombs, as President Clinton and Puerto Rican Gov. Pedro Rossello agreed in January. Vieques residents, meanwhile, will vote on whether the Navy should leave the island in 2003. A date for the referendum has not been set.

The resumption of training is a prerequisite for the transfer of \$40 million in economic aid for Vieques called for by the January agreement.

In Washington, Attorney General Janet Reno said all 12 protest sites were cleared and that there would be no charges against the demonstrators unless they assaulted federal officers or returned to range.

"All indications are that the protesters have handled themselves in a peaceful and dignified manner," Reno said.

Some protesters tried to run away when agents arrived, but "that was a short-lived exercise," said FBI agent Dave Miller.

Justice Department spokesperson Myron Marlin said that 213 people had been removed from the base, including 64 from the main gate area and the remainder from 12 camps inside. They were taken to Roosevelt Roads Naval Station, which administers the nearby Vieques range, for processing and release.

Marlin said there were no injuries to federal agents.

Arabs arrested for spying

ISLAMABAD, Pakistan (AP)—An Arab arrested in Afghanistan by the United States recruited him to find alleged terrorist Osama bin Laden, and his Taliban captors said and another prisoner "were spying on America and Israel."

A television reporter interviewed the two prisoners at a secret location in southern Afghanistan. The Associated Press viewed the taped interview Wednesday in Islamabad.

"We have arrested two Arabs, a Syrian and an Iraqi, who were spying for America and Israel," Taliban Foreign Minister Wakil Ahmed Muttawakil told the AP on Wednesday. "We found six documents on them that show they were spying."

Muttawakil refused, however, to confirm or deny the statement of a prisoner that the Taliban were holding an American as an alleged spy.

On camera, the Syrian said, "I was told by the Taliban that they have arrested an American."

In Washington, State Department officials said they were aware of reports that an American had been arrested but had been unable to confirm the reports independently. The U.S. Embassy in Islamabad and the consulate in Peshawar are investigating, the officials said.

The reporter and his cameraman interviewed by the AP upon their return to Islamabad this week, worked for United Arab Emirates Television, Al Dhabbi Channel, in the UAE's capital.

They interviewed the Taliban's acknowledged prisoners the night of April 25. The Syrian, Abdul Rahman Janko, 22, fidgeted in his chair as he answered questions.

"During my interrogation, I told them how I was recruited, what they wanted me to do and who I was in contact with my information," he said.

Soldier admits to killing hundreds

PRETORIA, South Africa (AP)—A former special forces officer on Thursday described killing hundreds of black prisoners and tossing their corpses from an airplane, shedding light on one of the worst horrors committed by apartheid South Africa.

Johan Theron's testimony for the first time crystallized the events of two decades ago. Sketchy reports had surfaced earlier of the murders of some 200 members of a guerrilla group that fought South Africa's occupation of neighboring Namibia,

known as South West Africa until it won independence in 1990.

The killings began with crude and gruesome stranglings, but evolved into more sophisticated poisonings with the evidence disposed of in the frigid waters of the Atlantic, Theron told the Pretoria High Court.

Adjusting his gold-rimmed glasses while leaning forward in the witness stand, Theron told of flinging his victims' corpses from a plane 12,000 feet above the Atlantic and watching the

bodies plummet to the sea.

"The people had to be dead before I threw them into the sea," the former lieutenant colonel explained, to eliminate any chance of their surviving the fall and returning to implicate him.

Most had been killed by an overdose of muscle relaxants, supplied by Dr. Wouter Basson, who ran apartheid South Africa's chemical and biological weapons program, Theron said. Theron was testifying Thursday as a prosecution witness in Basson's murder, conspiracy and fraud trial.

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