



Threat issued by extremist group

MANILA, Philippines (AP) — A Muslim extremist group on Monday issued a veiled threat to harm 20 kidnapped tourists — including three Americans — while the Philippines president said she would use everything in her power to “crush” the insurgents. One of the leaders of the Abu Sayyaf rebel group that kidnapped the tourists claimed responsibility in a satellite telephone call to a local radio station Monday. The rebel, named Abu Sabaya, allowed American Martin Burnham and another hostage to speak too. “We are safe and we are appealing for a peaceful negotiations,” Burnham said. “They are treating us well.” President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo said she would not give in to any

ransom demands and instead offered \$2 million in rewards for the capture of rebel leaders. “I am ready to do everything to crush the bandits, to allow the hostages to safely return to their families and to bring back peace,” Arroyo said on national television. “To the bandits ... listen closely, I will finish what you have started — force against force, weapons against weapons. They will only stop hunting you when you’re all wiped out or all of you surrender,” she said. The group kidnapped three Americans and 17 Filipinos from the upscale Dos Palmas Island Resort in Palawan province on Sunday. The same group seized 10 foreign tourists 13 months ago from a

Malaysian resort. Most were released for large ransoms, reportedly paid by Libya. The story was in the headlines for months, hurting the tourism industry and undercutting investor confidence. Claiming he led Sunday’s dawn raid, Sabaya issued a veiled threat against the hostages, particularly the Americans. He told radio RMN that Jeffrey Schilling, an Oakland, Calif., man whom the military freed from the Abu Sayyaf in an April raid after eight months of captivity, was not seriously harmed because he was a Muslim convert. Burnham and his wife, Gracia, who went to the resort to celebrate their 18th wedding anniversary, are both

Protestant missionaries who have lived in the Philippines since 1986. They are originally from Wichita, Kan. The third American was identified as Guillermo Sobero, of Corona, Calif. “What I can say is we should not compare Jeffrey because Jeffrey is Muslim, so we hesitated to hurt him. Now, we have three Americans. It’s hard for us to be shamed,” Sabaya said. Sabaya made no specific demands but said he was willing to talk to the government: “If you want to negotiate it’s up to you, we’re not pushing forward.” He claimed the hostages had been split into two groups, with the Americans among 10 taken to Bangsamoro province and the rest given to another Abu Sayyaf faction operating in nearby Sulu province.

President orders law maintained

Parliament expected to impeach Indonesia’s leader when it meets

JAKARTA, Indonesia (AP) — Indonesia’s embattled president ordered security forces Monday to take tough action to maintain law and order just two days before Parliament is due to meet to demand his impeachment. President Abdurrahman Wahid’s decree, however, appeared to fall short of a declaration of a state of emergency, which he had threatened to call if impeachment effort went ahead. That threat had raised fears he would take military action to prevent his ouster. Wahid supporters, angered by attempts to remove the president, rioted Monday and attacked rival party offices in his home province. Wahid said Monday he issued his decree to prevent clashes between his backers and opponents if Parliament pushes ahead with its campaign to remove him. “I have ordered the security minister to take actions and special steps to coordinate the functions of all the security forces to overcome the crisis and uphold order, security and law immediately,” Wahid said in a statement read out by an aide on national television. Wahid, 60, is nearly blind. Wahid has repeatedly warned that attempts to oust him could trigger massive rioting and bloodshed and ultimately the disintegration of Indonesia, a country of 210 million people.

Lawmakers meet Wednesday and are expected to demand a high assembly impeach Wahid for corruption and incompetence by August. Security minister Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono said the announcement did not constitute a state of emergency or martial law. Wahid has threatened in recent days if the impeachment drive continued. Defense Minister Mohamad Mahfud said no arms would be made under the measures, details of which were not immediately announced. Hours before the address broadcast, pro-Wahid mobs took to the streets, calling for the death of his opponents and attacking homes and offices of party members in several towns. A crowd in the town of Puruan, armed with sharpened sickles and sticks, burned two faces of the party headed by President Megawati Sukarnoputri, Wahid’s chief rival in power struggle. Other houses in the town about 400 miles east of Jakarta were also set on fire. There were no immediate reports of injuries, but police fired warning shots in nearby Sidoarjo when a pro-Wahid mob threw rocks at an opposition party member’s home. One person was injured. Wahid’s largest city, Surabaya, was blocked by burning tires.

Decriminalization of weed looked at by drug committee

TORONTO (AP) — The Friendly Stranger used to be up a narrow stairway in a back room, a crowded little shop offering water pipes, T-shirts and other products of the cannabis — or marijuana — culture. Now proprietor Robin Ellins has a prominent storefront on busy Queen Street and plenty of room to display everything from hempseed oil and chips to a full line of hemp clothing and elaborate smoking accessories. The transformation from hidden emporium to thriving commercial venture is part of Canada’s slow but clear shift toward decriminalizing marijuana. Justice Minister Anne McLellan says the issue should be studied, and a new Parliament committee on drug matters will look at decriminalization. Conservative Party leader Joe Clark is urging the elimination of criminal penalties for possessing a small amount of pot. “It’s unjust to see someone, because of one decision one night in their youth, carry the stigma — to be barred from studying medicine, law, architecture or other fields where a criminal record could present an

obstacle,” Clark said last week. The government has posed expanding medicinal marijuana, and the Canadian Medical Association Journal recently supported full decriminalization. Canada’s Supreme Court will consider a case next year that contends criminal charges for the personal use of marijuana violate constitutional rights. Making possession and use of small amounts of marijuana a civil offense — akin to a traffic fine — instead of a criminal violation would move Canadian policy closer to attitudes in the Netherlands and away from the United States, its neighbor and biggest trade partner. That worries U.S. anti-drug activists like Robert Maginnis of the Family Research Council. “It will have a residual effect on this country of depressing marijuana and making marijuana unavailable,” he said. He also knows a shift in Canadian law would boost the efforts of American advocates easing U.S. drug laws. “We’re our allies are piling up on us making it more difficult” to fight drug use, Maginnis said.

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