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Suicide bomber kills 19 bus passengers

JERUSALEM (AP) — Israel will seize and hold Palestinian lands until 'terror attacks against its civilians end, the government said early Wednesday, responding to a suicide bombing that killed 19 bus passengers and wounded 55 others.

Shortly after the new policy was announced, large numbers of Israeli tanks and troops entered the West Bank city of Nablus from all directions, and attack helicopters flew overhead, witnesses said. Israeli tanks had earlier rolled into Jenin and its refugee camp. There were no immediate reports of casualties in either action.

Tuesday's blast by a Palestinian who exploded a nail-studded bomb was the deadliest in Jerusalem in six years and the 70th suicide attack since the

current round of violence erupted nearly two years ago.

The Israeli government answered with a policy statement, saying it was changing its response to "murderous acts of terror."

The statement, announced after late-night consultations between Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and his top Cabinet ministers, said Israel will capture Palestinian Authority territory. "These areas will be held by Israel as long as terror continues. ... Additional acts of terror will lead to taking of additional areas."

The White House said it had no immediate comment on Israel's decision. And it wasn't known what impact, if any, it would have on a planned major Mideast policy address later this

week by President Bush. He was expected to propose establishing a "provisional" Palestinian state in part of the West Bank and Gaza without deciding on its final borders — and while neither side has embraced the idea, there is some hope that a renewed and forceful U.S. diplomatic drive might help end 21 months of carnage and despair.

On March 29, following an earlier series of Palestinian suicide bombings, Israel launched its largest military mission in two decades, taking control of Palestinian towns and refugee camps. Thousands of terror suspects were arrested and quantities of explosives and weapons seized, but the six-week operation won Israel only a brief respite in the bombing attacks.

Wednesday's statement, unlike

earlier comments on military actions, did not characterize its planned incursions as short-term.

Hours after Tuesday's blast, an angry Sharon strode past a row of victims in body bags and peered into the bombed-out bus, vowing to retaliate.

Two students were among the dead and four were among dozens wounded in the attack.

Sharon questioned Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat's ability to run such an independent state, saying, "It is interesting to know what kind of Palestinian state they mean."

Although Sharon has made clear he wants Arafat out of power, he apparently isn't ready to drive him into exile.

The Palestinian Authority condemned the attack. But the Palestinian leadership has not

appeared ready to act decisively against radical groups, as Israel has demanded.

In Ramallah, Palestinians anticipating an army invasion and extended curfew began hoarding food.

"The Israeli response usually is against the Palestinian people, the Palestinian president and the Palestinian Authority," said Labor Minister Ghassan Khatib. "It will not be any surprise if they decide to invade Ramallah again or impose a new siege on the president."

In Washington, the White House said Bush condemned the bombing "in the strongest possible terms," but aides wouldn't say if it would delay his policy statement, expected Wednesday.

Bush has been formulating his approach to Mideast peace

for weeks, during which he has met with Sharon and Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak.

Tanks enter Jenin

Israel launched an incursion into the West Bank town of Jenin, following a suicide bombing on a bus in Jerusalem.



SOURCES: Associated Press; ESRI AP

Melon trouble



BRIAN RUFF • THE BATTALION

A Wiggins Produce watermelon truck traveling north on Harvey Mitchell Parkway collided with a car headed eastbound on Villa Maria on Tuesday. The weight of the water-

melons swung the truck around when it attempted to avoid a collision. The southbound lanes of Harvey Mitchell Parkway were closed and traffic was rerouted during clean up.

Regents authorize salary increases

By Jessi Watkins
THE BATTALION

Despite a structural deficit in its budget, the Texas A&M administration is planning for modest, merit-based salary increases for faculty and staff in the upcoming fiscal year, beginning Sept. 1.

University officials said the A&M Board of Regents authorized merit increases to average up to three percent for faculty members and two and a half percent for staff members for the new fiscal year.

Bill Krumm, vice president of finance, said a merit increase is an increase in salary for work performed beyond the basic expectations of the job.

Assistant Provost Dan Parker said a portion of the funding for the salary increases will come from the Academic Enhancement Fee and the remainder will come from the tuition increase of four dollars per credit hour.

The Academic Enhancement Fee will charge \$30 more per semester credit hour starting with students who enroll next fall, requiring the average student to pay \$400 more in tuition each semester.

The new enhancement fee and other additional tuition fees will provide some money for the salary increase, but not all of it, Krumm said. Part of the new enhancement fees went to cover

last year's deficit of more than six million dollars.

"The new enhancement fees produced between eight and nine million dollars. We started with a deficit of over six million dollars. Enhancement fees went to deal with the deficit," Krumm said.

Another 10 percent of the enhancement fee was allocated to financial aid, he said.

The two and a half percent merit-based staff salary increase for staff members comes on top of a mandatory state salary increase for all staff last year, Parker said.

"The state required a mandatory four percent, or \$100, salary increase for staff, but they only funded half of it. That is part of the reason for the structural deficit," Parker said.

Parker also said the mandatory four percent increase was for staff only, not faculty.

Dr. Karen Watson, dean of faculties, said the faculty have supported the merit-based salary increases.

"The faculty have for a long time preferred merit salary increases and, in fact, the law in Texas is to use merit-based salary increases for faculty," Watson said.

University President Dr. Ray M. Bowen announced the plan for the salary increase but was unavailable for comments regarding the enhancement fees and the salary increases.

New education program produces Texas teachers

By Courtney McDonald
THE BATTALION

A new secondary certification program offered by Texas A&M provides undergraduates and post-baccalaureates with the opportunity to quickly receive teaching certification.

"A&M is trying to recruit students to be certified in math and science because (those teachers) are in high demand across Texas," said Jennifer Parrott, an undergraduate academic adviser and M.A.S.S. coordinator for the College of Science.

The Program for Accelerated Certification of Teachers (PACT) was developed in response to the shortage of math and science teachers. It is specifically geared towards math and science undergraduate seniors and degree holders that have chosen to pursue secondary teaching positions.

The colleges of agriculture and life sciences, education, geosciences, science, veterinary medicine and the Region IV Educational Service Center are involved in a partnership to advance the program.

Discussions have also begun to

include the math department in the Spring of 2003.

"[PACT] is a program that builds healthy collaborations to address teacher shortages (especially in math and science) for Texas," said Dr. Linda Glessner, director of Continuing Education, College of Education. "It gives A&M a good reputation around Texas that the College of Education is prepared and well qualified to produce great teachers."

Components of the new program include a TAMU-based academic semester composed of 15 hours, a teaching internship in a public school, and the TEXES examinations. All classes must be completed before students may begin their internship.

In order to participate, students must be within a year of completion of a math or science degree or have already completed their degree. A GPR of at least 2.5 for undergraduate work is required to be admitted into the program.

"(PACT) participants do not need prior education courses or teaching preparation skills to apply for the program.

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Officials look for student input

By Sarah Walch
THE BATTALION

Returning students and students attending New Student Conferences may anticipate more opportunities for student input in University decisions.

Zac Coventry, student body president and a senior agricultural development major said A&M provides a unique way of allowing student input from many aspects of the campus and surrounding community.

There are many avenues for students to choose from that may ade-

quately express their view, said Barry Hammond, Memorial Student Center (MSC) president and a senior economics major.

Hammond oversees diverse organizations such as MSC OPAS, MSC Wiley Lecture Series and MSC Academic League. He said that students have the ability to give input and become actively involved on campus. However, he added that students do have to give their opinion in a correct or positive manner.

"Students do have a say in designing policy and reviewing the procedure

of academic and administrative decisions through student government committees," Hammond said. "(Issues surrounding the 1999 Aggie Bonfire collapse) have definitely brought more attention to the risk management procedures that students are following. Students' greatest freedom right now is in assisting administrative planning," he said.

University President Dr. Ray M. Bowen delivered his announcement concerning the future of Bonfire 2002

See **Input** on page 2

Saudi Arabia makes al-Qaida arrests

JIDDAH, Saudi Arabia (AP) — Saudi Arabia announced its first al-Qaida-related arrests since Sept. 11 and said Tuesday it was holding 11 Saudis, an Iraqi and a Sudanese man behind a plot to shoot down a U.S. military plane taking off from a Saudi air base.

Meanwhile, U.S. officials announced another Saudi, described as an al-Qaida operative, was in custody in Morocco. They said Abu Zubair al-Haili helped evacuate al-Qaida members from Afghanistan after Sept. 11, officials said.

The arrests in Saudi Arabia were

made public through the official Saudi Press Agency, which linked the suspects to Osama bin Laden's terror network and said they were planning to use explosives and missiles in other attacks in the kingdom.

The agency provided only sketchy details on when or where the suspects were arrested. But it was the first time since the terrorist attacks on the United States — carried out by 15 Saudis and four other Arabs — that the U.S. ally has announced arrests linked to bin Laden, the Saudi exile whose first

cause was the overthrow of this Muslim kingdom.

The alleged plotters "were planning to carry out terrorist attacks against vital and important installations in the kingdom, by using explosives and two (surface-to-air) SA-7 missiles, smuggled into the kingdom and hidden in different places around the country," the agency said.

Among those in custody was a Sudanese man identified by U.S. officials as Abu Huzifa, a suspected al-Qaida cell leader.