

# Sharon, Arafat trade accusations of violence

JERUSALEM (AP) — The Israeli and Palestinian leaders traded recriminations Sunday, each accusing the other of stoking the Mideast conflict. A Palestinian gunman was killed and three Israelis were wounded in scattered violence.

The two leaders exchanged angry charges despite recent contacts between the two sides and talk of a possible and limited Israeli troop withdrawal from the Gaza Strip and then the West Bank.

Prime Minister Ariel Sharon said he did not believe Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat's government would take action to prevent Palestinian attacks against Israel.

"Arafat is the head of terrorism and no one is counting on him," Sharon told a Cabinet meeting, according to Cabinet Secretary Gideon Saar.

Arafat said he did not think Sharon's

government was serious about peace negotiations.

"This government is looking only for more escalation for its military plans. They are not looking to achieve peace," Arafat said at his mostly destroyed compound in the West Bank city of Ramallah.

In the Gaza Strip, Israeli troops tracked down and shot and killed a Palestinian militant after he opened fire on Israelis working on a fence at a Jewish settlement of Dugit in the northern Gaza Strip, wounding one of them, the army said.

The Palestinian gunman hit the Israeli worker with at least five bullets in his arms and legs, according to the Barzilai Hospital in the Israeli city of Ashkelon.

Israeli troops chased the gunman to a house in the nearby Palestinian area of Beit Lahiya and killed him in a gun bat-

tle, the army said. Troops then blew up the house.

The militant Islamic group Hamas claimed responsibility for the attack on

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ARAFAT

the Israeli workers and identified the gunman as Basil Naji, 22.

In the northern West Bank town of Jenin, Palestinian gunfire wounded two Israeli soldiers, the army said.

Meanwhile, Pope John Paul II delivered one of his most forceful denuncia-

tions of Middle East violence, lamenting that Palestinians were subjected to "collective punishment" and Israelis were gripped by fear.

"When will one learn that coexistence between the Israeli and Palestinian people cannot result from arms? Neither attacks, nor walls of separation, nor retaliation will ever lead to a just solution of the conflict under way," John Paul said Sunday at his summer palace in Castel Gandolfo, a hill town near Rome.

The Israel-Palestinian talks, since stalled, had focused on Israeli forces leaving Palestinian areas in the Gaza Strip. If calm prevailed, Israel then would examine withdrawing from parts of the West Bank, where troops are in most Palestinian cities and towns.

Sharon called the Palestinian proposals for an Israeli withdrawal "a trick designed to coincide with the talks

between Palestinian officials and U.S. leaders."

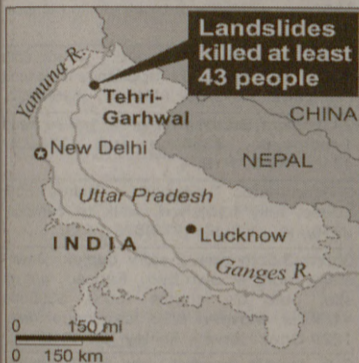
A Palestinian delegation was in Washington last week for discussions with senior Bush administration officials on stabilizing the region and reforming the Palestinian security forces.

Arafat said he was encouraged by the Washington discussions, which included the highest-level meetings between U.S. and Palestinian officials in recent months.

"There were very positive talks and today (Sunday) they will return and give a full explanation," Arafat said of the Palestinian team.

The Palestinian Authority's interior minister, Abdel Razak Yehiyeh, met CIA director George Tenet outside Washington on Saturday and said he was revamping what remains of a Palestinian security force devastated by the Israelis.

## Rain, landslides kill 43 in India



Landslides killed at least 43 people

LUCKNOW, India (AP) — Torrents of muddy water from monsoon rains swept away several villages in remote northern India Sunday, killing at least 43 people, government officials said.

Rescue efforts that included helicopter flights were hampered by pouring rain and lack of roads in Uttaranchal state, nearly 185 miles northeast of the Indian capital, New Delhi.

Army and paramilitary soldiers called in to help were not expected to reach the area until early Monday, said R.S. Tolia, Uttaranchal's chief secretary.

The death toll mounted Sunday as rescuers battled heavy rain to clear debris and pull bodies from piles of mud, rocks and uprooted trees.

Virendra Singh, an official from Tehri-Garhwal district in Uttaranchal, said rescuers recovered 43 bodies from the villages of Marwadi,

Medugoon, Kotgaon and Angoda.

The district headquarters had not received information about some remote villages that lack telephones or accessible roads.

A cloudburst that hit nearby Uttarkashi district created a torrent of muddy water that swept away at least six villages while flowing down the mountains, said D.K. Gupta, a top state official. There were no casualties but many cattle were lost, he said.

India's monsoon season begins in June and ends in late September. Floods this year have hit Bihar state in the east and several provinces in the remote northeast, killing at least 250 people.

Meanwhile, India's worst drought in 14 years continues affecting as many as 12 states in the north, central and northwest regions, where most of the nation's 1 billion people live.



Detail

SOURCES: Associated Press; ESRI AP

### NEWS IN BRIEF

#### Workers recover last two bodies among 10 killed in crash of U.S. Air Force plane

CAGUAS, Puerto Rico (AP) — A search team cut into the wreckage of a U.S. Air Force plane Sunday and found the bodies of two servicemen, the last of 10 who died when their plane slammed into a mountainside.

The searchers found the bodies after opening a battered section of the cockpit using a specialized saw and other equipment, officials said. "We have finished one of the most important missions, which is the recovery of bodies," said Lt. Col. Adolfo Menendez, commander of a National Guard unit at the crash site. "Now begins the investigation."

#### Separated twins improve at Los Angeles hospital

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Guatemalan twins born joined at the head and separated in a lengthy operation were more alert Sunday, and doctors reduced their sedation medication, hospital officials said.

Though Maria de Jesus Quiej Alvarez and sister Maria Teresa were in critical condition, their vital signs remained stable.

"Both are tolerating the intravenous nutrition fairly well," said UCLA Medical Center spokeswoman Roxanne Mosler. Meanwhile, medication used to sedate the two girls has been reduced.

"Maria de Jesus is much more alert and even looking around," Mosler said.

#### Russian floods kill 55 so far

MOSCOW (AP) — The death toll from flooding that swept through holiday resorts and scenic villages in Russia's Black Sea Coast rose to 55 on Sunday, according to the Krasnodar region's Emergency Situations Ministry.

Most of those killed were local residents and died of drowning, emergency officials said on Russian television.

The flooding left picturesque beaches in the south of Russia littered with debris, fallen trees and the ruined hulks of swept-away cars. Homes and shops were washed away, and roads and bridges destroyed by the current.

Both residents and tourists, who descend on the region during their summer vacations, were left stranded.

On Sunday, the sun shone brightly, providing relief to crews dispatched to help in the cleanup efforts.

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