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NEWS IN BRIEF

**Switzerland now
190th member of
United Nations**

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — Switzerland became the 190th member of the United Nations on Tuesday, preserving its historic neutrality but stepping more actively onto the world stage.

The admission of Switzerland was one of the first orders of business at the opening of the new session of the General Assembly, the gathering place of the world's nations. Delegates burst into applause when the new assembly president, Czech Foreign Minister Jan Kavan, declared Switzerland the 190th member.

French Foreign Minister Dominique de Villepin, on behalf of Switzerland's five neighbors, recommended its application for membership after more than 50 years on the sidelines.

"The role of Switzerland is now crucial on issues of development, international law and human rights," he said. "The

entry of Switzerland will strengthen the United Nations."

De Villepin noted that Switzerland was the only nation to decide to join the United Nations after a popular referendum, which would strengthen "the democratic premise of our organization."

In a Swiss referendum in March, 55 percent voted in favor of U.N. membership, heeding a government campaign that said rejection would be disastrous for the country's international standing and that neutrality had lost much of its meaning.

A 1986 vote overwhelmingly rejected U.N. membership.

At the end of the French minister's speech, Kavan asked whether the General Assembly would accept the recommendation for Switzerland's membership "by acclamation."

When delegates burst into applause, Kavan banged his gavel and said, "I therefore declare the Swiss Confederation admitted to membership in the United Nations."

**Al-Qaida
suspects
captured
by police**

KARACHI, Pakistan — Police commandos pitched battle with suspects holed up in a building Wednesday, with one suspect spilling out onto a rooftop. Two suspects were killed and five captured in fighting, as Pakistan stepped up pressure on the terrorist movement after it made its mark on the world.

Six officers, including intelligence agents, were wounded when they stormed the top-floor apartment and the rooftop. The gunmen held out hundreds of troops on the street and on the rooftops by apartment blocks. The wounded were in critical condition.

Police said one of the arrested were Arabs, but nationalities were not disclosed. The rest were Afghans, he said.

The federal Ministry in Islamabad affirmed all the gunmen were foreigners but released no information. A spokesman said the men moved into an apartment in the neighborhood about a month ago.

Police seized a laptop computer and "literature," an arsenal of assault rifles, machine guns, pistols, hand grenades, said an intelligence agent on the scene spoke on condition of anonymity.

Police retracted a report that a 4-year-old boy was killed in cross fire.

Karachi, a war-torn city of 12 million, has become a refuge for al-Qaida and Taliban fighters who fled Afghanistan when coalition forces chased them into the mountains bordering Pakistan after the collapse of the Taliban regime.

In a separate report, Karachi on Wednesday arrested five Islamic militants suspected of planning attacks on American restaurants in the city. The men were members of a group of Holy Warriors, who received weapons training in Afghanistan, police said.

Authorities said they have captured 400 Qaida activists in Pakistan since the start of the war on terrorism. Most have been turned over to U.S. authorities for questioning.

Last week, a reporter for the Gulf-based Al-Jazeera television network said he interviewed two of Osama bin Laden's lieutenants in Karachi — Khalid Shaikh Mohammed and Ramzi Binalshibh — of whom admitted they helped plan the Sept. 11 attacks in the United States.

The fighting in Karachi began Wednesday morning when agents of Pakistani intelligence agency and police raided the apartment building receiving a tip that suspects were living there.

Two militants were seen initially, but the raiding retreated under fire from others, police said. Hearing the gunfire, unidentified neighbors called the police and reinforcements were brought in. The gunmen fired and lobbed grenades from the apartment. They then fled to the rooftop where they took position on the roof. At a minimum, police and witnesses said.

It was unclear at what time the two militants were captured. An intelligence official said one of the gunmen inside the apartment scrawled "There is no God but Allah" in Arabic blood on the tiles of the kitchen wall.



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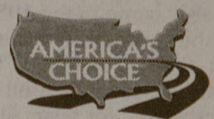
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