

# Judge refuses to release shoe bomber's letters

By Denise Lavoie  
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

BOSTON (AP) — A federal judge refused to release would-be shoe-bomber Richard Reid's jailhouse letters Tuesday after prosecutors warned he might be trying to send or receive coded terrorist messages.

U.S. District Judge William Young said last week

that he planned to release the letters written by Reid to his family and others unless prosecutors submitted additional evidence that the al-Qaida member was trying to communicate in code. Prosecutors filed a sealed affidavit Monday from the FBI.

Young cited the affidavit in his decision to keep Reid's letters sealed. He did not elaborate further in his two-sentence ruling.

The Boston Globe and the Boston Herald had

sought release of the letters.

Reid, a 29-year-old British subject who converted to Islam, is scheduled to be sentenced Thursday for trying to blow up a Paris-to-Miami jetliner in December 2001 with plastic explosives hidden in his shoes. He faces 60 years to life in prison.

Passengers and crew members overpowered Reid after he tried to light a fuse protruding from one of his shoes.

Reid pleaded guilty in October to trying to blow up the plane and kill all 197 people aboard. In entering his guilty plea, Reid said he was a follower of Osama bin Laden and declared his hatred for the United States.

Prosecutors have repeatedly expressed concern that Reid had tried to communicate with other terrorists from prison, despite tight restrictions placed on him.

"The exceptional facts of this case com-

## Consumer confidence decreases once again

By Rebecca Gomez  
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

NEW YORK (AP) — The threat of war with Iraq contributed to the second straight monthly drop in U.S. consumer confidence.

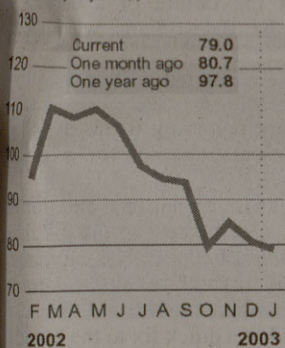
The Conference Board's Consumer Confidence Index slipped in January to 79 from 80.7 in December. The index is based on a survey of 5,000 U.S. households and is calculated from a base of 100 in 1985.

"Overall readings continue to reflect the country's lackluster economic activity," said Lynn Franco, director of the Conference Board's Consumer Research Center. "Now, with the threat of war looming, consumers have grown increasingly cautious about the short-term outlook."

### Consumer confidence

Here is a look at the Consumer Confidence Index from a survey of 5,000 U.S. households.

Seasonally adjusted, 1985=100



SOURCE: The Conference Board AP

U.S. manufacturing, however, is limping. New orders to U.S. factories for big-ticket goods — also known as durable goods — rose a paltry 0.2 percent in December, the Commerce Department said. Economists were expecting an increase of 1 percent.

"The manufacturing sector is deep in the dumps, and this report gives little hope of improvement," Gonzalez said.

In the consumer confidence survey, consumers expressed more worries about the job front in the next six months, and fewer people said they plan to buy a car or major appliance.

"There's no doubt the uncertainties about geopolitical events weigh on people's minds," said Josh Feinman, chief economist with Deutsche Asset Management in New York. "Is there going to be a war? Certainly, that's contributing to people's anxiety."

### NEWS IN BRIEF

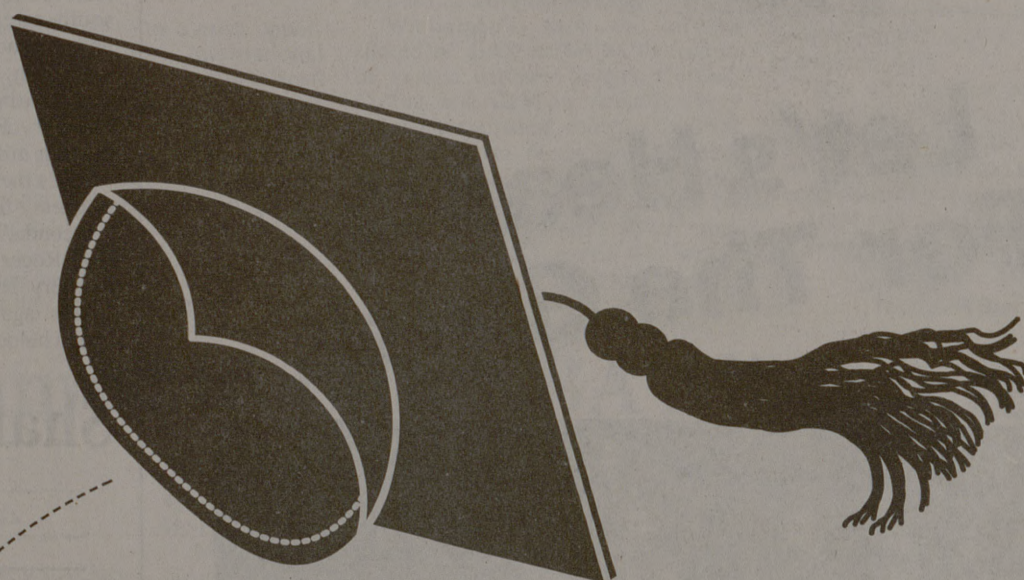
#### Mayors of New York and Philadelphia propose cutbacks

NEW YORK (AP) — With New York City facing its worst fiscal crisis since the '70s, Mayor Michael Bloomberg proposed a \$4 billion budget Tuesday that includes more than \$550 million in cuts in services and assumes passage of a commuter tax that the governor is against.

Bloomberg's budget plan does not call for immediate layoffs in the city's work force of 250,000.

In Philadelphia, meanwhile, Mayor John Street proposed the elimination of about 1,600 jobs through layoffs and attrition.

Bloomberg's spending plan also includes \$600 million in savings from the city's municipal work force.



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