

# North Korea interception of U.S. plane raises nuclear tension

By Christopher Torchia  
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

SEOUL, South Korea — After North Korean fighter jets intercepted a U.S. reconnaissance plane, the communist country said Tuesday the threat of armed confrontation on the Korean Peninsula was growing because of what it called U.S. aggression.

North Korea did not comment on the interception of the plane. Its state-run media instead criticized annual U.S.-South Korean military exercises that began Tuesday, saying they were preparation for an attack. The exercise, named Foal Eagle, ends April 2.

"This Foal Eagle exercise is escalating the danger of armed clashes on the Korean Peninsula," said Minju Josen, a North Korean newspaper.

"If the eagle swoops down on us, a nuclear war will break out and it is clear that the whole Korean nation will not escape nuclear holocaust," said the report, which was monitored by South Korea's Yonhap news agency.

North Korea routinely condemns such exercises, but the belligerent rhetoric and the interception of the American plane come amid fears the North could make nuclear bombs within months.

U.S. military officials say the annual maneuver is "defense-oriented" and is not related to the nuclear dispute.

Lt. Cmdr. Jeff Davis, a Pentagon spokesman, said four North Korean fighter jets had

approached the U.S. plane over the Sea of Japan on Sunday, coming as close as 50 feet. One used its radar to identify the plane as a target, but there was no hostile fire, he said.

Davis said it was the first such incident since 1969, when a North Korean plane shot down a U.S. Navy EC-121 surveillance plane, killing all 31 Americans aboard.

In Washington, White House spokesman Ari Fleischer said President Bush "believes that the issue of North Korea can be handled diplomatically."

**"This Foal Eagle exercise is escalating the danger of armed clashes on the Korean Peninsula."**

— Minju Josen, North Korean newspaper

"This is a matter that we will protest and we're talking to our allies about best manner to do that," Fleischer said, adding that "North Korea continues to engage in provocative, and now reckless actions. And North Korea engages in these actions as a way of saying, pay me. That will not happen."

In a commentary, North Korea's Minju Josen described Bush as "a political illiterate and a shameless impostor who has dull senses of the times."

The newspaper also appealed to South Koreans, who host 37,000 U.S. soldiers on their soil, to join North Korea in resisting the United States.

The interception of the U.S. plane appeared to be part of an effort to pressure the United States into negotiations on chief North Korean aims: a

nonaggression treaty and economic aid.

"The reckless move is a signal to the United States at a time when Washington pays little attention to North Korea's repeated demand for direct dialogue," said Lee Suk-soo, a military studies professor at the National Defense College in Seoul.

North Korea on Tuesday reiterated its demand for a nonaggression pact, saying through Radio Pyongyang that it was "to remove an unreasonable U.S. threat, not to gain something." The radio was monitored by Yonhap.

Washington, which is preparing for a possible war against Iraq, says it will not be blackmailed into concessions and that North Korea's efforts to develop nuclear weapons are a multilateral issue. The U.N. Security Council is expected to debate the matter.

North Korea test-fired a missile into the sea off its east coast on the eve of South Korean President Roh Moo-hyun's inauguration last week.

On Feb. 20, a North Korean MiG-19 warplane crossed over the South's western sea border, but retreated after South Korean jets flew to the area.

Last week, U.S. officials said North Korea had restarted a nuclear reactor that is at the center of a suspected weapons program. The reactor could yield enough plutonium for an atomic bomb in about a year, experts say.

North Korea, which has warned a U.S. attack on its nuclear facilities at Yongbyon would trigger war, could also decide to reactivate a repro-

## N. Korea jets intercept U.S. plane

Four North Korean fighter jets approached the U.S. Air Force RC-135S plane over the Sea of Japan on Sunday, coming as close as 50 feet.



SOURCES: ESRI; Associated Press; U.S. Air Force; Jane's Information Group

cessing facility near the reactor. Such a move could allow it to make several nuclear bombs within months, according to defense analysts.

The United States believes the North already has one or two nuclear bombs.

North Korean complaints about reconnaissance flights by U.S. planes had grown more frequent before the incident Sunday. On Saturday, the North said a U.S. RC-135 reconnaissance plane intruded into its airspace off the east coast daily for a week.

The current nuclear dispute began in October when U.S. officials said the North acknowledged it had a secret nuclear program in violation of a 1994 agreement.

Washington and its allies suspended oil shipments and North Korea responded by moving to reactivate frozen nuclear facilities and withdrawing from the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty.

# Filipino explosion kills 19, injures 147

By Oliver Teves  
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

MANILA, Philippines — A bomb planted inside a backpack ripped through an airport terminal in the southern Philippines on Tuesday, killing at least 19 people — including an American missionary — and injuring 147 in the nation's worst terrorist attack in three years.

The blast comes at a time of heightened debate over the role of U.S. troops in the war on terror in the Philippines, where Muslim insurgents have battled the government for decades with attacks, bombings and kidnappings.

Three Americans — a Southern Baptist missionary and her two young children — were among the wounded. Many of the injured were in serious condition, and officials feared the death toll could rise. The dead included a boy, a girl, 10 men and seven women.

President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo, who invited U.S. troops to help train Filipino soldiers in counterterrorism later this year, said the bombing at Davao airport on Mindanao island was "a brazen act of terrorism which shall not go unpunished."

President Bush condemned the attack as a "wanton terrorist act" and sent condolences to the people of the Philippines, his press secretary Ari Fleischer said.

"The president notes that the bombing underscores the seriousness of the terrorist threat in the southern Philippines, and he emphasizes that the Philippines have been a stalwart partner of the United States in the war against terror," Fleischer said.

No one claimed responsibility for the blast, but Arroyo said "several men" were detained. The military has blamed Moro Islamic Liberation Front rebels for a string of attacks, including a car bombing at nearby Cotabato airport last month that killed one man.

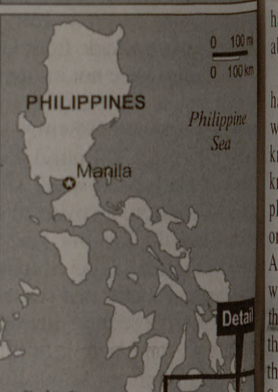
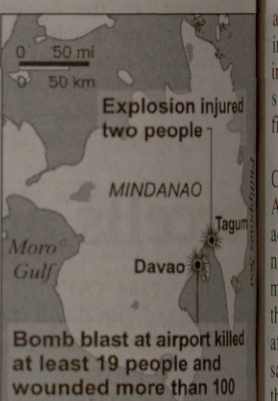
Eid Kabalu, spokesman for the rebel group, which has been fighting for Muslim self-rule in the predominantly Roman

Catholic Philippines for more than three decades, denied his group was responsible. He condemned the attack and said the group was ready to cooperate in an investigation.

Police said the bomb was hidden inside a backpack planted in the middle of the airport waiting area. The blast was heard three miles away; some of the debris landed on the terminal 100 yards away.

The Southern Baptist Convention's International Mission Board in Richmond, Va., confirmed that missionary William P. Hyde, 59, of Cedar Rapids, Iowa, died in surgery from head and leg injuries.

Hyde had gone to the airport to meet American missionaries Barbara Wallis Stevens and Mark Stevens and their family, who were had just arrived from Manila when the bomb went off.



SOURCES: Associated Press; ESRI

# Bush administration: U.S. gaining in war on terror

WASHINGTON (AP) — New terrorism indictments and al-Qaida capture show the United States gaining ground in the global war on terrorism, three top Bush administration officials said Tuesday.

Facing a Senate Judiciary Committee that includes prominent administration critics, Attorney General John Ashcroft, Homeland Security Secretary Tom Ridge and FBI Director Robert Mueller highlighted recent successes and stressed prevention efforts.

Lawmakers applauded the victories — but many questioned the government's tactics and the need to expand anti-terrorism laws that already raise constitutional questions.

Ashcroft said the weekend capture in Pakistan of al-Qaida operations chief Khalid Shaikh Mohammed was "a severe blow" that could "destabilize their terrorist network worldwide" by providing a trove of intelligence that will prevent new attacks.

He also announced that a Yemeni cleric and an assistant were charged in New York with helping finance al-Qaida. The cleric, Sheikh Mohammed Ali Hasan Al-Moayad, personally handled Osama bin Laden \$20 million to finance the terrorist group, Ashcroft said.

To date, more than 200 criminal terrorism charges have been brought since the Sept. 11, 2001 terror attacks, Ashcroft said, with 108 convictions or guilty pleas. FBI Director Robert Mueller added that "well in excess of 10" terrorism plots have been thwarted worldwide.

The recent successes muted growing criticism on Capitol Hill about the slow progress on the war on terrorism. The concern reached a high point last month when a new bin Laden videotape surfaced and the nation was put on high alert for a possibly imminent terrorist attack.

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### Texas seeks notaries abusing immigrants

DALLAS (AP) — Texas Attorney General Greg Abbott on Tuesday said his office is cracking down on notaries public who misrepresent themselves as legal professionals to scam money out of thousands of immigrants — a practice that was specifically outlawed two years ago.

He said con artists prey on Hispanic victims who confuse the English term "notary" and the Spanish term "notario." Some people with notary public licens-

es from the state unlawfully present themselves as "notarios publico," which in Mexico are also licensed attorneys.

Abbott said such notaries often disappear with their clients' money, charge high fees for filing unnecessary documents or perform poor-quality services that jeopardize immigration cases.

Abbott said victims who come forward will not be questioned about their country of origin or immigration status. He urged anyone who believes they've been victimized by such scammers to call (800) 252-8011.

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# MIKE LUKOVICH

