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# Israeli air strike kills 5 in Gaza

## Palestinian Cabinet wrangle may delay peace plan

By Steve Weizman  
 THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

**JERUSALEM** — A dispute over forming a new Palestinian Cabinet could delay a U.S.-backed Mideast peace plan, officials said Tuesday, while Israel mounted its first air strike since the Iraq war began, killing a Hamas commander and six other people in Gaza City.

The slow pace of Palestinian politics provoked some impatience from President George W. Bush, who said he will not make public a U.S.-supported "road map" for peace until a Palestinian government takes office.

Until the Gaza strike, Israel had scaled back its military operations, even though a suicide bombing, billed by Islamic Jihad as a gift to the Iraqi nation, wounded 30 people March 30.

In Tuesday's attack in Gaza, witnesses said, an F-16 warplane fired a missile at a car in Gaza City, turning it into a mass of charred metal. The mangled bodies of the people inside were brought to Shifa Hospital in Gaza. One of the dead was identified as Saed Arabeed, 38, a senior Hamas commander.

Doctors said seven people were killed and about 50 wounded. They said all of the wounded were civilians, ranging in age from 6 to 75 years old. Two of the other dead were also identified as Hamas activists and another was a child.

Israeli security sources said Arabeed, the main target, was responsible for a string of deadly attacks against Israelis, dating back a decade.

The attack was in the Zeitoun neighborhood of Gaza City, known as a stronghold of the Islamic militant Hamas, responsible for dozens of attacks.

Israel has carried out many similar attacks during the Palestinian-Israeli violence, targeting suspected Palestinian militants. Palestinians and human rights groups have condemned the practice.

Meanwhile, Mahmoud Abbas, the Palestinian prime minister-designate, was running into problems in forming his new Cabinet as Yasser Arafat raised obstacles, officials and diplomats said.

Arafat reluctantly agreed to create the prime minister's post, ceding some aspects of daily governance, under international and domestic pressure to reform the Palestinian Authority. Israel and the United States have been boycotting Arafat, saying his regime has been implicated in terrorism.

Abbas — who has called violent conflict with Israel a mistake — has until Thursday to present his Cabinet, but can request a two-week extension. His office wouldn't comment Tuesday on whether he'd meet the deadline.

Abbas has encountered opposition by Arafat to sweeping changes he is seeking to make in the Cabinet, according to Palestinian officials and diplomatic sources, who spoke on condition of anonymity.

Arafat wants no more than four out of the 21 current ministers replaced, while Abbas is seeking a far more extensive shake-up, said Palestinian sources.

The key disagreement appears to involve the important position of interior minister,

### Gaza explosion

An Israeli warplane fired a missile at a car in Gaza City, killing at least five people and wounding at least 47.



SOURCES: Associated Press; ESRI AP

which controls Palestinian security organizations.

Senior Palestinian officials said Arafat wants to name Hani al-Hassan, a Hamas commander who currently holds the post. Abbas preferred Mohammed Dahlan, a Hamas commander who is supported by the United States and Europe and is considered unlikely to seriously try to stop militant groups from attacking Israelis.

Meanwhile, international mediators kept up the pressure.

After a meeting with British Prime Minister Tony Blair in Belfast, Northern Ireland, Bush and Blair

the two were committed to a "road map" peace plan drawn up late last year by the so-called "Quartet" of mediators — the United States, the European Union, the United Nations and Russia.

"I look forward to him (Abbas) finally putting his Cabinet in place so we can release the road map," he said.

The three-phase plan includes creating a provisional Palestinian state that would negotiate with Israel over final borders, Jewish settlements in the West Bank of Gaza and the status of Jerusalem.

Although both sides have said they accept the plan in principle, a dispute is expected over changes Israel plans to request. Israel's main concern is that the plan does not explicitly condition statehood on an end to Palestinian violence — but it is unclear whether the Quartet would be open to alterations in the plan.

### NEWS IN BRIEF

#### SARS continues to spread worldwide

**HONG KONG (AP)** — The new flu-like virus has shown no signs of letting up in Hong Kong, where health officials warned Tuesday the crisis could worsen even as new infections in China's Guangdong province have tapered off.

The global death toll climbed to at least 104 with new fatalities announced Tuesday in Hong Kong and Singapore from severe acute respiratory syndrome, or SARS, and public worries were also on the rise.

More than 2,600 people have now been infected worldwide with SARS, most of them in mainland China and Hong Kong. The United States has had no deaths from the disease but reports 148 suspected cases in 30 states.

Dr. Samson Wong, a microbiologist at the University of Hong Kong, warned SARS might infect 80 percent of the population within two years, and eventually everyone could be infected.

#### Drill team

Continued from page 1

we could be sure beyond any doubt that this incident was not a drill team problem," Groves said.

Groves said he plans to question two more students today before deciding whether to lift the suspension. The unit had been scheduled to drill daily this week to prepare for its performance at the Corps of Cadets Parents' Weekend Review. If the suspension is still in place, the unit will not perform.

The unit, created in 1946, competes in precision drill competitions across the country. The team is famous among cadets for its long practices, intense and strict discipline and long runs that test the endurance of the fittest freshmen.

#### HIV

Continued from page 1

"Aggies need to hold each other accountable and watch out for each other," he said.

Brian said he speaks on this topic because he wants to break the stereotypes associated with those who suffer from HIV/AIDS.

The Centers for Disease Control estimates that 35,000-40,000 cases of HIV are reported each year. According to the Texas Department of Health, there are 141 known cases of HIV/AIDS in Brazos County and nearly 42,000 cases statewide.

Student Health Services will provide free and confidential AIDS testing in MSC 139 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Thursday.

Students can also receive free testing at the A.P. Beutel Health Center by appointment.

#### Baghdad

Continued from page 1

of a key source of influence in a population thought increasingly eager to help the former Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Four days after American forces first penetrated the Baghdad suburbs, the city showed the effects of the war. Civilians roamed streets with Kalashnikov rifles in hand, uncollected garbage piled up, and there were long lines for the reduced number of gas stations still open. There were also military losses for Americans.

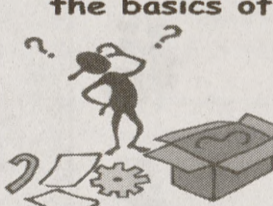
An A-10 "Warthog" plane was shot down in Baghdad early in the day, possibly the first fixed-wing aircraft downed by an Iraqi surface-to-air missile since the war began. Central Command said the plane was ejected safely, was recovered by ground forces and was in good condition.

A U.S. F-15E jet fighter was sent down Sunday and a second was still under way Tuesday.

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