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# Sharon stands firm on need for West Bank military action

By Martin Merzer  
 Knight Ridder Newspapers

JERUSALEM (KRT) — Amid a mounting death toll and growing international pressure, some Israeli officials reluctantly conceded Sunday that they will have to curtail their offensive in the West Bank and possibly drop plans to invade the Gaza Strip.

But urban combat still raged in many places, no signs of withdrawal appeared and Prime Minister Ariel Sharon defended a military campaign that has aroused criticism from many corners of the world, including the White House.

"We have no interest in dragging it out, but we have to do the job," Sharon told Israel Radio.

At least 14 Palestinians were killed Sunday in Nablus alone. The death toll so far: at least 200 Palestinians and 12 Israeli soldiers.

Late Sunday, Israelis along the northern border retreated to bomb shelters after Hezbollah guerrillas based in Lebanon opened fire on several villages and rockets pounded Israeli military sites on the Golan Heights.

Six Israeli soldiers were wounded during exchanges of fire with the guerrillas, a military spokesman said Sunday night. A second front clearly was active in the war now.

Sharon blamed Iran and Syria, and said Israel has issued warnings through diplomatic channels. "We

made clear that this ... could perhaps lead to a very big outbreak," he said.

Earlier, as he opened his weekly Cabinet meeting, Sharon offered no apologies for the invasion of the West Bank.

Israeli military officials released a grim roster of the casualties: In addition to the dead, more than 1,500 Palestinians and 143 Israelis have been wounded.

Israeli officials also said that 1,413 Palestinians have been detained during the 10-day campaign, including 361 "wanted suspects."

Maj. Gen. Dan Harel, head of military operations, claimed that few Palestinian civilians perished and that nearly every Palestinian victim "died with a rifle in his hand or a suicide-bomb vest around his waist."

Palestinian leaders and many citizens disagreed, saying countless civilians have been killed in the Israeli offensive, which began after a series of suicide bombings and other attacks killed more than 125 people in March alone.

Heavy fighting continued Sunday in a refugee camp near Jenin and in Nablus, both in the northern section of the West Bank, Israeli officials reported. Meanwhile, with U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell expected in Israel by week's end, some Israeli officials paid at least lip service to the Bush administration's demand that they begin the military withdrawal from the West Bank as

soon as possible.

Israeli Cabinet Minister Matan Vilnai told Israel Radio that Israel "apparently will have to stop" the offensive by the time Powell arrives.

"It could be that we won't be able to enter new places that we planned on entering at this phase, for example, cities of the Gaza Strip," Vilnai said. Sunday's Cabinet meeting ended with no outward sign that Sharon or his government would capitulate to world opinion.

"Israel, like any country in the world, has the right to defend itself against the cruel terror operated against it from a center of terror found only a number of kilometers from its population centers," the Cabinet said in an official communiqué.

One day after President Bush said he expected Israel to "withdraw without delay" from the West Bank, his national security adviser, Condoleezza Rice, seemed to soften the administration's position.

"Our message to the Israelis is that we understand that a military mobilization of this kind and an operation of this size cannot be undone in moments," she said on ABC's This Week. "But the important point is to begin now, without delay, not tomorrow, not (when) Secretary Powell gets to the region, but now."

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## Candidates

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said Deckert, a 1993 University graduate and the youngest member of the Senate at age 31.

While Deckert decided to wait until graduation to run for office, students Bobby Lee and Scott Austin did not. Lee, a former student and ASUO president during 1992-93, defeated three other candidates for Eugene City Councilor in 1996, including incumbent Kevin Hornbuckle.

Austin, a University junior at the time, ran for Oregon Senator Susan Castillo's seat in 1998. Unlike Lee, Austin lost his race by a wide margin, but even at the time of his defeat he said the experience was worthwhile.

Austin is currently a graduate student at the University.

U.S. Rep. Greg Walden, D-Hood River, Class of '81, said that age is less important than the ideas a

candidate has.

"I've never been one to believe that age, in and of itself, is a determining factor in a race," he said. "It can be a very difficult challenge, but it really comes down to the type of campaign you wage and the power of your ideas."

Former Oregon governor Neil Goldschmidt agreed with Walden, and added that voters are really looking for people with varied experience, something many students might be able to bring to the table.

"Lack of experience can be overcome — it's been done before," he said.

But Goldschmidt said while he was active in student government at the University, he never considered running for political office at the time.

"I never thought of it as being connected to other political issues," said Goldschmidt, who went on to secure two terms as mayor of Portland, was appointed as Secretary of Transportation for

former U.S. President Jimmy Carter and eventually beat Norma Paulus in a closely-contested 1986 race for Oregon governor.

McNeill and Stewart aren't daunted by their lack of experience so far.

"Every day, I feel that I'm doing a little bit better," McNeill said. "There's a lot of students in my district, and I hope they'd support a fellow student."

McNeill will run unopposed in the May 21 primary, but faces former representative Floyd Prozanski in the Oregon House's newly-drawn District 8. Stewart also could have difficulty winning his political race. He faces city council President David Kelly in his bid for reelection. But Stewart is keeping his hopes up and networking as best he can with his fellow students.

"I'm an underdog, but I think I have a chance," Stewart said.

E-mail reporter Brook Reinhard at [brookreinhard@dailyemerald.com](mailto:brookreinhard@dailyemerald.com).

## Theft

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burglary and theft are felony charges.

Aguilar said that, after talking with a number of Barnhart residents, officers couldn't find a cause for the alleged incidents, nor is there a pattern of thefts in Kelley's past, but alcohol may have factored into the incidents.

EPD spokeswoman Pam Alejandre said Kelley became extremely intoxicated late Thursday night and was taken to Sacred Heart Hospital. He returned to the residence hall early Friday and, at 6:30 a.m., reportedly walked into a third-floor room where two female residents were sleeping.

Alejandre said the women awoke immediately and pushed him out of their room without a struggle. An hour later, Kelley allegedly entered the fifth-floor room across the hall from his own. When the female res-

ident awoke, she reportedly found him rummaging through her clothes. Alejandre said she yelled at him to leave, and he did — with her clothes in tow. She followed him into the hallway, where Alejandre said the woman "lunged at him to grab stuff," and in the process "she ripped off his shirt and scratched his back."

EPD officers arrived at 10:20 a.m. and arrested Kelley, but an hour later another call came in from two female residents who returned home to find their fourth-floor room "ransacked."

Aguilar said that officers found almost \$1,000 in clothing and other items from the room, including an entire underwear drawer from a dresser, when they searched Kelley's room.

"Some of these women, they had no underwear or clothes to wear," Aguilar said.

Aguilar and other officers spent Friday afternoon interviewing the

victims and other residents who saw Kelley on Friday, but none of the residents had enough contact with Kelley to notice if he was still intoxicated, Aguilar said, adding that Kelley was sober when interviewed Friday morning.

"I think drinking may have been a catalyst. It may have been a facilitator," Aguilar said. "But he was sober enough to leave the hospital."

University spokesman Ross West said University Housing circulated a letter, drafted by Department of Public Safety Director Tom Fitzpatrick, detailing Kelley's arrest and charges. This information is also available on a special DPS hotline at 346-5692, which will be updated if additional information becomes available.

West said anyone with information regarding these or other incidents should call DPS at 346-5444 or EPD at 682-5121.

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