

Nation & world briefing

Al-Qaida may be planning new attack

Jonathan S. Landay

Knight Ridder Newspapers (KRT)

WASHINGTON — A new threat of coming attacks, apparently from Osama bin Laden's top aide, and recent killings of American soldiers in Kuwait and the Philippines have U.S. officials worried that a revitalized al-Qaida may be launching a new terrorist campaign.

One Marine was killed and a second injured Tuesday when two assailants in a pickup truck opened fire during a military exercise on an island off Kuwait City. Marines shot the pair dead. They were later identified as Kuwaitis. State Department spokesman Richard Boucher on Wednesday called the incident a terrorist attack.

In what could be a related inci-

dent, a U.S. soldier fired Wednesday at the driver of a civilian vehicle after one of its two occupants pointed a weapon at the soldier's Humvee, said Marine Corps Maj. Rob Riggle, a spokesman for the U.S. Central Command. The incident took place on Highway 80 north of Camp Doha, where American forces in Kuwait are based. U.S. and Kuwaiti officials are investigating, Riggle said.

On Oct. 2, an American Green Beret assigned to train Filipino troops in counterterrorism techniques was among three people who were killed in a bombing at a market in the Philippine city of Zamboanga. The bomb was believed to have been set by guerrillas of the Abu Sayyaf group, a Muslim extremist band linked to al-Qaida.

Also feeding those fears was Sunday's suspected bombing of a French-owned oil tanker off Yemen and a sharp rise in intelligence reports indicating that al-Qaida could be aiming to hit "accessible economic targets" in America or elsewhere, said a U.S. intelligence official, who requested anonymity.

Such targets could include oil tankers and loading facilities in the Persian Gulf and elsewhere in the Middle East, and symbolic targets such as the New York Stock Exchange, the Federal Reserve in Washington or the Chicago Board of Trade, the official said. There is no intelligence to indicate that any of those has been targeted, however, the official said.

New strikes by bin Laden's follow-

ers could deal fresh blows to the sputtering U.S. economy, especially if they disrupt vital petroleum supplies.

American officials said Wednesday that voice recordings received by The Associated Press in London and the al Jazeera television station in Qatar this week almost certainly were made within the last few months by Ayman al Zawahiri, an Egyptian who has been bin Laden's closest aide and spiritual adviser.

"It's probably (Zawahiri)," said an American official with knowledge of preliminary U.S. government analyses of the recordings.

If genuine, the recordings would prove that Zawahiri, 51, has eluded U.S.-led military operations in Afghanistan, and could mean that bin Laden did too, because the two

were virtually inseparable. No firm evidence of bin Laden's survival has surfaced since the United States heavily bombed his Afghan mountain stronghold of Tora Bora last December, though some reports suggest he remains in hiding in the region.

The recordings "most likely mean that both jokers are still alive," said the U.S. intelligence official. But a second U.S. intelligence official said the recordings could indicate that Zawahiri had taken command of al-Qaida because bin Laden was dead or incapacitated.

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Army tested chemical agents, gases on U.S. soil

David Goldstein

Knight Ridder Newspapers (KRT)

WASHINGTON — The U.S. military admitted Wednesday that its secret germ and chemical warfare testing program involved experiments on American soil, as well as Canada and Britain — far wider than originally believed.

Declassified reports disclosed by the Department of Defense show the army tested several lethal nerve gases, including Sarin, VX and Tabun, as well as a variety of possibly dangerous chemical agents in a series of tests between 1962 and 1973 in Alaska, Hawaii and Utah.

In one Alaska test called Elk

Hunt, the nerve gas VX — which the Pentagon called "one of the most toxic substances ever synthesized" — was loaded into land mines and detonated underground and underwater. Army personnel in protective clothing "traversed the contaminated test grids" so the amount of VX picked up on their clothing could be measured.

"We would wear all this rubber gear and crawl through the grids," said Jerrel Cook, 58, of Joplin, Mo., who was an Army private and an Elk Hunt volunteer in 1964.

The military also experimented with other more benign substances, including a wheat fungus in Florida in 1968 to determine its value as a biological warfare agent

against agricultural crops.

William Winkenwerder Jr., a top Defense Department health official, told a House Veterans Affairs hearing Wednesday that the servicemen involved in tests using live biological agents were vaccinated beforehand. He said protective clothing also was used.

Many veterans who participated in other, earlier-disclosed secret tests have said that in their cases — regardless of the military's assurances — they were neither given protective clothing nor told the nature of the tests.

Many of them now believe that they suffer similar ailments, including assorted types of cancer and respiratory problems, because

of their involvement in the tests.

Cook, the Missouri veteran involved in the VX tests, said he had suffered from chronic respiratory problems since the 1970s. "We got into a mess and didn't realize what we got into," he said.

He recalled in an interview that when they asked about the nature of the tests, they were told that the army was experimenting with nerve agents to find the "right mixture to make people feel badly sick without really killing them real quick."

Jonathan B. Perlin, deputy undersecretary for health for the Department of Veterans Affairs, testified that the agency was trying to reach all 5,000 SHAD veter-

ans and the additional 500 involved in the latest land-based tests. He also said a \$3 million, three-year study of the medical effects of Project SHAD was under way.

Rep. Christopher Smith, a New Jersey Republican and chairman of the Veterans Affairs Committee, said the VA needed to aggressively reach out to those veterans.

"There needs to be a sense of accountability," Smith said. "Some of these men and women are sick and don't know what to attribute it to."

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Politics will shape U.N.'s final resolution on Iraq

Elizabeth Neuffer

The Boston Globe

UNITED NATIONS (U-WIRE) — As United Nations diplomats wrangle over the terms of a new, tough Security Council resolution aimed at forcing Saddam Hussein to disarm, it will be the behind-the-scenes horse-trading — as much as the mandate's fine print — that will make or break any final UN deal.

Publicly, diplomats remain divided: whether to have one resolution or two, whether to threaten Iraq with military force directly or with unspecified consequences later. Privately, however, what's also at stake is what concessions Washington is willing to grant to get its allies on board.

China wants assurance that the United States will overlook its actions in Tibet and downplay the importance of Taiwan. Russia has its eye on billions of dollars in as-yet-unrealized oil deals in Iraq, which has the world's second-largest known oil reserves. And France, which also has vested interests in Iraq's lucrative oil fields, doesn't want to give the United States a blank check for military force against Iraq.

"Countries are trying to make it clear — on an initiative on which they have grave misgivings — that Washington has to realize they will accumulate brownie points and be prepared to accommodate them later," said David Malone, a former Canadian ambassador to the United Nations and president of the International Peace Academy, a New York-based think-tank.

Nowhere in the 15-member Security Council is the trading

more fast and furious than among its five permanent members. Each wields a veto that can block any plan.

But if the United States and Britain, spearheading the drive for the new resolution, can capture the votes of the other three permanent members — France, China and Russia — the new United Nations measure is all but guaranteed. Only nine votes are needed

for passage, and the other rotating member countries often follow the lead of the permanent five.

Some consensus has emerged: Diplomats appear to agree a new resolution is needed before U.N. weapons inspectors return to Iraq to hunt for Iraq's supposed weapons of mass destruction. But sharp differences over the wording of the mandate remain.

The United States and Britain

favor a measure granting U.N. inspectors wide-ranging powers to seek weapons of mass destruction and threatening "all necessary means" should Iraq fail to comply. France, by contrast, favors two resolutions: one, laying out stricter terms governing U.N. weapons inspection, and a second that would "consider any measure" should Iraq fail to comply.

The French draft also refers to

Iraq's "sovereign and territorial integrity" — a phrase that is anathema to the Americans because it was used by the Iraqis in the past to block access by weapons inspectors to presidential palaces. But it is a phrase that resonates with the Chinese, who are troubled by the precedent that sanctioning military action against Iraq might create in the absence of a state of war.

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