




Today	Friday	Saturday
		
High: 58 Low: 38 Precip: 0%	High: 56 Low: 38 Precip: 0%	High: 59 Low: 43 Precip: 20%

IN BRIEF

**Officials: Arafat suffers medical setback**

PARIS — Yasser Arafat, hospitalized in France with a mystery ailment, was rushed to intensive care after suffering a setback and was undergoing a new round of tests, Palestinian officials said early Thursday. The two officials, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the 75-year-old Arafat's condition had seriously deteriorated over the past day, adding that doctors who have been examining him since Friday still don't know the cause of his illness.

**Iraqi gunmen seize second American in week**

BAGHDAD, Iraq — Gunmen kidnapped a Lebanese-American businessman — the second U.S. citizen seized this week in Baghdad — and videotape Wednesday showed the beheadings of three Iraqi National Guardsmen and an Iraqi officer. Elsewhere, a U.S. soldier was killed and another wounded in a roadside bombing 12 miles south of the capital. A suicide driver detonated his vehicle at a checkpoint near Baghdad airport, injuring nine Iraqis and prompting U.S. troops to close the main route into the city for hours.

**European allies extend olive branch to Bush**

PARIS — European allies alienated by President Bush's first four years in power offered Wednesday to let bygones be bygones, saying they want to work with the new administration and seeking, right from Day 1, to get the new White House to listen more to overseas opinion. French President Jacques Chirac, in a congratulatory letter, said he hoped Bush's second term "will be the occasion for strengthening the French-American friendship."

**Japanese students plead guilty to murder**

WELLINGTON, New Zealand — Four young Japanese men have pleaded guilty to manslaughter in the beating death of a fellow student at an academy in New Zealand for Japanese youths with behavior and learning problems, local media reported Thursday.

Ryu Fukushima, 24, Ryuji Hiraki, 28, Nobu Oshima, 20, and Masato Fujita, 21, on Wednesday admitted to the manslaughter of Nozomu Shinozaki, 22, at the Columbus Academy in the northern city of Auckland on Feb. 26 last year.

The guilty pleas came after prosecutors reduced the charges from murder.

Charges initially were filed against a group of nine students. When 12 witnesses refused to return from Japan to testify at the trial, prosecutors dropped murder charges against five of the accused, who immediately returned to their homes in Japan.

The witnesses included the dead student's father — a surgeon said to be having business problems — and his mother, who was earlier reported to be too sick to travel.

Murder charges against the remaining four were reduced to manslaughter two weeks ago, prosecutors told the High Court in Auckland, local media reported. They face maximum life prison terms when they are sentenced Dec. 3.

— The Associated Press

# Nine arrested for slaying filmmaker

Officials believe the murderers were motivated by Theo van Gogh's criticism of Muslim culture

BY TOBY STERLING  
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

AMSTERDAM, Netherlands — Police arrested eight more suspected Islamic radicals Wednesday in the slaying of a Dutch filmmaker who criticized Muslim customs. Lawmakers questioned why authorities hadn't kept tabs on the alleged killer, who had a record of violent crime and contacts with a group under surveillance. The arrests were made in the 24 hours since Theo van Gogh was slain while cycling down an Amsterdam street Tuesday — believed to be the first Islamic terrorist attack in the Netherlands.

Six of the detainees are of Moroccan ancestry, one is Algerian and the last has dual Spanish-Moroccan nationality, prosecution spokeswoman Dop Kruiemel said. The eight are in addition to the suspect arrested minutes after the slaying, a 26-year-old Amsterdam resident of Moroccan origin.

Their ethnic identities raised questions of links to the March 11 train bombings that killed 191 people in Madrid, Spain. Twenty-nine suspects, mostly Moroccans, have been charged in those attacks; others arrested were of Algerian, Spanish, Tunisian and Egyptian origin.

The Netherlands has arrested more

than 40 terrorism suspects since the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks on the United States, including many accused of providing logistical support for groups linked to al-Qaida. Muslim youths are thought to have been recruited in the country, and experts believe a number of cells in the Netherlands provide funding to foreign terrorist cells.

The country is home to 3 million first- or second-generation immigrants, almost 20 percent of the 16 million population. There are about 300,000 Moroccan nationals in the Netherlands.

Kruiemel said five of the suspects, whose identities were not released, were detained and released during an October 2003 investigation into a potential terrorist threat.

"They were previously known to us," Kruiemel said. "As of now only one suspect is being held for Van Gogh's murder, but the investigation will determine if others may have been connected."

The Dutch have reacted with outrage to the killing of the filmmaker, testing the nation's famed tolerance and straining already tense relations with the Muslim immigrant population.

Mainstream Dutch Muslim groups condemned the killing. A number of mosques were closed

Tuesday night for fear of vandalism, and political figures were given additional police protection.

Newspaper NRC Handelsblad reported that conservative politician Ayan Hirsi Ali, who wrote the script for van Gogh's latest provocative movie criticizing the treatment of women under Islam, received a death threat in an e-mail Wednesday that read, "You're next."

The Justice Ministry said the suspect in the murder of the 47-year-old filmmaker — a distant relative of painter Vincent van Gogh — is a Muslim radical associated with Islamic fundamentalists on a terrorist watch list.

Interior Minister Johan Remkes confirmed that the suspect was known to have associated with a group of 150 radicals who are watched day and night by the Dutch secret service for fear they may commit a terrorist act.

The suspect himself was not on that watch list. Authorities didn't release his name, and Dutch media identified him only as Mohammed B.

The suspect had contacts with Samir Azzouz, an 18-year-old Moroccan immigrant accused of plotting terrorist attacks against Dutch targets, NOS Dutch television reported.

Members of parliament called for an emergency debate on why the alleged killer — who police say had a record of violent crime — hadn't been stopped.

"Is this a murder, or is this a terrorist attack?" said Jozias van Aartsen, leader of the conservative VVD party. "The facts must come out very, very quickly."

Van Gogh released a fictional film in August about the mistreatment of Muslim women. In the film, women were shown naked with texts from the Quran scrawled on their bodies.

Police and eyewitnesses said the attacker shot van Gogh, stabbed him, cut his throat with one knife, and pinned a note to his chest with another.

The note is said to have contained texts from the Quran in Arabic, though police would not confirm this. According to NRC Handelsblad, the note called for an Islamic holy war, or jihad.

Van Gogh's killing, which came two years after the murder of populist anti-immigration politician Pim Fortuyn in 2002, stirred outrage and fears that Dutch people will no longer feel free to speak their minds.

Immigration Minister Rita Verdonk told 20,000 Dutch who flocked to Amsterdam's central square for a noisy wake Tuesday night that "we won't take this."

In the past two years, the government has passed a series of laws cracking down on violent crime, which is often blamed on immigrants; expanding prosecutors' wiretapping powers to thwart would-be terrorists; and restricting further immigration.

## Iraq asks Hungary to extend support during 'critical stage'

Prime Minister Ferenc Gyurcsany plans to request a three-month extension to keep 300 troops in Iraq

BY KARL PETER KIRK  
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

BUDAPEST, Hungary — Hungary's government will ask lawmakers to keep its 300 troops in Iraq for an extra three months before pulling them out by March 31, the country's new prime minister said Wednesday.

The decision to set a firm limit undercut President Bush's effort to hold the multinational force together since Spain pulled out its 1,300 soldiers earlier this year. The interim Iraqi government asked Hungary a few weeks ago to keep its troops there for about another year.

Prime Minister Ferenc Gyurcsany said he would ask parliament to extend the troops' current mandate, which expires Dec. 31, until March 31. Hungary's largest opposition party, which wants the soldiers home by year's end, signaled it likely would block the move.

"We are obliged to stay there until the (Iraqi) elections. To stay longer is an impossibility," Gyurcsany said.

Iraq's elections are to be held by Jan. 31.

Hungary's ambassador to the United States, Andras Simonyi, said the government's decision to seek an extension until after the Iraqi elections was "serious and responsible."

"It is important for Hungary to be present at this critical stage of Iraq's democratization process," he said.

Hungary has a transportation

contingent of 300 troops stationed in Hillah, south of Baghdad. One Hungarian soldier died in Iraq when a roadside bomb exploded by the water-carrying convoy he was guarding.

Hungary, which joined the European Union in May, sent the troops as part of the U.S.-led coalition. But the government has been under mounting pressure from citizens and opposition parties who object to the deployment.

Recent polls showed that about 60 percent of Hungarians wanted the government to withdraw the country's troops from Iraq immediately.

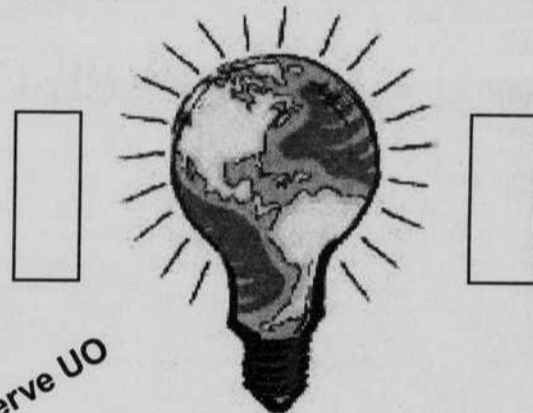
There were no immediate signs Wednesday that other coalition governments were considering pulling out their troops, although most — including Japan, Britain and Denmark — are facing domestic pressure to do so.

In a letter sent three weeks ago, Iraq thanked Hungary for its contributions so far and asked the country to extend the mission "to help Iraq's stabilization process," Hungarian government spokeswoman Boglar Laszlo said.

The government will ask lawmakers Monday to extend the troops' mandate by three months, Defense Ministry spokesman Peter Matyuc said. However, that would require a two-thirds majority, and the Fidesz-Hungarian Civic Union, the main center-right opposition party, said it only would be willing to consider an extension if the multinational force received a U.N. mandate to stay.

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