

Arafat evacuates to bunker

Israel targeted the Palestinian leader's compound and symbol of authority.

By Hadeel Wahdan
ASSOCIATED PRESS WRITER

RAMALLAH, West Bank — Bodyguards whisked Yasser Arafat into an underground bunker at the sight of Israeli attack helicopters approaching his compound yesterday.

Seconds later when the missiles struck — a few dozen yards from where he had been sitting — the Palestinian leader was safely hidden away with advisers and bodyguards in a windowless underground office.

"You should not forget that Arafat is a fighter," said Ahmed Abdel Rahman, secretary general of the Palestinian Cabinet, who stayed in the shelter with him.

"He was very quiet. ... Although he was very surprised, he did not stop giving directions. ... We took all the natural

measures that we used to take when we were in Lebanon."

Rahman said Arafat ordered employees of the compound to evacuate, keeping only his personal bodyguards.

Although Israel says it is not targeting Arafat, its attacks have looked personal, aimed squarely at the symbols of his authority. In addition to hitting the Ramallah compound, Israel has damaged three of Arafat's helicopters and torn up the landing strip at Gaza International Airport.

With troops sealing off the West Bank and Gaza, the Palestinian leader has been left a virtual prisoner in Ramallah.

The tactic further complicates Arafat's daunting task — confronting and controlling increasingly popular Islamic militants when he has little to offer his people in return.

When he emerged from his shelter,

Arafat angrily accused Israel of trying to sabotage his crackdown on Islamic militants, which Israel dismisses as a sham.

The Israelis "don't want me to succeed and for this (Prime Minister Ariel Sharon) is escalating his military activities against our people, against our towns, against our cities, against our establishments," Arafat said.

"He doesn't want a peace process to start."

The Palestinian Authority has rounded up some 130 members of the militant Islamic Jihad and Hamas groups in response to weekend suicide bombings and shootings in Israel that killed 26 people.

Jibril Rajoub, Palestinian security chief in the West Bank, said arrests would continue, although none have been made since the Israeli airstrikes began Monday.



Nasser Nasser/Associated Press

Palestinian police officers search through burning remains inside Arafat's compound.

Pakistan, CIA team up to hunt for bin Laden

By Munir Ahmed
ASSOCIATED PRESS WRITER

ISLAMABAD, Pakistan — Pakistan has agreed to step up cooperation with the CIA in the hunt for Osama bin Laden, which is now centering on the rugged mountains along Pakistan's border with Afghanistan, Pakistani intelligence officials said yesterday.

The agreement followed weekend meetings with CIA Director George Tenet, who also urged Pakistan to crack down on religious schools seen as training grounds for Islamic militants.

U.S. officials confirmed Tenet's visit, but refused to discuss the content of his meetings.

Pakistani intelligence officials said Pakistani officials, including President Pervez Musharraf, told Tenet their government would enhance cooperation with the CIA, joining the hunt for bin Laden and giving American spies access to seven arrested members of bin Laden's al-Qaida network.

In return, Tenet said the United States would provide surveillance equipment, according to the officials, who spoke on condition of anonymity.

Pakistan's intelligence agents, many of whom are of the Pashtun ethnic group that straddles the country's border with Afghanistan, have a larger presence in Afghanistan than anyone else.

The United States considers their cooperation essential in tracking down bin Laden and his al-Qaida terror network.

Despite Pakistan's support for the U.S.-led war in Afghanistan, only a few of the country's Inter-Service Intelligence agents have been sharing information with their CIA counterparts. The agency's director, Lt. Gen. Ehsan-ul Haq, told Tenet that would change, the officials said.

Haq told Tenet his agency would join the hunt for bin Laden — possibly in joint operations with the CIA — and would increase security along the border to prevent the terrorist suspect from fleeing, they said.

Haq also assured Tenet he would have access to seven men in Pakistani custody who have confessed to membership in the al-Qaida network and to two retired nuclear scientists detained for their ties to bin Laden, the officials said.

Bush attacks Hamas backers

The president cracked down on financial supporters of the militant group.

By Ron Fournier
ASSOCIATED PRESS WRITER

WASHINGTON, D.C. — The Bush administration yesterday froze the financial assets and closed the offices of a Texas-based foundation accused of funneling money to Hamas, the militant Palestinian group that claimed responsibility for last weekend's deadly attacks in Israel.

In a display of solidarity with Israel, President Bush also ordered a crackdown on two Palestinian groups accused of financing Hamas.

"The message is this: Those who do business with terror will do no business with the United States or anywhere else the United States can reach," the president said in a Rose Garden announcement with Treasury Secretary Paul O'Neill and Attorney General John Ashcroft.

Bush called Hamas one of the deadliest terrorist organizations in the world and said it supports "the total destruction of Israel."

The Texas-based Holy Land Foundation for Relief and Development, with offices in Illinois, California and New Jersey, denied having ties to Hamas.

The group, registered with the Internal Revenue Service as a tax-exempt charity, raised \$13 million last year and calls itself the largest Muslim charity in the United States.

Foundation president Shukri Abu-Baker said the action was "the work of special interest groups working for Israel in Washington."

"If the Holy Land Foundation has violated any U.S. law, they would have charged us in a court of law. They wouldn't need to seize our assets. We intend to pursue this in a court of law," he said.

"The decision by the U.S. government to seize the charitable donations of Muslims during the holy month of Ramadan is an affront to millions of Muslim Americans who entrust charities like ours to assist in fulfilling their religious obligations," the foundation said in a statement.

Bush said Hamas uses money raised by the foundation to indoctrinate chil-

dren to become suicide bombers and to support the families of suicide attackers.

Most donors don't know how the money is used, Bush said, "but the facts are clear, the terrorists benefit from the Holy Land Foundation, and we're not going to allow it."

Hamas, already on the State Department terrorist list, said through a spokesman that it gets no money from U.S. groups.

The action marked the administration's third round of orders against groups suspected of funneling money to terrorists from offices in America and abroad.

Bush has promised to lead a global coalition that uses military, financial, diplomatic and intelligence tools against terrorist cells, starting with the al-Qaida network based in Afghanistan. Al-Qaida leader Osama bin Laden is suspected of being behind the Sept. 11 attacks that killed nearly 3,500.

"The net is closing," Bush said. "Today, it just got tighter."

Bush said Hamas has killed hundreds of people over the years, including two Americans in the past 12 months.



Bush

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