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Pakistan pursues diplomacy

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS
ISLAMABAD, Pakistan — Pakistan's government eased its rhetoric Saturday against unilateral U.S. attacks on militant havens near the Afghan border, saying it hopes quiet diplomacy will persuade Washington that the raids only inflame sentiment against leaders of both countries.

Defense Minister Ahmad Mukhtar claimed Washington already has agreed to curtail its military activities against militants in Pakistan, although a missile strike Friday killed at least 12 people.

Most U.S. cross-border activity has been limited to missiles fired by unmanned drone aircraft. But in a Sept. 3 attack, helicopter-borne U.S. ground forces were used in an operation that killed at least 15, an escalation of U.S. military force.

"As far as my information, we have taken it up at the highest level with the State Department

“ We will exchange information and the Pakistan military ... will take action against terrorists in Pakistan. ”

— Ahmad Mukhtar, Defense Minister, Pakistan

and Pentagon,” Mukhtar said in an apparent reference to the U.S. using ground forces.

“They have given us assurance that it would not be repeated. The agreement we have with them is that we will exchange information and the Pakistan military or (paramilitary) forces will take action against terrorists in Paki-

stan,” Mukhtar added. The White House declined comment on the remarks, as it largely has done since reports emerged Thursday that President Bush secretly approved more aggressive cross-border operations in July as part of a strategy to fight the resurgent Taliban in Afghanistan.

Since Aug. 13, there have been at least seven reported missile strikes, as well as the ground forces operation, in tribally governed territory where the government has little control. The border region is considered a likely hiding place for al-Qaida leader Osama bin Laden and his deputy, Ayman al-Zawahiri.

Top government officials indicated Pakistan was trying to avoid an outright confrontation with Washington, its ally and financial supporter, after the main opposition party suggested the country should consider dropping out of the war on terror if cross-border attacks continue.

China: Company knew of tainted milk

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS
BEIJING — China's health minister blamed a dairy Saturday for the delay in warning the public about tainted milk powder linked to kidney stones in infants and at least one death, as authorities increased the number of known sick babies to 432.

The incident has been an embarrassing failure for China's product safety system, which was overhauled in an attempt to restore consumer confidence after a string of recalls and warnings around the world over tainted toothpaste, faulty tires and other Chinese-made goods.

Officials complained they were not alerted to the milk problem until Monday even though the product's maker, Sanlu Group Co., had received complaints as early as March and its tests found a banned chemical in

432	78	175	55,115
Number of known sick babies in China	People being questioned in the case	Companies under emergency inspection	Pounds of tainted milk shipped to Taiwan

the milk in August. The company ordered a recall Thursday.

“The Sanlu Group should shoulder major responsibility for this,” Health Minister Gao Qiang said at a news conference.

He gave no indication what penalties the dairy might face, but said those responsible would “be dealt with severely.”

Officials defended their response to the latest product safety disaster. They said 19 people had been detained and 78 were being questioned about how the banned chemical melamine was added to milk sold to Sanlu, which is China's biggest producer of milk powder.

Shoddy and fake goods are common in China, and infants, hospital patients and others have been killed or injured by tainted or fake milk, medicines, liquor and other products. The milk scandal is especially damaging because it involves a major food processor. The government expects such companies to act as industry role models of safety and quality.

Gao, who said the government had launched an emergency inspection of all 175 Chinese companies that produce infant formula, said some of Sanlu's tainted milk powder was exported to Taiwan but none was sold to other foreign markets.

In Taiwan, authorities were trying to determine if any tainted milk powder was consumed on the island. Liu Fang-ming of Taiwan's Taoyuan county government said the 55,115-pound shipment arrived in June and only 21,660 pounds had been recovered.

The number of babies with kidney stones who were fed Sanlu milk has risen to 432 across China, Gao said. He said the government was sending experts to treat them and would pay for their care.

“We are confident that with timely diagnosis and treatment, these infant patients will recover soon,” he said.

Chinese investigators are still looking into how and why melamine was added to milk sold to Sanlu, officials said.

Traffic resumes in Channel tunnel

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS
PARIS — Passengers and freight trundled again through the tunnel under the English Channel on Saturday, two days after a fierce undersea fire suspended service, injured 14 people and showed the fragility of Britain's only land link to the European continent.

Passengers on the first Eurostar trains since the accident described the lingering smell of smoke in the tunnel and said the journey took longer than usual.

Freight service resumed overnight, and Eurostar began “limited service” Saturday morning on its passenger trains. Trains are only running in one of two tunnels that normally carry traffic, the one untouched by Thursday's fire. The other tunnel remains closed.

Eurostar warned late Saturday that passengers should continue to expect “significant delays before boarding” and longer-than-usual travel times.

On Sunday, Eurostar says it expects to run up to 10 routes each way between Paris and London, and up to five trains in each direction between London and Brussels. Passengers with tickets booked through Tuesday can change them for a later date or get a refund, it said.

The blaze broke out Thursday afternoon and was not extinguished until midday Friday. Firefighters worked through the night, enduring extreme temperatures and cramped quarters as they put out the blaze 40 meters under the English Channel.

While investigators were trying to determine the cause of the blaze, the state prosecutor of France's coastal Boulogne-sur-Mer region, Gerald Lesigne, said he believed it was of “accidental origin.”

“There is no element in this case that indicates that this fire could have originated from an act of malice,” he said.

The fire left the British Isles cut off for more than a day from continental Europe other than by sea or air — the only routes that existed before the tunnel revolutionized travel between France and England when it opened in 1994.

About 26,000 people travel the tunnel on average each day. The tunnel has had several fires in the past, including one in 1996 that shut freight traffic for months.

Pope drinks water from Lourdes spring



THE ASSOCIATED PRESS
LOURDES, France — As millions of pilgrims do each year, Pope Benedict XVI drank water Saturday from the Lourdes spring famed for miraculous cures as he visited a grotto at the sanctuary he calls a “citadel of hope.”

A young girl handed the pontiff a glass of water from the spring that burst through the ground 150 years ago when a local girl, Bernadette Soubirous, had repeated visions of the Virgin Mary.

The grotto sheltered Benedict from a steady rain but didn't keep out the evening chill as the pontiff, in a red mantle over white robes, prayed and lit a candle.

Benedict flew to Lourdes, a town in southwest France near the Pyrenees, after saying an outdoor Mass in Paris attended by more than a quarter million Roman Catholics — a show of faith in a traditionally Roman Catholic country that has witnessed a sharp decline in churchgoing in recent years.

In his homily in Paris, Benedict focused on the ills of modern materialism. He blasted modern society's thirst for these new “pagan” idols as a “scandal, a real plague.”

The main purpose of Benedict's first visit to France as pontiff was the pilgrimage in Lourdes as the shrine marked the 150th anniversary of the apparitions of the Virgin Mary to 14-year-old Bernadette, who later was made a saint.

Pope Benedict XVI prays at the Grotto of the Apparitions, also called Grotto of Massabielle, on Saturday in the Sanctuary of Lourdes, southwestern France.

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