

The Boston Globe

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 19, 2001

FAIR TO MUDDLING

TODAY: Early fog, then lots of sun, 65-72

TOMORROW: Mostly cloudy, chance of showers, 65-70

HIGH TIDE: 12:53 a.m., 1:18 p.m.
FULL REPORT: PAGE B12

US probes a possible Iraq link

Battle won't be quick or easy, warns Rumsfeld

By Peter J. Howe and Anne E. Kornblut
GLOBE STAFF

WASHINGTON — Destroying the terrorist groups that brought down the World Trade Center and ripped through the Pentagon “will not be quick, and it will not be easy,” Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld said yesterday, as rescue workers in New York observed a minute of silence precisely one week after the beginning of the assault that killed 5,000 or more.

Mayor Rudolph W. Giuliani of New York said the chances of finding anyone alive in the thousands of tons of rubble is “very, very small.”

The week since the terror strikes has brought forth “the best of America,” President Bush said, as he led a ceremony in the White House Rose Garden to honor rescue workers and promote a Web site to coordinate donations. “We saw a great country rise up to help.”

Among developments yesterday:

■ As sketchy reports raised the possibility that Iraq played some role in the attacks, Muslim clerics in Afghanistan were meeting to decide how to respond to a demand that the country turn over suspected terrorist mastermind Osama bin Laden, possibly for trial only in another Muslim nation.

■ The Palestinian Authority called a cease-fire in its ongoing conflict with Israel, which quickly reciprocated and agreed to pull tanks out of Palestinian territories. US officials said the moves were a promising development for peace in the Middle East.

■ An early rally on Wall Street fizzled by late afternoon, leaving the markets down slightly after Monday's sharp sell-off.

■ Transportation Secretary Norman Y. Mineta said the Bush administration will unveil an aid

TERROR, Page A34



KRT PHOTO

From left, chief of staff Andrew Card, national security adviser Condoleezza Rice, Attorney General John Ashcroft, FBI Director Robert Mueller, President Bush, and Vice President Dick Cheney on their way to participate in a moment of silence for victims.

Hijacking suspect said to have met with agent

By John Donnelly and Bryan Bender
GLOBE STAFF
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

WASHINGTON — US intelligence has begun to take a hard look at whether Iraq was involved in the deadly terror attacks last week, following a report that one of the suspected hijackers met with the head of Iraqi intelligence in Europe earlier this year, two Bush administration officials confirmed yesterday.

The classified intelligence on a meeting between Mohamed Atta and Iraqi intelligence — delivered to US officials by an unspecified foreign agent — prompted officials in recent days to broaden the focus of the probe beyond the only publicly identified suspect, Saudi terror operative Osama bin Laden, said the two officials, speaking on condition of anonymity.

The officials cautioned that the information did not conclusively link Iraq to the attacks.

“It's been a suspicion from the beginning that Iraq may have been at least helping with their intelligence networks,” said one of the officials. “But now, after the report, they're looking really seriously at Iraq.”

One US intelligence official said yesterday that the United States received a report “several days ago” that Atta met with a senior Iraqi intelligence agent somewhere in Europe. The official offered no other details, in order to protect sources.

Atta — who carried Saudi and United Arab Emirates passports and had trained as a pilot — was aboard American Airlines Flight 11, the Boston-to-Los Angeles flight that crashed into the first of the two World Trade Center towers, on Sept. 11. Investigators believe he was at the controls of the plane when it crashed.

At the Pentagon and in intelligence

IRAQ, Page A33

Taliban officials hint at softening stance

By Indira A.R. Lakshmanan
GLOBE STAFF



REUTERS PHOTO

A group of Afghans waiting for a bus to take them out of Kabul yesterday as fears mounted of an attack by the United States.

ISLAMABAD, Pakistan — Members of Afghanistan's Taliban leadership hinted last night that they might agree to hand over suspected terrorist leader Osama bin Laden for trial in a neutral Islamic country, raising hopes among Pakistani officials that a devastating assault on their neighbor could be averted.

“Anyone who is responsible for this act, Osama or not, we will not side with him,” Information Minister Qudrutullah Jamal told Reuters news service by telephone from Kabul. It was the first time any Taliban official had conceded the possibility that bin Laden may have been involved in the terror attacks that killed more than 5,000 people in New York and

Washington, D.C.

“We told [the Pakistanis] to give us proof that he did it, because without that how can we give him up?” Jamal said. “We have been saying this for two years,” he said in reference to US demands for bin Laden's handover after the 1998 bombings of US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania.

A senior Pakistani delegation returned last night from two days of trying to make the Taliban leadership understand the danger they face if they refuse US demands to expel bin Laden.

There was virtually no chance that Washington would be satisfied by a trial in an Islamic country, however. When Richard Boucher, US State Department spokesman, was asked yesterday

PAKISTAN, Page A35

America prepares

Scramble confirmed

Two fighter jets dispatched from Cape Cod had closed to within 71 miles of New York when the second airliner slammed into the World Trade Center towers. **A32.**

Keeping routines

Weddings, birthday parties, and other personal events continue as scheduled, sometimes doubling as support sessions. **City & Region, B1.**

Emotions at Fenway

Players and fans sing every verse of “America the Beautiful” in a long seventh-inning stretch as the Red Sox return to action with a 7-2 win over Tampa Bay. **Sports, E1.**

Full coverage, **A23-38. Index, A2.**

Features Classified

Comics	B10-11	Classified	C12-22
Crossword	B10		D4-7
Deaths	B8-9	Autos	C12
Editorials	A20	Help Wanted	D5
Horoscope	B10	Professional	F9
Lottery	B2	Real Estate	D4
Movies	C6-7	Apartments	D4
TV/Radio	B6-7	Comm'l/Ind'l	D4
© Globe Newspaper Co.		Market Basket	D7
		Yachts/Boats	E2

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Ex-Boston cabdriver may be tied to attackers

By Stephen Kurkjian and John Element
GLOBE STAFF

Federal authorities are investigating whether a former Boston cabdriver with alleged links to Osama bin Laden may have met in the 1990s with two of the hijackers responsible for the attacks last week on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon.

Last weekend, several FBI agents canvassed the Dorchester neighborhood where the former cabdriver, Nabil A. Almarabh, was listed as living in recent years.

The landlord of one of the three-deckers where Almarabh had lived said agents showed him photos of several of the terrorists and asked if he had ever seen them. The landlord, who asked to remain anonymous, said he was unable to identify any of them.

Meanwhile, a colleague at one of the cab companies where Almarabh had worked said the 34-year-old Kuwait native told him last October that he was leaving Boston because he was cooperating with federal authorities in their investigation of bin Laden.

“He told me he had to leave immediately, that he was cooperating with the FBI, and they were going to give him a new identity,” said the colleague, who asked not to be identified.

FBI agents visited Boston Cab's Fenway garage yesterday to ques-

CABDRIVER, Page A33

More than 75 Rockaway residents are missing, one of the heaviest human tolls to hit any New York City enclave

A community of loss

By Anne Barnard and Beth Daley
GLOBE STAFF

NEW YORK — On the Rockaway peninsula, a sliver of Queens that juts between the Atlantic Ocean and the city skyline, boys tend to choose between two careers: firefighting and finance.

Many follow their fathers and neighbors into the Fire Department — there is a joke in town that every other house has a firefighter. Those with more white-collar ambitions head for the Wall Street skyscrapers they can see 12 miles off, across Jamaica Bay. A neighborhood pipeline has led many of them straight to Cantor Fitzgerald, the bond-trading giant that had offices near the top of the World Trade Center.

Those two paths converged in tragedy Sept. 11, when terrorist attacks on the twin towers ripped through both the blue- and white-collar worlds — and doubly devastated the neighborhoods of the Rockaway peninsula. More than 75 residents are missing, one of the heaviest human tolls to hit any New York City enclave.

The first hijacked jetliner sliced diagonally through Cantor Fitzgerald's offices, leaving most of the firm's 1,100 workers missing. Less than two hours later, the twin towers crashed down onto



GLOBE PHOTO/JOE TABACCA

Kim Moran of Rockaway with a photo of her husband, John, a New York fire battalion chief who is still missing.

hundreds of firefighters and police officers, among them schoolmates and neighbors of the traders above.

“I can count, from 129th to 134th street, at least one person, if not two, on each block that are gone,” said Flip Mullen, a retired firefighter who lives on the peninsula's west end, a four-block-wide grid of single family homes. “You never thought you'd need a scorecard to figure out how many funerals you have to go to.”

The Rockaway Chamber of Commerce estimates that up to 90 people are dead or missing from the 11-mile spit of land, mostly from its westernmost neighborhoods Rockaway Park, Belle Harbor, Neponsit, and Breezy Point, which combined are

home to around 37,000 people.

Across greater New York, there are other concentrated pockets of loss. In Ridgefield, N.J., a bedroom community for the financial district, 12 children from a single elementary school lost parents. In Brooklyn's Marine Park neighborhood, around 20 people, mostly firefighters and police officers, are missing from one church congregation.

But in the Rockaways, a twofold loss has hit both the peninsula's Jewish communities and its

ROCKAWAY, Page A37

Aid backed for airlines, but extent is uncertain

By Sue Kirchhoff
GLOBE STAFF

WASHINGTON — Transportation Secretary Norman Mineta and key lawmakers said yesterday they would try to pull together an aid package for the airline industry, which has suffered staggering financial losses since last week's terrorist attacks.

But the heads of the nation's top airlines, who made an extraordinary joint plea here for aid, are not likely to get the full \$24 billion they are seeking, lawmakers and aides said. And Senate leaders, after meeting with airline executives, said they were using an earlier \$15 billion measure as the basis for any relief package.

“President Bush and his administration are committed to working closely with all industry members and with the Congress to help maintain the strength of our nation's aviation industry,” said Mineta after a morning meeting with the industry executives.

The Transportation secretary said he would try to have a proposal by next week, suggesting the airlines should be compensated for at least \$250 million to \$300 million per day that they lost as a direct result of the attacks. But he stressed that the administration needed to assess the broader picture carefully before committing to a dollar figure or specific plan.

On Capitol Hill, lawmakers

AIRLINES, Page A28