

AP PHOTO
An Iranian student holds the Koran and a sign, in a protest over the publication of caricatures of the Prophet Muhammad in European newspapers, in front of the Danish Embassy, in Tehran, Iran, on Monday.

Danish official: Apology pointless

Unapologetic Danes believe their country's being misrepresented

BY KARL RITTER
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

COPENHAGEN, Denmark

Denmark's prime minister complained Monday that his nation had been unfairly portrayed as intolerant in the international furor over the Prophet Muhammad cartoons, while his foreign minister said an apology would accomplish nothing.



RASMUSSEN

After meeting with a newly formed network of moderate Muslims, Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen called for peaceful dialogue to defuse Denmark's biggest international crisis since World War II.

"This meeting just testifies that the Danish government wants a positive dialogue with all groups in the Danish society," he said. "The way forward is peaceful."

However, critics said the network did not represent Denmark's estimated 200,000 Muslims and warned the prime minister could be heightening tensions by not reaching out to radical groups.

Danish Foreign Minister Per Stig Moeller said the government had no reason to apologize for the drawings first published in one of Denmark's largest newspapers.

"First, you cannot apologize for something you have not done," Per Stig Moeller said.

"Second, nothing illegal has been done because no one has been found guilty by a court."

Protests against the cartoons continued, with Pakistani police firing tear gas on thousands of student protesters, Egyptian demonstrators calling for a boycott of European countries and hundreds of Palestinian schoolchildren trampling on a Danish flag.

President Gen. Pervez Musharraf said the conflict had united moderate and radical Muslims "because this hurts the sentiments of every Muslim."

The Danish government has resisted pressure to accept any responsibility for the cartoons, one of which depicts the prophet wearing a turban shaped like a bomb, saying it has no say over the media. Islam widely holds that representations of Muhammad are banned for fear they could lead to idolatry.

Fogh Rasmussen insisted that Denmark respects all religions and had been misrepresented in the Muslim world.

"We have seen distribution of false pictures, false stories, false rumors of Denmark," he told reporters in Copenhagen.

He did not give examples of misinformation, but earlier criticized a group of Danish Islamic leaders who went on a Middle East tour in December.

Leaders of the group, claiming to represent 27 Muslim organizations, said they sought support in countries including Egypt, Syria and Lebanon because they felt their voices were not being heard in Denmark.

The group carried a dossier with purported examples of images offensive to Islam, including photocopies of the 12 Muhammad cartoons and three additional images, two offensive drawings of the prophet and a copy of an AP photograph unrelated to the controversy.

Hunters say look before you shoot

Experts: Vice president broke sport's cardinal rule in gun accident at friend's ranch

BY NEDRA PICKLER
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON

Vice President Dick Cheney apparently broke the No. 1 rule of hunting: be sure of what you're shooting at.

Cheney wounded fellow hunter Harry Whittington in the face, neck and chest Saturday, apparently because he did not see Whittington approaching as he fired on a covey of quail in Texas.

Hunting safety experts interviewed Monday agreed it would have been a good idea for Whittington to announce himself, something he apparently didn't do, according to a witness.

But they stressed that the shooter is responsible for knowing his surroundings and avoiding hitting other people.

"We always stress to anybody that before you make any kind of a shot, it's incumbent upon the shooter to assess the situation and make sure it's a safe shot," said Mark Birkhauser, president-



CHENEY

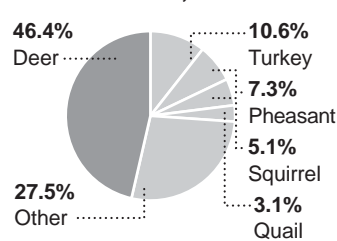
Most hunting injuries involve shotguns

There are about 850 hunting injuries a year in America, down 31 percent over the past decade. Vice President Dick Cheney's accident this weekend involved a shotgun, the weapon most commonly used in hunting accidents.

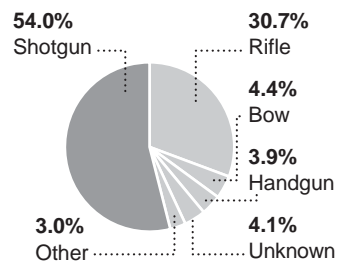
Top factors for injury, 2002

Failure to identify target	15.1%
Shooter swinging on game	12.9
Careless handling of firearm	11.9
Victim out of sight of shooter	8.5
Fall while climbing in/out of position	7.8

Game involved, 2002



Weapon involved, 2002



SOURCE: International Hunter's Education Association

elect of the International Hunter Education Association and hunter education coordinator in New Mexico. "Once you squeeze that trigger, you can't bring that shot back."

Cheney, an experienced hunter, has not commented publicly about the accident. He avoided

reporters by leaving an Oval Office meeting with United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan before the press was escorted in.

President Bush was told about Cheney's involvement in the accident shortly before 8 p.m. Saturday — about an hour after

it occurred — but the White House did not disclose the accident until Sunday afternoon, and then only in response to press questions. Press secretary Scott McClellan said he did not know until Sunday morning that Cheney had shot someone.

Facing a press corps upset that news had been withheld, McClellan said, "I think you can always look back at these issues and look at how to do a better job."

Katharine Armstrong, the owner of the ranch where the shooting occurred, said she told Cheney on Sunday morning that she was going to inform the local paper, the Corpus Christi Caller-Times. She said he agreed, and the newspaper reported it on its Web site Sunday afternoon.

Secret Service spokesman Eric Zahren said that about an hour after Whittington was shot, the head of the Secret Service's local office called the Kenedy County sheriff to report the accident.

"They made arrangements at the sheriff's request to have deputies come out and interview the vice president the following morning at 8 a.m. and that indeed did happen," Zahren said.

At least one deputy showed up

at the ranch's front gate later in the evening and asked to speak to Cheney but was turned away by the Secret Service, Zahren said. There was some miscommunication that arrangements had already been made to interview the vice president in the morning, he said.

Gilbert San Miguel, chief deputy sheriff for Kenedy County, said the report had not been completed Monday and that it was being handled as a hunting accident. He said his department's investigation had found that alcohol was not a factor in the shooting.

The National Rifle Association, a close ally of the White House, would not comment on who was to blame in the accident.

Whittington, a prominent Republican attorney in the Texas capital of Austin, was in stable condition at Christus Spohn Hospital Corpus Christi-Memorial.

He was moved from intensive care to a "step-down unit" Monday. Doctors decided to leave several birdshot pellets lodged in his skin rather than try to remove them.

Armstrong said the accident occurred as Whittington was retrieving a bird he had shot in the tall grasses on her property.

Study: Millions in Katrina aid wasted

BY HOPE YEN
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON

Ann Archer says she was puzzled when she suddenly received a \$2,358 check for Katrina housing relief last fall. While many of her neighbors were still awaiting aid, the government was repeatedly offering her money and a trailer she didn't ask for.

The New Orleans retiree says Federal Emergency Management Agency workers were surprised, too, when she tried to send the money back.

"They shouldn't be making a salary if they're screwing up this badly when our city needs help," Archer said.

In the weeks after the Aug. 29 storm, the government squandered millions of dollars in Katrina aid, including handing

IN OTHER DEVELOPMENTS

White House defends federal Katrina role

WASHINGTON — The Bush administration on Monday pushed back hard against Katrina-response criticism leveled by ex-disaster agency chief Michael Brown and congressional investigators.

"I reject outright the suggestion that President Bush was anything less than fully involved," said White House homeland security adviser Frances Fragos Townsend.

Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff "unequivocally and strongly"

rejected suggestions that his agency was preoccupied with terror threats at the expense of preparing for natural disasters.

Both spoke at a conference of state emergency management directors in suburban Alexandria, Va.

Their rebuttal came as a Republican-written House report blamed government-wide ineptitude for mishandling Hurricane Katrina relief.

A report by Congress' investigative arm, the Government Accountability Office, reached similar conclusions and singled out Chertoff for delays.

out \$2,000 debit cards to people who gave phony Social Security numbers and used the money for such items as a \$450 tattoo, federal auditors said Monday.

Overcharges, poor accounting and abuses will take "months or

years" to rectify, the Government Accountability Office and the Homeland Security Department's inspector general concluded in preliminary reports on how billions of dollars in taxpayer money is being spent.

FEMA recognizes it "made many, many mistakes," and is working on improvement, said Homeland Security inspector general Richard Skinner. "But they're not where they should be. In some cases, the government will have little legal recourse to recoup payments to contractors for payments."

Separately, the Justice Department said Monday that federal prosecutors had filed fraud, theft and other charges against 212 people accused of scams related to Gulf Coast hurricanes.

Forty people have pleaded guilty so far, the latest report by the Hurricane Katrina Fraud Task Force said. Many defendants were accused of trying to obtain emergency aid, typically a \$2,000 debit card, issued to hurricane victims by FEMA and the American Red Cross.

The GAO report found that up to 900,000 of the 2.5 million applicants who received aid under the emergency cash assistance program — which included the debit cards given to evacuees — based their requests on duplicate or invalid Social Security numbers, or false addresses and names.

In other instances, recipients improperly used their debit cards intended for food and shelter for \$400 massages, a \$450 tattoo, a \$1,100 diamond engagement ring and \$150 worth of products at "Condoms to Go."

The reports called for stronger controls to verify the eligibility of disaster victims who apply for aid over the phone and Internet, better planning of emergency supplies for hurricanes and improved accounting of FEMA's vast inventory of temporary housing.

Outgoing parliament boosts Abbas' grip on government

BY MOHAMMED DARAGHMEH
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

RAMALLAH, West Bank

The Palestinian parliament used its final session Monday to give President Mahmoud Abbas broad new powers, infuriating Hamas days before the Islamic group takes control of a suddenly weakened legislature.

The measures were designed to preserve Abbas' control over the Palestinian Authority, though it was unlikely to assuage international concerns about dealing with a Hamas-led government.

Hamas officials said they would immediately try to overturn the laws after the new parliament is sworn in Saturday.

"I think this session was illegal. It is a kind of bloodless coup," said Abdel Aziz Duaik, an incoming Hamas legislator.

Abbas' Fatah Party, which dominated Palestinian politics for four decades, was roundly

defeated by Hamas in Jan. 25 parliamentary elections. Abbas was elected last year to a four-year term.

In their final session with a parliamentary majority, Fatah lawmakers gave Abbas the authority to appoint a new, nine-judge constitutional court, which would serve as the final arbiter in disputes between himself and a Hamas parliament and Cabinet. The court could also veto legislation deemed to violate the Palestinians' Basic Law, which acts as a quasi-constitution.

Legal expert Issam Abdeen said the legislation would essentially give Abbas power over what laws the new parliament passed "since he is the one who appoints the judges of the constitutional court."

"He can use (these powers) to nullify laws that are unacceptable to him. If Hamas now approves Islamic laws, he could say it is against the constitution," Abdeen said.



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