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Article 5

**A package of news briefs from the Caribbean**

By The Associated Press

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GUANTANAMO: U.S. military to transfer about 200 terror suspects to medium security

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico (AP) - The U.S. military will transfer about 200 terror suspects being held by the United States at Guantanamo Bay to a new medium-security prison block next month, officials said Thursday.

Military officials have said the medium-security detention is a first step to sending some detainees home.

The detainees to be transferred to Camp 4 are "3/4 less of a security risk," U.S. Southern Command spokesman Army Sgt. Maj. Ruben Maestas said.

Camp 4, which lies within the maximum-security complex Camp Delta, will open next month for detainees who have followed rules and provided valuable information during interrogations, Maestas said, but could not give an exact date for the transfer.

The new quarters allow detainees to sleep, eat and pray together. Previously, all detainees have been kept in individual 8-by-7-foot (2.4-by-2-meter) cells with steel floors and metal mesh walls.

There are roughly 650 detainees at the U.S. Naval base in eastern Cuba. All are accused of having links to Afghanistan's Taliban regime or al-Qaida, though none has been charged with a crime.

HAITI: Police chief meets parliamentary leaders following detention of top anti-drug official

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti (AP) - Haiti's police chief met with parliamentary leaders Wednesday following a scandal (which the police force's top anti-drug official was detained & r allegedly aiding drug traffickers.

Police chief Jean Nesly Lucien and other high-ranking officers met behind closed doors with members of Parliament including the ministers of justice and the interior.

Evans Brillant, head of the police anti-drug branch, was detained last Thursday for allegedly providing security for a Colombian plane that landed in Haiti Feb. 6 carrying 800-1,000 kilograms (1,800-2,200 pounds) of cocaine, police Inspector General Harvel Jean-Baptiste said.

The plane left Haiti, Jean-Baptiste said last Friday when he announced Brillant's detention. It was unclear what happened to the cocaine.

Brillant was being held at a police station north 1/2 of Port-au-Prince. During Wednesday's talks, Lucien discussed what case and others involving political violence, said legislator Millien Romage, president of a commission on security and justice.

#### DOMINICAN REPUBLIC: Brazil's 'City of God' wins best picture at film festival

SANTO DOMINGO, Dominican Republic (AP) - Brazilian movie "City of God" won best picture awards at the fifth annual Santo Domingo International Film Festival, organizers said Thursday.

The Miramax Films release, directed by Fernando Meirelles and Katia Lund, won three different awards for best picture at the festival from organizers, the public and film experts, organizers said.

Actors Matheus Nachtergaele, Seu Jorge and Alexandre Rodrigues star as Rio de Janeiro drug gang members battling for control of city slums.

Last month, "City of God" received a Golden Globe nomination for best foreign language film, but lost to "Talk to Her" from Spain.

Nineteen films from several Latin American countries competed at the festival in the Dominican Republic.

Other winners include Arturo Ripstein of Mexico, who won best director for "Virgin of Lust" and Lazaro Ramos of Argentina, who won best actor for his role in "The Bonarense." Dolores Heredia and Zaide Silvia Gutierrez, both Mexicans, shared the best actress award for "Dark Cities."

#### PUERTO RICO: FBI: Nine arrested in operation to break up alleged criminal gang

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico (AP) - The FBI arrested nine people in the San Juan metropolitan area as part of an operation to break up an alleged criminal gang, officials said.

The nine face a range of charges, including for drugs, murder and burglary, FBI agent Jose Figueroa Sancha in Puerto Rico said.

The arrests took place Wednesday at a housing project in Isla Verde, a San Juan tourist zone, and Carolina, a suburb of the U.S. Caribbean territory's capital, Figueroa said.

Among those arrested was Carlos Ayala Lopez, whom authorities have connected to the killing of a security guard at the Veterans Hospital in San Juan, he said.

#### TRINIDAD: Teacher stabbed to death at school in Tobago

PORT-OF-SPAIN, Trinidad (AP) - Police detained a man in connection with the stabbing death of a teacher at a primary school in Tobago, authorities said Thursday.

A man approached Evelyn James, 47, just before classes near an entrance to the Montgomery Government Primary School, senior police Supt. Richard Frederick said.

The man accused her of spreading rumors about her molesting a student at the school, Frederick said. When she tried to walk away, the man stabbed her in the chest with a kitchen knife, he said.

James was taken to a hospital where she was pronounced dead, police said. Some students about to gather for a morning assembly witnessed the stabbing and classes were canceled Wednesday and Thursday. About 100 children between the ages of 5 and 13 attend the school.

The man who allegedly stabbed James then walked past the home of a former police officer to tell him what happened, apparently wanting to turn himself in, police said.

Authorities detained him at the house about a half hour after the stabbing, Frederick said. He remained in custody Thursday and police were awaiting autopsy results before charging him.

CUBA: Government negotiating to buy more in U.S. farm products

HAVANA (AP) - Cuban officials are negotiating tens of millions of dollars worth of new food purchases with American farm representatives who attended a **U.S.-Cuba business conference** this week, the head of the island's food import concern said Wednesday.

Pedro Alvarez, president of Cuba's food import-export company Alimport, told reporters that contract details were being worked out and would be announced in the coming days.

"Every day there is more interest for normalizing commercial relations and travel," Alvarez said, referring to the restrictions that still remain on most American trade with and travel to the communist-run island. "This event was truly successful."

With the steady purchases of American food now allowed under an exception to the U.S. trade embargo, Cuba now counts the United States as around its 10th most important trade partner, Alvarez said. The United States now counts Cuba as its 17th or 45th most important trade partner for agricultural goods, he said.

Cuba spent about US\$189 million in American goods last year alone, including transportation costs, said Alvarez.

ANTIGUA: Protesters urge faster investigation of fraud suspects in health care program

ST. JOHN'S, Antigua (AP) - About 30 people marched through the rainy streets of Antigua's capital on Thursday to demand the government speed up its investigation of fraud and corruption in the health insurance program.

Chanting "Medical Benefits - Lock Dem Up Now," the marchers wove a path through the capital, St. John's, and held effigies of 11 people implicated in an inquiry report on fraud and corruption in the country's health care program.

"We want to see justice. That's our most important concern," said businessman Eugene Humphreys, who organized the protest. Several opposition supporters were also participating.

Police detained three of the 11 for questioning last week, but released them without charges. All 11 suspects, including two former ministers, are barred from leaving the Caribbean country.

Director of Public Prosecution Cosbert Cumberbatch said that, because of the detailed nature of the investigation, it was taking time to file criminal charges.

The inquiry started after a government audit showed evidence of embezzlement from the program through false claims and questionable accounting practices.

JAMAICA: Military chief calls for giving police powers to soldiers

KINGSTON, Jamaica (AP) - The military has threatened to abandon joint operations in Kingston's crime-ridden neighborhoods unless soldiers are given the same powers to arrest and search as police, a statement said Thursday.

Current restrictions on soldiers performing policing duties on their own left them vulnerable to physical attacks and legal action, said Rear Adm. Hardley Lewin, head of the Jamaica Defense Force.

Soldiers cannot make arrests or do searches without a police officer present, unless the case involves drug trafficking, border control or environmental damage.

"Sometimes in joint operations ... the police officer is not even within hearing

distance but instant action is required," the military chief was quoted as saying by the Observer newspaper on Thursday.

Human rights groups have opposed giving troops policing powers, saying soldiers are not given the same legal training as officers and might be more prone to violating civilian rights.

In December, the government sent the military to help police restore order in crime-ridden areas of the capital Kingston. No soldiers or police officers have been injured during the joint operations.

**DOMINICAN REPUBLIC:** Authorities find charred body of missing woman from Puerto Rico

**SANTO DOMINGO, Dominican Republic (AP)** - Authorities found the charred body of a missing woman from Puerto Rico in southern Dominican Republic, officials said Thursday.

Maria Lisa Colon Berrios, a 23-year-old medical student at a university in this Caribbean country, had been missing since Tuesday - the day she arrived at the airport from Puerto Rico, police said.

Authorities found her body late Wednesday in the town of Boca Chica, 31 kilometers (20 miles) east of the capital, Santo Domingo, National Police spokesman Col. Ramon Francisco Rodriguez Arias said.

Investigators had trouble identifying the corpse at first, but dental records confirmed that it was Colon, said Dr. Dani Moquete, spokeswoman at the Institute of Pathology in Santo Domingo.

Colon's hands were bound and she was gagged, Rodriguez said. Investigators have detained several people, he said, but did not provide further details.

Police said they believe she was killed before being burned, but authorities have not determined an exact cause of death. Authorities were performing an autopsy Thursday.

**ANTIGUA:** Regional airline LIAT needs US\$9 million to continue operations

**ST. JOHNS, Antigua (AP)** - Regional airline LIAT needs Eastern Caribbean \$25 million (US\$9.2 million) to keep its creditors at bay and restructure operations in order to continue operating, officials said.

The Antigua-based airline, which is owned by several island governments, may need to merge with another regional carrier to avoid liquidation, Prime Minister Lester Bird said Wednesday.

"If we can get the money, then I'm sure LIAT would not be at this desperate stage," Bird said. But creditors were demanding payment on loans, he said without elaborating.

Last year, LIAT received an EC\$31 million (dlns 11 million) loan from Barbados-based CIBC West Indies Holdings to replace aging planes and finance severance packages.

The troubled airline also laid off 241, or more than one-third, of its 700 employees.

Despite restructuring, low fares were continuing to hurt the airline's revenues, said St. Vincent Prime Minister Ralph Gonsalves, who is in charge of LIAT's affairs. He did not give details of the company's losses or revenues.

**DOMINICA:** Government workers continue strike to protest proposed wage cuts

ROSEAU, Dominica (AP) - Government workers were on strike for a second day Thursday to protest the government's plans to cut wages and staff forces by 10 percent each.

The strike by about 80 percent of the government's 3,000 workers forced Cane Field Airport to shut down Wednesday and Thursday, with all flights redirected to the main international Melville Airport.

Firefighters were not on duty, and government offices were not performing most services, including customs duties, tax processing and registration. Teachers were discussing Thursday whether to join the strike.

Public Services Union and government officials vailed Thursday to negotiate an agreement that would end the str9 1/2 e, and planned to meet again Friday. The union said, however, 9w would continue the strike on Friday.

The government proposed the cuts to reduce its monthly wage bill of about Eastern Caribbean \$10 million (US\$4 million) in order to meet requirements set by the International Monetary Fund.

The IMF pledged US\$4 million in budgetary support if the government can make the cuts by next month.

CUBA: Fidel Castro meets with more than 100 Americans before leaving for Asia

HAVANA (AP) - Dressed in black suit and tie and occasionally checking his wristwatch, President Fidel Castro left his Asia-bound plane waiting almost four hours to the tarmac late Wednesday so he could chat with more than 100 visiting Americans.

American farm representatives in town for a U.S.-Cuba business summit and a group of women business leaders fro- Seattle, Washington, gathered in Havana's Conventions Palace W%ndnesday evening for a lively question and answer session with thu communist leader, participants in the meeting said Thursday.

"He kept saying: 'I have to go, I have to go,' but I don't think he wanted to leave!" said Jeri Rice, board member of the Center for Women & Democracy at the University of Washington. "He was really enjoying himself."

Castro excused himself shortly before 10 p.m. to go to the airport, said Rice. Castro was scheduled to visit the communist countries of Vietnam and China, and to attend a summit of the 114-nation Non-Aligned Movement in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, on Monday and Tuesday.

SURINAME: U.N. development program grants US\$390,000

PARAMARIBO, Suriname (AP) - The United Nations twvelopment Program granted Suriname US\$390,000 (845 million Sur9 amese guilders) on Thursday for two projects to improve labor srket skills and legal implementation, officials said.

One grant for US\$220,000 (477 million guilders) will go toward improving citizens' labor skills, which the United Nations sees as a means for reducing poverty, U.N. Development Program representative Inyang Ebong-Harstrup said.

The grant comes as Suriname prepares to open its markets under the Free Trade of the Americas Agreement, due to come online in 2005.

"Due to the fast advancing effects of globalization, the quality of labor has become more than ever a decisive factor," Minister Clifford Marica said.

About 20 percent of the 440,000 people are unemployed in this former Dutch colony on the north coast of South America.

A second grant for US\$170,000 (368 million guilders) will go toward helping legislators implement laws through institutional measures, including creating a computer network, Parliament Chairman Ramdien Sardjie said.

**SURINAME:** President to suspend minister accused of sexual molestation

PARAMARIBO, Suriname (AP) - The public housing minister accused of sexually molesting a 19-year-old beauty pageant contestant was suspended from government duty Thursday, Suriname's president said.

Minister Paul Somohardjo, who has said repeatedly he is innocent, asked Wednesday to be relieved of his duties after receiving a subpoena to appear in criminal court March 6, President Ronald Venetiaan said.

"I have decided to ask Somohardjo to go on indefinite leave," Venetiaan told reporters Thursday. He did not say what would happen if the minister was found guilty of sexual harassment.

Somohardjo is charged with indecently touching Sharon Renfurm, who was a contestant in the Dec. 20 Miss Jawa Beauty contest organized by Somohardjo's Pertjajah Luhur political party, according to the subpoena.

The incident allegedly took place in December, when Somohardjo was driving Renfurm home after a contest training seminar.

Somohardjo has repeatedly denied the accusations, and filed a lawsuit against reporter Erna Aviankoi, who first wrote about the allegations in early January for local de Ware Tijd newspaper.

**BRITISH VIRGIN ISLANDS:** Airline baggage handler charged with importing ecstasy

ROAD TOWN, British Virgin Islands (AP) - American Airlines baggage handler pleaded innocent Thursday to charges of importing 25,000 tablets of the drug ecstasy into this British Caribbean territory.

Luis Vanterpool, 31, a British Virgin Islands citizen, was also charged with possession of the drug with intent to supply.

Police arrested Vanterpool, a native of the Dominican Republic, on Tuesday at the airport on Beef Island, Police Chief Inspector Vere Browne said in court, but gave no further details of the case.

The drugs are worth an estimated US\$500,000, Browne said.

Magistrate Gail Charles ordered Vanterpool held without bail until trial on April 30.

Ecstasy, also known as MDMA, is a mild hallucinogenic stimulant. Overdoses on the drug can cause hypothermia or excessive body heat and possibly death.

**UNITED STATES:** Cuban pilot survives after plane crashes off Florida Keys

MIAMI (AP) - A charter pilot returning from Cuba was injured slightly after his plane crashed into the water off the Florida Keys Thursday.

The pilot left Havana heading for Miami International Airport but his twin-engine Cessna 402B crashed about five miles southwest of Marathon, U.S. Federal Aviation Administration spokesman Christopher White said.

Florida officials identified the pilot as Dennis Murphy, a Cuban native who now lives in Florida.

The pilot told air traffic controllers that his plane experienced mechanical problems as he returned on a charter flight for Airways Express in Miami, White said.

The company could not be reached for comment.

U.S. Coast Guard officials said Murphy was expected to be released from a Florida hospital Thursday after being treated for head and neck injuries.

TRINIDAD: Dominica prime minister undergoes heart surgery

PORT-OF-SPAIN, Trinidad (AP) - Dominica's prime minister underwent heart surgery in Trinidad on Thursday and should be able to leave the hospital within the next two days, officials said.

Doctors successfully performed angioplasty on Prime Minister Pierre Charles at the Eric Williams Medical Sciences Complex outside the capital, Port-of-Spain, Trinidad Prime Minister Patrick Manning said in a statement.

Charles, 49, was hospitalized a week ago after experiencing chest pains while attending a summit for Caribbean leaders in Trinidad.

In June, Charles complained of chest pains and underwent a series of tests in Martinique. He became prime minister in October 2000 following the death of Prime Minister Rosie Douglas.

CUBA: Government confirms Fidel Castro's departure for Asia

HAVANA (AP) - Fidel Castro left Cuba late Wednesday for an Asia trip that will include stops in communist Vietnam and China and in Malaysia for a summit of the 114-nation Non-Aligned Movement summit, state media reported Thursday afternoon.

The Cuban government announcement came hours after the Vietnamese Foreign Ministry said Castro would arrive there on Friday. Castro has visited Vietnam twice before, in 1973 and 1995.

Castro will travel on Sunday to Kuala Lumpur for the summit, being held Monday and Tuesday. The dates of his stay in Beijing were not announced.

The Non-Aligned bloc of mostly African, Asian and Latin American nations has sought since the Cold War to reinvent itself to confront challenges of globalization and U.S. military and economic might.

The group is expected to denounce any U.S.-led attack on Iraq.

UNITED STATES: New York Gov. Pataki declares February 'Dominican Heritage Month'

NEW YORK (AP) - Attending the opening of a business development office in New York, the U.S. state's Gov. George Pataki on Thursday declared February "Dominican Heritage Month" as about 20 protesters criticized his planned budget cuts.

The Empire State Development community network office is in upper Manhattan's Washington Heights neighborhood, which is the center of New York City's Dominican community.

The office is one of five in the city to help small business owners gain access to economic resources.

In a speech delivered mostly in Spanish, Pataki declared this to be "Dominican Heritage Month," but did not elaborate how that would be realized.

Outside, about 20 protesters stood on snow banked, criticizing the governor's proposed cuts in spending, including a more than \$1.2 billion reduction in school aid, and fee and tax increases of more than \$1.3 billion.

Holding signs reading "Governor Pataki, no cuts to schools, our kids count!" they booed him as he left the building and waved to the crowd.

**SOCCKER:** Jamaica national soccer player found innocent of manslaughter charges

**MONTEGO BAY, Jamaica (AP)** - A magistrate's court jury took half an hour to decide that a Jamaica soccer player was innocent of manslaughter and reckless driving charges.

Theodore Whitmore, 28, was accused in the death of former teammate Steve Malcolm, killed in a car crash on Jan. 28, 2001, in the northwestern parish of Trelawny.

A seven-member jury returned with the innocent verdict Wednesday to end the two-day trial at Trelawny Circuit Court, 17 miles (27 kilometers) east of Montego Bay, a north-coast resort town in the Caribbean island nation.

"I am happy that it is over, now I can move on with my life," Whitmore said following the trial. "I am very sorry for what happened because I suffered along with (Malcolm's) family."

The two players and a friend, Charles Hewan, had been traveling in Whitmore's car from Kingston to Montego Bay after a friendly match between Jamaica and Bulgaria when a tire blew out and the car overturned, killing Malcolm and injuring Whitmore and Hewan.

**CRICKET:** Warne has Australia's prime minister on his side ahead of drug hearing

**MELBOURNE, Australia (AP)** - When legspinner Shane Warne goes into his Australian Cricket Board (ACB) hearing on Friday over a positive drug test, he'll have the country's prime minister hoping a lengthy suspension isn't enforced.

Warne faces a possible two-year ban from the game after being charged with testing positive to the banned diuretics hydrochlorothiazide and amiloride on Jan. 22. His case will be heard by an ACB three-person anti-doping committee on Friday morning.

Prime Minister John Howard said Thursday the rule must be upheld, but added that it would be disappointing to see him go.

"He's facing a tribunal and I don't think it's fair for someone in my position to express a view either way, except to express the hope he's dealt with fairly and justly," Howard told Adelaide radio station 5DN.

Warne returned home from the World Cup in South Africa last week without bowling a ball after being informed of the positive test.

His defense was that he was given a weight-loss tablet by his mother, Brigitte, and was unaware it contained the banned substances.

**ATHLETICS:** Six world record holders to compete in 'World's Best 10K' road race in Puerto Rico

**SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico (AP)** - Six world record holders are to compete in the "World's Best 10K" road race in the capital of Puerto Rico on Sunday, organizers said.

Leading the pack is British distance runner Paula Radcliffe, who last year ran the world's fastest marathon for a woman at 2:17:17.7 and won gold medals in the Commonwealth Games and European Championships at 10,000 and 5,000 meters.

Other first-class runners include Kenyan Lornah Kiplagat, who won the 2001 edition of the 10-kilometer (6.25-mile) race and holds the world record in the 20K.

Moroccan Asmae Leghzaoui, who holds the women's world record for the 8K and 10K, and South African Elana Mayer, who holds the 15K and half-marathon marks, will also run, organizer Rafael Acosta said Thursday.

Kenyans Paul Togat, the men's winner of the 2000 edition of the San Juan race and world record holder of the half-marathon, and Felix Limo, who ran the best men's 15K in the world, are also slated to run.

Hendrick Ramaala of South Africa won last year's event in 28:15 and will be defend his title this year.

Nearly half of the race takes place on a bridge, which runs over a lagoon in San Juan and is notorious for strong winds and intense tropical heat.

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