

Democrats investigate Tower's drinking

WASHINGTON -- The Democratic chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee said Tuesday he has directed staff from another committee to investigate new allegations of excessive drinking against John Tower, an unusual move that quickly raised protests from Republicans.

The partisan squabble erupted as President George Bush once again defended his embattled defense nominee, saying there would be "25,000 people in the Pentagon" making sure Tower stands by his no-drinking pledge. Senate Democratic Leader George Mitchell, meanwhile, conceded there may be further Democratic defections but insisted the GOP will not have enough votes to win Tower's confirmation.

Sen. Sam Nunn, the Armed Services Com-

mittee chairman who has led the fight against Tower, said the new allegations concerned Tower's alcohol consumption, a subject that was exhaustively investigated during committee hearings. "The time frame is from the 1970s until recently," Nunn said.

"Why are we still investigating Sen. Tower," Republican leader Bob Dole of Kansas asked on the Senate floor. "Isn't the FBI report adequate? When does the investigation stop?"

Dole disclosed details of the separate investigation at the start of the fourth day of Senate debate on the troubled nomination.

Republicans face what they concede is an uphill battle to win Senate confirmation for Tower, who has been dogged by allegations of excessive drinking, womanizing and questions

about his ties to defense contractors.

Mitchell said that despite Southern Democrat Howell Heflin's decision Monday to back Tower, the nomination will be defeated.

An Associated Press survey shows 47 Democrats and Sen. Larry Pressler, R-S.D., leaning against or solidly opposed to confirming Tower, and 40 Republicans and Heflin either leaning for or supporting confirmation.

Democrats hold a 55-45 edge in the Senate. Dole left open the possibility of asking the Senate to agree to allow Tower to answer the charges against him on the floor itself but in his remarks, the GOP leader made the surprise announcement of the separate investigation.

Dole said he had been told that investigators from the Senate Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations had traveled to Texas this past

weekend to look into new charges against Tower.

Nunn acknowledged that he directed staff members of the subcommittee, which he chairs, to check the new allegations, and defended his actions, saying that he had been told by the FBI that it was no longer investigating charges against Tower.

"These were not matters the FBI checked," Nunn said. "These were new matters that came up and there was no other way to check them." Nunn did not further characterize the new allegations.

But Dole and Sen. Arlen Specter, R-Pa., questioned Nunn's use of staff from a committee other than the Armed Services panel, which conducted the hearings on the Tower nomination.

Iran severs ties with Great Britain

NICOSIA, Cyprus -- Iran broke relations with Great Britain on Tuesday because it refused to suppress "The Satanic Verses," whose author has been sentenced to death by Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini for blaspheming Islam.

Khomeini's fundamentalist Shiite Moslem regime, which has put a price of \$5.2 million on novelist Salman Rushdie's head, said it was determined to defend Islam against foreign insults.

Britain said the 88-year-old patriarch's order that his followers kill Rushdie, a British citizen, violated the principles of international relations and the diplomatic rupture was "entirely of Iran's making."

Iran decided Feb. 27 to sever diplomatic ties unless Britain met its demands, expressed as follows in a parliamentary resolution:

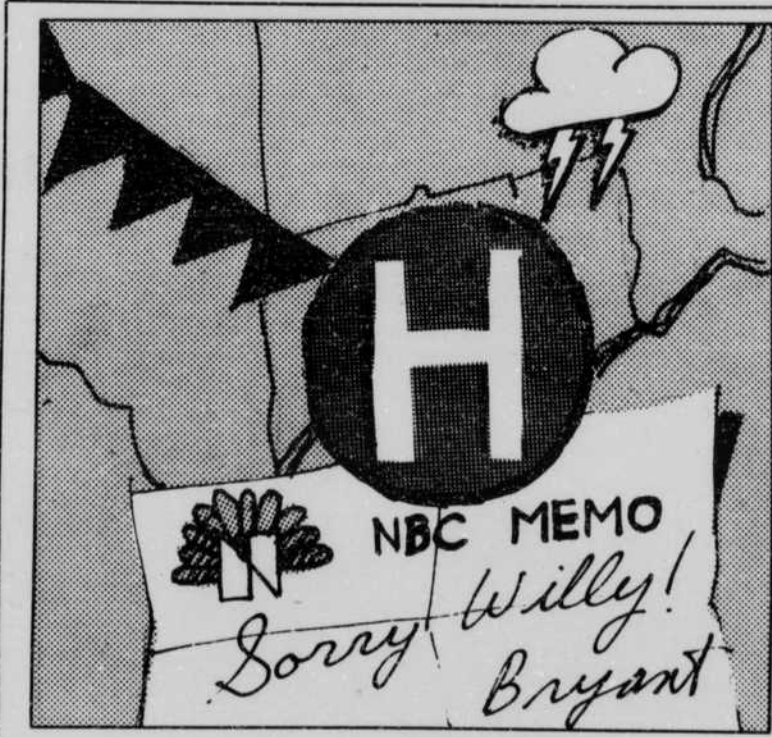
Moslems object to Rushdie's portrayal of the prophet Mohammed's wives as prostitutes and his implication that Mohammed wrote the holy Koran rather than receiving it from Allah. Rushdie says the novel, published last year, is a secular study of good and evil that is not meant to offend Moslems.

More than a dozen countries have banned the book, including Egypt, India, Pakistan and Iran. Riots it inspired in India and Pakistan have taken at least 19 lives.

Rushdie, 41, was born in Bombay, India, to Moslem parents but has said he no longer practices religion. He has been in hiding since Khomeini pronounced the death sentence and Iranian clerics offered the reward.

After Khomeini ordered Rushdie killed, Britain closed its embassy in Tehran and its 11 European Economic Community partners -- along with Canada, Norway and Sweden -- recalled their ambassadors to Iran.

The dispute arose as relations between Britain and Iran were returning to normal. In December, Britain reopened its embassy in Tehran, which had been closed for eight years.



Gumbel and Scott warm 'Today' show cold spell

NEW YORK -- "Today" show regulars Bryant Gumbel and Willard Scott patched things up publicly Tuesday -- sort of -- with the folksy weatherman trying to lead his severest critic in an oath on computer memo writing.

Scott had threatened to leave if Gumbel did not apologize for saying in an in-house memo to the producer that the weatherman was killing the show with "his assortment of whims, wishes, birthdays and bad taste."

Their first effort to make up occurred Monday, but a technical problem with the telephone and a video link prevented the two from completing an on-air conversation.

Tuesday morning, they tried again, and this time the hookup worked.

After some banter about the previous day's snags -- "I hung up on you," Scott joked -- they got down to business.

Scott told Gumbel to raise his right hand and repeat after him:

Gumbel raised his left hand.
Scott: "I, Bryant Gumbel . . ."
Gumbel: "I, Bryant Gumbel . . ."

Scott: ". . . will promise . . ."
Gumbel: ". . . will promise . . ."

Scott: ". . . to never write another memo and leave it in the computer again."

Gumbel: ". . . but I can't write in longhand."

Bush refuses to act in airline strike

WASHINGTON -- President George Bush on Tuesday virtually ruled out intervening in the Eastern Airlines strike, saying "man-to-man negotiation" is preferable to a government-imposed settlement.

While he didn't flatly rule out stepping in to end the walkout, Bush said his policy "will hold firm" despite pressure in some congressional quarters to force him to act.

Fielding questions for more than 40 minutes in the White House briefing room, he insisted that "there isn't malaise" in his administration because of the drawn-out fight over confirmation of Defense Secretary-designate John Tower.

"A lot is happening," the president said. "Not all of it good, but a lot is happening. . . . We're on track."

Bush also defended his chief of staff, saying John Sununu, the former New Hampshire governor, knows his way around Washington and is doing

his job well. Bush said he has "total confidence" in Sununu.

Bush noted that Tower has pledged not to drink a drop of liquor if he gets the job and told his nationally televised news conference, "You'll have 25,000 people in the Pentagon making sure that's true."

The president said his backing of Tower against Democratic opposition in the Senate "isn't iron-willed stubbornness; it's a question of fundamental principle here."

The president had spare time in his schedule Tuesday because inclement weather forced him to cancel a planned trip to Lancaster, Pa., and Wilmington, Del., for speeches on his plans to attack drug abuse.

House Speaker Jim Wright responded that Bush's refusal to halt the strike by appointing an investigative panel "would be unprecedented," noting that over the last half-century 33 such boards have

been named in transportation disputes.

Bush, however, used his opening news conference statement to "restate my belief that free collective bargaining is the best means of resolving" the strike.

He exhorted Eastern management, the machinists union and other unions to conduct "head-on-head, man-to-man negotiation" and said he thought that would be "better and more lasting . . . than an imposed government settlement, which could cause the airline to totally shut down."

On other subjects during the more than 40-minute question-and-answer session, Bush said:

● He would like to see Palestine Liberation Organization Chairman Yasser Arafat "speak out" against raids that have been carried out by Palestinian guerrillas against Israelis in southern Lebanon.

Bush said he hoped these incidents would not jeopardize U.S. talks with PLO representatives but said he thought that Arafat should "forthrightly condemn any terror that might be perpetrated by the Palestinians."

● He welcomes a Soviet proposal for a reduction in conventional weapons and military personnel in Europe. The proposal was outlined in Vienna Monday by Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze.

"It looks to me (as if) he is moving toward the oft-stated public position of NATO in this regard, and that is good," Bush said. But he cautioned he had not yet seen Secretary of State James Baker III's report on the NATO and Warsaw Pact conference.

● The Contra rebels in Nicaragua will need additional humanitarian aid after the current program expires March 31. "We simply cannot and I will not leave the Contras out there with no humanitarian aid at all," he said.

World leaders commit to saving ozone

LONDON -- Industrialized nations committed themselves Tuesday to banning chemicals that are destroying the ozone layer, but they reacted coolly to Third World demands for money to find substitutes.

China, India and other populous developing nations embarking on mass production of consumer goods containing chlorofluorocarbons reason that since the West invented and produces most of the ozone-destroying chemicals, the West should pay to replace them.

Despite the split, the 123 countries at an international conference on the ozone layer agreed that pressure is on scientists and industry to find safe alternatives before more damage is done to the fragile atmospheric shield.

William Reilly, head of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, said the three-day conference that ended Tuesday sparked as much public discussion as any international

environmental issue since the 1985 Chernobyl nuclear accident in the Soviet Union.

"We are all in this together," he said. "We're all going to have to find ways to collaborate in cleaning this mess up. It affects us all."

Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher of Britain, the conference host, said all countries, including financially strapped Third World nations, must do their part to save the ozone layer.

"It is not a case of some countries asking other countries to act," she said. "It is a case of every country taking action. . . . No one can opt out."

Chlorofluorocarbons are widely used in aerosol propellants, refrigerants, air conditioners, fast-food cartons and computer solvents.

They are stable and non-toxic when released into the atmosphere, but 10 to 100 years later, when they rise 15-20 miles to the stratosphere, their chemical bonds are broken apart. Scientists say their chlorine

atoms destroy ozone, allowing more of the sun's ultraviolet rays to reach Earth, causing more skin cancer and eye cataracts, and suppressing human immune systems.

Related chemicals known as halons, used primarily in firefighting equipment, cause the same damage, but are 10 times as efficient at it.

"Even if all the chemicals which damage the ozone layer were banned tomorrow, ozone depletion would continue for more than a decade and it would take our planet something like 100 years to replenish the ozone already lost," said Thatcher, an Oxford University-educated chemist.

Chlorofluorocarbons also trap heat and warm global temperatures, a process known as the "Greenhouse Effect," which already is thought to be responsible for climate changes.

More than 1 million tons of the damaging substances are produced annually, mostly by the United States.

Several companies are working on substitutes, including the American chemical firm Du Pont, which is the world's largest manufacturer of chlorofluorocarbons, and Britain's Imperial Chemical Industries.

Du Pont says it has "candidate alternatives" for all major markets and hopes to market them by the mid-1990s. Reilly said American carmakers told him they plan to use substitutes in air-conditioning systems of their 1994 models.

The United States and the 12-nation European Community have promised to try to ban those chemicals by 1999 -- surpassing the goals of the 1987 Montreal Protocol which requires they be halved by the turn of the century.

The protocol has been ratified by 33 countries. Another 20 countries told the conference they will sign up, and 14 are thinking seriously about it, said Britain's Environment Secretary Nicholas Ridley.

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