

### USS Iowa shipmate says Hartwig didn't cause blast

WASHINGTON -- Gunner's mate Kendall Truitt told Congress Wednesday former USS Iowa crew mate Clayton Hartwig was no "suicidal freak" and didn't cause the explosion that killed Hartwig and 46 other sailors.

Truitt accused the Navy of using "a big coverup" to thwart theories that the shipboard explosion was accidental rather than caused intentionally, "most likely" by Hartwig, as the Navy has concluded.

The sailor said Hartwig wasn't told until the morning of April 19 that he was going to be positioned at center gun in the No. 2 gun turret, "so there would have been no time for planning" a suicide explosion. He said Hartwig had once talked of suicide, but Truitt said he did not take him seriously. Truitt said his own theory is that

the blast was caused by a defective hydraulic rammer -- the piece of equipment used to shove the powder bags up against the projectile in the huge gun.

He said he had had a problem with a rammer on the left gun in No. 2 gun turret about a year earlier, describing it as behaving like a transmission stuck between neutral and drive. He theorized that the rammer might have "suddenly taken off," putting too much pressure on the propellant.

He also maintained that gunpowder on the Iowa had been stored in high heat, that the cans were not airtight, and that "you could smell ether."

Questioned about his personal relationship with Hartwig, Truitt said they had a basically strong friendship, with occasional quarrels.

## Bulgarians strip Zhivkov's powers

SOFIA, Bulgaria -- The party that took Todor Zhivkov's orders for 35 years expelled him Wednesday, and his replacement as leader exhorted Communists to prepare for "a nationwide exam" in free elections promised for May.

The policy-making Central Committee also agreed to join other Warsaw Pact parties in surrendering its constitutional guarantee of supreme power. Members made the decisions in a three-day discussion of reform, while tens of thousands of people stood outside to remind them promises must be kept.

Petar Mladenov, who became party chief when Zhivkov was forced out Nov. 10, said Monday that free elections should be held in May. On Tuesday, he told the Communist leadership:

"We have to . . . conquer -- this time in the real sense of the word --

the hearts and minds of the millions of Bulgarians.

"Soon we will face a nationwide exam: free and democratic elections. . . and it is there we must show that we are not only worthy of, but also practically capable of, leading" the country.

The news agency said the Central Committee would propose to Parliament today that it remove two constitutional clauses in which the party is given sole power.

One defines the party as "the leading force" in society and the state, and the other says the party "heads the construction of an advanced socialist society."

As the Central Committee meeting drew to a close, a crowd estimated by Western reporters at 60,000 gathered in the plaza outside to show support in a rally sponsored by the party.

Signs hoisted above the throng said "A Bulgarian Communist Party of Untainted People," and "Together with the Bulgarian Communist Party for New Democratic Communist Socialism."

Nearby, outside the Alexander Nevski Orthodox Cathedral, about 2,000 people applauded a speaker from the Agrarian Union party who declared: "Today we end this semi-existence."

### January election for Czech leader

PRAGUE, Czechoslovakia -- The opposition and Communists resolved their last major dispute by agreeing Wednesday that the president should be elected by Parliament before the end of January, negotiators reported.

They told The Associated Press there was no agreement on who would become president, only that the person chosen would be a Czech not affiliated to any political party.

That seems to pave the way for opposition leader Vaclav Havel, a jailed playwright and symbol of Czechoslovakia's peaceful revolution, and dash the hopes of Alexander Dubcek, the 68-year-old Slovak who led the "Prague Spring" reforms of 1968.

While the presidential negotiations were being held, the government said Wednesday it was drafting laws to ensure freedom of religion, assembly and association and provide more protection to people who are arrested.

## Mandela, de Klerk discuss end to racial conflict in S. Africa

JOHANNESBURG, South Africa -- Black leader Nelson Mandela, expected to be released within weeks after 27 years in jail, visited President F.W. de Klerk on Wednesday to discuss prospects for negotiating an end to South Africa's racial conflict.

The main far-right party denounced the meeting, the first ever between Mandela and de Klerk, as a step toward white capitulation.

Liberal leaders, however, hailed the event as evidence the government accepts the central role of Mandela's outlawed guerrilla movement, the African National Congress, in any

political settlement.

The Justice Ministry said Mandela requested the meeting at Tuynhuis, the presidential office in Cape Town, and that de Klerk "welcomed the opportunity."

Mandela, the country's best-known black leader, has been imprisoned since 1962 and is serving a life sentence for plotting an anti-government sabotage campaign.

The two discussed "ways and means to address current obstacles in the way of meaningful dialogue," the ministry said. "Follow-up talks in the new year are envisaged."

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The Daily Nebraskan (USPS 144-080) is published by the UNL Publications Board, Nebraska Union 34, 1400 R St., Lincoln, NE, Monday through Friday during the academic year; weekly during summer sessions.

Readers are encouraged to submit story ideas and comments to the Daily Nebraskan by phoning 472-1763 between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. Monday through Friday. The public also has access to the Publications Board. For information, contact Pam Hein, 472-2588.

Subscription price is \$45 for one year.  
Postmaster: Send address changes to the Daily Nebraskan, Nebraska Union 34, 1400 R St., Lincoln, NE 68588-0448. Second-class postage paid at Lincoln, NE.  
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