

Arms-control treaty would be largest in history

Bush: Deal would balance military power

WASHINGTON - President Bush on Thursday hailed a tentative accord requiring the Soviet Union to destroy thousands of tanks, artillery pieces and armored vehicles in Europe, saying it would "decisively improve the balance of military power" on the continent.

The Conventional Forces in Europe treaty would be the largest arms-control deal in history and the first in Europe since the end of World War II.

If final details are resolved, it will be signed by the 22 nations of the Warsaw Pact and the NATO alliance at the Nov. 19-21 Paris summit of the 34-nation Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe.

The accord would set a ceiling on non-nuclear forces for both alliances.

Each side would be limited to 20,000 tanks, 20,000 artillery pieces, 30,000 armored combat vehicles and 2,000 helicopters in the area stretching from Europe's Atlantic Coast to the Ural Mountains inside the Soviet Union.

The two sides are still grappling with overall limits on combat aircraft for each military alliance.

However, after long negotiations, they agreed to a limit of 5,150 warplanes in any single country, Secretary of State James A. Baker III announced at a joint appearance with Bush.

The agreement does not put any limit on the number of soldiers. The United States and Soviet Union agreed to skip that step in order to meet the Paris deadline.

Within the overall ceilings, no country could have more than 13,300 tanks, 13,700 artillery pieces and 1,500 helicopters in the region.

On Capitol Hill, Senate Majority Leader George Mitchell, D-Maine, called the announcement of the tentative accord good news.

He said he hoped there would be "early and enthusiastic approval" of the agreement in the Senate early next year.

Bush said that despite the collapse of hard-line communist regimes in Eastern Europe, the continent "is still the site of the greatest concentration of armed strength in the world."

"As Europe is transformed politically, we must also redraw the military map of the continent and lift some of the shadows and fears

that we and our allies have lived with for nearly half a century," the president said.

Bush said the treaty would ensure that "the political transformation of Europe is matched in the military field."

He pledged full support to conclude the agreement, calling it "a treaty that would decisively improve the balance of military power on the continent and back our hopes for lasting stability."

Baker and Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze agreed in principle on major elements of the treaty during a five-hour negotiating session Wednesday.

The two officials will meet again in New York today to press toward agreement on a separate treaty slashing their nuclear arsenals.

Budget package debate heads toward first vote

WASHINGTON - A wary House debated the \$500-billion deficit-reduction plan Thursday night as the election-year package of tax boosts and spending cuts moved toward its first, uncertain congressional test.

After a week of intense arm-twisting by President Bush and congressional leaders from both parties, top lawmakers spoke bravely of garnering majorities of Democrats and Republicans. One GOP official said Bush was hunting for votes over the telephone even as debate began.

The first votes would be on an outline of the five-year plan that Bush and congressional leaders completed last weekend after four months of bargaining. Votes on specific spending cuts and tax increases were planned in two weeks.

But with legislators leery of the plan's Medicare slashes, higher gasoline taxes and other painful items, vote-counters acknowledged that they remained uncertain of the support they needed.

The problem was especially acute among House Republicans, who, one official said, remained 11 votes shy of providing a majority of their 176 members.

"It is the best thing that we could do at this point," Rep. James Quillen, R-Tenn., said as debate began. "If we have to hold our nose and vote for this, let's do it."

"We're going to have a majority when we get there," said Senate Majority Leader George Mitchell, D-Maine.

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Bush has threatened that unless Congress approves the outline by today, he will reject any extension of the temporary financing legislation that has kept the government operating since the new fiscal year began Monday. That financing expires tonight.

As part of what administration officials have called the Bush presi-

dency's most intense lobbying campaign, the president brought 60 GOP lawmakers to the White House Thursday morning to press for votes.

Maverick Republicans spoke of getting phone calls at home from Bush, Vice President Dan Quayle, White House Chief of Staff John Sununu and even former President Gerald Ford.

"The president called me at a quarter to seven in the morning, and Sununu called two hours later," said Rep. Gerald Solomon, R-N.Y., who opposes the plan. "They're not threatening me, and they better not."

Pressure was applied in the Capitol as well, with Commerce Secretary Robert Mosbacher among those roaming the halls. Foley and others emphasized that lawmakers could support the outline now and then work for changes in details during the next two weeks.

"Foley has been pleading and pleading," said one Democratic aide.

Opposition within Bush's own Republican Party came from conservatives, who complained about the package's \$134 billion in new taxes, and spending cuts they considered too shallow.

But the package, which would save \$40 billion in the new fiscal year, has something for all lawmakers to dislike, including tax increases and spending cuts that would affect virtually every American.

Droves of liberal Democrats expressed displeasure with the plan, complaining that its taxes and spending cuts came down too harshly on the poor and frail. They railed most bitterly about its Medicare reductions and some \$11 billion in small business tax breaks that they said were merely tax shelters for the rich.

"This package represents the wrong values," said Rep. Thomas Downey, D-N.Y. "Democrats have made an art form of explaining to the American voter how the rich aren't taxed, and then we produce a package that doesn't hit them."

Republican candidate may end bid for Louisiana senate seat

BATON ROUGE, La. - The Republican Senate candidate pulled his radio commercials and canceled public appearances Thursday, feeding speculation he will drop out of the race to keep ex-Ku Klux Klan leader David Duke out of a runoff.

Ben Bagert had been endorsed by President Bush, but national party leaders said they feared his consistent third-place showing in polls would prevent anyone from getting more than half of the vote in Saturday's primary election, forcing the top two into a runoff.

That presumably would mean a runoff between Duke, running as a Republican without party endorsement, into a runoff with Sen. Bennett Johnston, a Democrat.

Kelly Johnston, deputy political director of the Republican Senate Campaign Committee, said a runoff between Johnston and Duke "would be the worst possible thing that could happen to us."

It would allow Democrats across the nation to link any Republican in the November general election to Duke, she said.

On Wednesday, eight Republican senators in Washington urged Louisiana voters to reject Duke.

Duke represents hatred and bigotry, and Bagert can't win, the senators said.

"All of us would be embarrassed and mortified to have to serve in the United States Senate with David Duke masquerading as a Republican," Sen.

John Danforth, R-Mo., said Wednesday.

WVL-AM radio reported Thursday that Bagert had canceled his commercials. Bagert's office didn't confirm that but said he had canceled his campaign schedule and set an afternoon news conference at his home in New Orleans.

If Bagert does indeed withdraw, it would essentially make Saturday's election a two-man race between Johnston, an 18-year incumbent, and Duke, a first-term state representative.

Workers at Bagert's campaign headquarters said they had not been told anything about his possible withdrawal.

Filipino rebels willing to talk to government

CAGAYANDEORO, Philippines - A rebel leader whose troops seized two military garrisons without firing a shot said today he was willing to negotiate with the government.

There was no immediate word on the proposal by Col. Alexander Noble, but President Corazon Aquino had earlier urged troops to wipe out the rebels on the southern island of Mindanao.

"I'm waiting (to negotiate)," said Noble, who launched the uprising Thursday. "It's the people who should decide what to do with Mindanao."

Noble said no one had approached him to open a dialogue. He also did not elaborate on what he seeks from the government.

Rebels had earlier declared independence for Mindanao, the nation's second largest island.

Noble appeared in complete control of the military garrison today in the port city of Cagayan de Oro, about 500 miles south of Manila. Noble said his followers seek to form a civilian-military junta to govern Mindanao.

Aquino, who has survived six coup attempts during her four years in office, promised to crush this revolt, which broke out before dawn Thursday.

The Armed Forces on Thursday said it would not permit the country to be "dismembered," and the nation's leading Roman Catholic churchman called on Filipinos "to close ranks once again" to defend the government.

In Cagayan de Oro, thousands of people turned out to catch a glimpse of the mutineers, who marched in a festive "victory parade" through the city streets.

On Thursday, the armed forces went on nationwide alert and Aquino huddled with her Cabinet and senior military officers and congressmen at the presidential palace. Flights to Mindanao were canceled and schools on the island were closed.

GUINIA update

Soviet envoy brings message from Gorbachev to Baghdad

A Soviet envoy carried a secret message from Mikhail Gorbachev to Baghdad and Japan's prime minister met with Iraq's No. 2 leader Thursday in new efforts for peace in the Persian Gulf. Five Europeans used a 10-foot boat in a daring escape from Iraq and plans were announced to evacuate more Americans.

The USS Independence -- the first American aircraft carrier in the gulf in 16 years -- left the waterway after a brief show of force. A Navy warship enforcing a U.N. embargo on Iraq stopped a Sudanese freighter from entering the Gulf of Aqaba, the Pentagon said.

Iraq planned to argue its case before the United Nations. The world body, which has condemned Iraq's invasion and placed a naval and air embargo on the country, may consider stronger measures.

At the United Nations, Iraq's planned address to the General Assembly was postponed after the nation's U.N. ambassador suffered a nose bleed.

Ambassador Abdul Amir al-Anbari was expected to read a statement in response to President Bush's suggestion Monday that an unconditional Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait could lead to "opportunities" toward a broad Middle East peace settlement.

U.N. officials said the speech would be rescheduled, possibly for Monday.

British Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd, following up on Bush's suggestion, said Thursday that Israel must be prepared to negotiate the Palestinian problem once Iraq withdraws from Kuwait. Iraqi President Saddam Hussein has tried to link a pullout from Kuwait with Israel's occupation of territories it captured in the 1967 Middle East war.

Yevgeny Primakov, a senior adviser to Gorbachev, arrived in Baghdad carrying a message from the Soviet president, Soviet diplomatic sources said. Its contents were not disclosed. Tass quoted him as saying in Baghdad that a negotiated solution was needed "to avoid a military explosion."

Primakov planned to request that some of about 5,000 Soviet citizens, most oil industry workers, be allowed to leave Iraq, the diplomatic sources said.

Primakov also met early Thursday with Palestine Liberation Organization chairman Yasser Arafat in Amman, Jordan, and delivered a message from Gorbachev, said a PLO source who requested anonymity.

Arafat met later in Baghdad with Saddam and the two "agreed that a political solution to the crisis is possible within an Arab context," said a PLO source.

Gorbachev said Thursday he saw no reason to send Soviet troops to join the U.S.-led multinational force in the gulf. In response to a query, Gorbachev told reporters in Moscow: "I think there are already more than enough troops there."

Daily Nebraskan

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