

GULF update

Iraqi-American group says some citizens will be freed

Saddam Hussein will free some sick and elderly Americans from among the hundreds of U.S. citizens detained by Baghdad since its Aug. 2 invasion of Kuwait, the leader of an Iraqi-American group said Monday.

It was not immediately clear when the releases might come, or how many Americans would be affected.

"We don't want to talk about figures or names at the moment, but I'm happy to announce that some good news will come up," said Salim Mansour, leader of the Maryland-based Iraqi-American Foundation.

There was also good news for the U.S. economy. Oil prices were down \$4 a barrel in the early afternoon on the New York Mercantile Exchange, to \$29.60. In London, North Sea Brent Blend oil plunged \$5.65 a barrel to close at \$26.75.

The prices dropped following reported remarks a day earlier by Saudi Arabia's defense minister that Arab nations were willing to grant Iraq "all its rights." The market interpreted that as a sign Saudi Arabia was prepared to agree to territorial concessions by Kuwait.

The same day, however, Prince Sultan reiterated that "any solution must provide for an unconditional Iraqi pullout from Kuwait and the return of the rule of the al-Sabah family."

Since the Persian Gulf crisis began 11 weeks ago, oil prices have fluctuated wildly on world markets, reaching above \$40 a barrel at times compared with pre-crisis levels of \$22 a barrel.

Lawmakers may not have votes for override Bush kills civil rights measure

WASHINGTON - President Bush vetoed a major civil rights bill Monday and seemed assured of winning a battle in Congress to override him.

"I deeply regret having to take this action," Bush said.

The president called on lawmakers to enact his version of the measure before they quit for the year, expected later this week.

The administration argued that the bill, as passed by Congress, would force businesses to adopt quotas in hiring and promotion. Supporters of the measure rejected the White House argument and portrayed Bush's stand as a measure of his commitment on human rights.

Sen. Edward M. Kennedy, D-Mass., the chief Senate sponsor, called the veto "tragic and disgraceful."

"When the chips are down, the White House is against civil rights," Kennedy said. He urged Congress to override the president.

The bill was approved by substantial margins in both the House and Senate, but both votes fell short of the two-thirds needed to override.

Rep. Augustus F. Hawkins, D-Calif., the prime House sponsor, said he would not even ask for an override vote without the two-thirds needed

by supporters.

"I'm just not going to waste any more time," Hawkins said, adding that civil rights forces might even lose support in an override fight.

In his veto message, Bush said, "The temptation to support a bill — any bill — simply because its title includes the words 'civil rights' is very strong."

"But when our efforts, however well-intentioned, result in quotas, equal opportunity is not advanced but thwarted," he said. "The very commitment to justice and equality that is offered as the reason why this bill should be signed requires me to veto it."

He said, "I deeply regret having to take this action with a bill bearing such a title, especially since it contains certain provisions that I strongly endorse."

The measure would nullify six Supreme Court decisions that have made it more difficult for women and minorities to prove and win job discrimination suits. It would ban racial harassment in the workplace and al-

low punitive damages in the most serious discrimination cases.

It was passed by the Senate 62-34 and by the House 273-154 — strong majorities, but not reaching the two-thirds required to override a veto.

Bush said there were many similarities between the bill he vetoed and the version that the administration supports. Civil rights advocates denounced the latest version of Bush's bill as a sham for permitting challenged hiring practices to stand if they could be justified on such grounds as "customer relations," justifications they said were used to support the separate-but-equal "Jim Crow" laws of the first half of the 20th century that kept blacks in segregation.

Summing up his key argument, Bush said, "Despite the use of the term 'civil rights' in the title... the bill actually employs a maze of highly legalistic language to introduce the destructive force of quotas into our nation's employment system."

He said that under Congress' bill, "employers will be driven to adopt quotas in order to avoid liability."

Congress adopts clean-air bill

WASHINGTON - House and Senate negotiators approved a clean-air bill Monday that is expected to eventually cost the economy \$22 billion a year and affect most of American society by toughening pollution controls on automobiles, factories and power plants.

The bargainers worked out the final details before dawn, ending more than a year of bargaining between the two chambers. Late Monday afternoon, the conference committee gave the measure formal endorsement, with only Rep. William Dannemeyer, R-Calif., opposing it.

Senate Majority Leader George Mitchell, D-Maine, called the legislation "historic in its significance" and said he expected both the Senate and House to endorse it and President Bush to sign it into law. Final approval from both chambers is expected by week's end.

Bush, meanwhile, noted that

tougher clean-air legislation "has been 13 years in coming" and said that "no American should have to wait another day for clean air."

Republican members of the clean-air conference, including Rep. Norman Lent of New York and Sen. John Chafee of Rhode Island, predicted Bush would sign the bill.

But White House press secretary Marlin Fitzwater said the administration still opposes a program to retrain displaced workers and was continuing to make its opposition known on Capitol Hill. Yet, he added that the administration "has not signaled a veto."

Under the legislation, there would be drastic reductions in emissions of acid rain pollutants and toxic industrial chemicals. In addition, more than 100 cities would be given five to 15 years to bring their air quality up to federal standards, mainly by controlling pollutants that cause smog.

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