

House budget challenges Bush priorities

WASHINGTON (AP) - The House Budget Committee moved toward passage Tuesday of a \$1.46 trillion Democratic budget for 1992 that would reshuffle some of President Bush's domestic priorities and could set the tone for a year of confrontation between the White House and Congress.

Work on the budget came as lawmakers returned from their holiday recess and as Democrats and Republicans girded to battle over a host of contentious domestic issues, including civil rights, crime legislation and parental leave.

On Wednesday, a House Judiciary subcommittee will consider the so-

called Brady Bill, named for former White House press secretary Jim Brady. The legislation would impose a seven-day waiting period on people seeking to buy a handgun. The administration has criticized the bill.

The budget proposed by Democrats neither raises nor cuts taxes but reverses multi-billion dollar cuts Bush would make in Medicare, veterans' pensions and other benefit programs.

It also shifts about \$10 billion Bush would spend on science, space and other programs to social initiatives such as education, child care and job training.

Constrained by record federal deficits and budget rules that strictly

limit spending, many of the Democratic efforts to reshape Bush's budget were modest.

Rather than cutting \$226 million from job-training initiatives, as Bush has proposed, Democrats would raise spending on such programs by \$23 million. They would boost spending for the National Aeronautics and Space Administration by \$377 million, well below the \$1.1 billion increase Bush has requested.

Adhering to limits included in last fall's five-year budget agreement, both Democrats and the White House envision defense spending next year of about \$295 billion with a federal

deficit exceeding \$280 billion. That shortfall would be the second largest ever, surpassed only by the \$318 billion in red ink expected this year.

The Senate convened for the first time since the deaths of Sen. John Heinz, R-Pa., and former Sen. John Tower, R-Texas, in airplane crashes last week.

Several members of Congress are scheduled to attend Heinz's funeral in Pittsburgh on Wednesday.

On Thursday, the Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee will take up the divisive issue of requiring employers to give workers up to 12 weeks of unpaid leave for newborn children or medical emergencies. Bush

vetoed similar legislation last year, but Democrats in Congress consider it a high-priority item and are trying again.

The plight of Kurdish refugees in northern Iraq clearly was also on lawmakers' minds as they returned. Several senators who attended a hearing on whether to seek to try Saddam Hussein for war crimes said they were chagrined that Saddam was able to slaughter civilian refugees without interference from the United States.

"We have a moral obligation to do what we can," said Sen. Claiborne Pell, D-R.I., suggesting the threat of U.S. air power would force Saddam to curtail the killings.

Hunger plagues Basra

Editor's Note: This story was subjected to Iraqi censorship.

BASRA, Iraq (AP) - Barefoot boys and girls fight swarms of flies to collect water from puddles rank with the bodies of animals. Hungry children are fed starch and water instead of milk.

After two wars and a month-long Shiite Muslim rebellion, Basra's people are often hungry, ill and desperate.

The southern city Western reporters visited this week bore little resemblance to the thriving port of 1 million people that once was known as the Venice of the Middle East.

The city was hammered by artillery during the 1980-88 war with Iran; pounded by allied bombs during the war for Kuwait; and further devastated when Saddam Hussein's troops put down the uprising by Shiite rebels that followed the gulf war.

The rattle of gunfire could still be heard in the distance Monday, and soldiers and residents said the area remained unsafe.

"Adults and children have died and are still dying from severe malnutrition and diseases we cannot confirm (diagnose) because of the lack of equipment and medicine,"

“Adults and children have died and are still dying from severe malnutrition . . .”

Dr. Salem Bakos Al-Tahir hospital

said Dr. Salem Bakos of Al-Tahir hospital.

"During the last two weeks, five babies less than 8 months old have died here," he said.

Doctors said Al-Tahir, which was riddled by bullets inside and out, was the city's only functioning hospital. Dr. Mohammed Jassem said about two dozen new patients were admitted each day because of severe dehydration or other critical conditions.

Bakos accused the rebels of looting the hospital's stores, destroying equipment, stealing or burning ambulances and expelling patients. Reporters were unable to confirm how the visible damage occurred.

No one knows how many people now live in Basra, but it is certain that many were killed or fled the recent fighting. The streets of the city were

littered with the stinking bodies of dead animals, some gnawed by packs of roving dogs and covered with flies and mosquitoes.

Residents said municipal water supplies were cut off when the allied bombing began Jan. 17, and service has not been restored. This week, women and children collected water from the polluted Shatt-al-Arab waterway, or from muddy puddles — some fouled by the bodies of animals.

"We don't care if the water is clean. We need water and this is what we have," said a 15-year-old boy who gave his name only as Hussein.

Government food deliveries halted during last month's rebellion, residents said, leaving the black market as the only source for supplies.

"If food products are found in the black market, the prices are usually very high. We cannot afford to buy it and feed our children," said Samira Hussein, a mother of four whose husband was reported missing in the gulf war.

At the market, vendors sold tomatoes and cucumbers scattered on the dirt in front of them under a blanket of insects. The odor of dirt and dead animals filled the air.

Poland watches first troops withdraw from military base

BORNE-SULINOWO, Poland (AP) - A train carried away Soviet missile launchers and 60 soldiers from a formerly top-secret military base Tuesday, beginning the Red Army's withdrawal from Poland.

But Polish and Soviet negotiators remained at odds over when the rest of the Soviet Union's 50,000 soldiers would leave. Their departure will end a deployment that started 47 years ago when the Red Army chased out the German occupiers and then stayed on to prop up a series of pro-Moscow governments.

During months of tense negotiations, Poland has demanded that all the Soviet troops be pulled out by the end of this year, as is planned for Hungary and Czechoslovakia. The Soviets say they will not vacate Poland before the end of 1993.

The troop train pulled away in pouring rain at 11 a.m. after a ceremony that included speeches by Soviet and Polish generals, and a Soviet garrison band playing the Soviet and Polish national anthems.

Soviet Gen. Viktor Dubynin, commander of the Northern Forces

group, told the members of the Guards Missile Brigade they had guaranteed "the independence of Poland."

"Our mission has been completed successfully," he added.

Soviet children held a sign reading: "Thank you for your services in the Northern Forces group" and handed the departing soldiers small plastic banners and badges.

The only Polish presence was 50 soldiers from a nearby Polish garrison and a three-member parliamentary delegation, including Sen. Andrzej Szczypiorski, a well-known writer who long opposed the Soviet-backed Communist regime in Poland.

"I never believed I would see this day," he told reporters after shaking hands with the soldiers boarding the train.

Feelings were mixed about the pullout among Poles living near the 54-mile-wide base, which grew up in northwest Poland around a small World War II German barracks into one of the largest military training areas in Europe.

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