

Peace conference Baker bids for support

KUWAIT CITY - Secretary of State James Baker headed for Damascus Monday in hopes of enlisting Syria's participation in a Mideast peace conference. Earlier, he bid for Soviet sponsorship of the initiative and gained the sideline endorsement of Saudi Arabia.

Baker's scheduled sessions with President Hafez Assad and Foreign Minister Farouk Sharaa loomed as his most difficult challenge on the Arab side, as he attempts to fashion a format and agenda for the prospective peace talks. He was expected to return to Israel on Tuesday in hopes of resolving its concerns about the scope of the proposal.

On the way from Jiddah, Saudi Arabia, to Damascus, the secretary of state took a brief detour to Kuwait to reaffirm U.S. support of the emirate.

Before leaving Jiddah, Baker had a 35-minute telephone conversation with Soviet Foreign Minister Alexander Bessmertnykh. Baker wants Moscow to co-sponsor the peace talks, provided the Soviets resume full diplomatic relations with Israel after a 24-year lapse.

Bessmertnykh is expected to make a trip to Israel soon. Baker gave a detailed briefing to the Soviet official. The fact that Baker was keeping his schedule open raised a possibility that he might fly to Moscow to firm up a jointly sponsored conference. The trip would depend on the resolution of the Arab-Israeli differences over the agenda and the extent of third-party participation.

The Saudis confirmed during Baker's meetings in Jiddah with King Fahd and Prince Saud, the foreign minister, that they would not participate directly in peace negotiations though they may take part in dealing with such side issues as the environment.

But Prince Saud, seeing Baker off to Kuwait, said "It was conveyed to the secretary that Saudi Arabia believes it is time to put an end to the Arab-Israeli conflict and to achieve a comprehensive and just solution to the Palestinian question."

The foreign minister said, Saudi Arabia "supports the efforts of the United States for the convening of an early peace conference to achieve this objective."

U.S. builds camp; Iraqis watch

SILOPI, Turkey - U.S. military forces who worked Monday to construct a model camp to house Kurdish refugees in northern Iraq are being watched but left alone by Iraqi police in the region, officials said.

The U.S. soldiers have received high marks from relief groups and refugees in Kurdish camps along the Turkish border.

"We were a bit worried they would take over at one point," said Constantin Sokoloff, a field officer for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. "But they are very cooperative, very willing, and they have a lot of logistical support."

Dozens of U.S. troops have arrived the past few days at the worst-off refugee camps, at Cukurca and Uzumlu in Turkey. They will be bringing in medicine and water by helicopter, distributing food and helping pipe spring water to the hundreds of thousands of refugees at the squalid camps.

Two U.S. soldiers were injured

in a land mine explosion at the Uzumlu camp Monday. The border had been mined by Turkey and Iraq before the Gulf war, and several refugees have been killed or maimed when they stepped on mines.

Relief workers said the arrival of the Americans had reduced tensions among the refugees.

"They see it as a bit of a tangible sign that the Americans are interested and are going to do something," said Leah Thatcher, a public health specialist with the New York-based International Rescue Committee.

At Cukurca, a camp crowded with about 185,000 refugees, refugees seemed particularly pleased to see U.S. Army Special Forces on Monday. A day earlier, Turkish soldiers had fired at a crowd rioting over food distribution, killing five and seriously injuring three, according to medical workers.

Turkish officials said Sunday that one refugee was killed and five injured.

The United States and allied countries have promised several safe havens in northern Iraq to house refugees now massed on the borders of Turkey and Iran.

Said Hayri Kozackioglu, governor of Turkey's southeastern border region where several hundred thousand Iraqi Kurds have massed: "Now we are waiting for the Americans to finish setting up the camp. When it is finished we shall know whether we have to set up another one."

Turkey's Anatolia news agency reported the governor met earlier Monday with U.S. Lt. Gen. John Shalikashvili, commander of the military relief effort.

Reporters who visited the camp being set up near the northern Iraqi border town of Zakho said about 200 tents had been erected since Sunday and that another 400 were being put up. They noted hundreds of Iraqi policemen carrying automatic weapons and loitering around the camp area and the town.

Soviet premier warns of 'social explosion'

MOSCOW - Prime Minister Valentin Pavlov warned Monday that a "social explosion" could occur and millions of people lose their jobs unless the country agrees on an emergency program to halt economic decline.

Pavlov said industrial production will plummet if debilitating strikes continue, state contracts are not met and the government fails to adopt an economic plan.

Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev told reporters on Red Square that he expected "serious proposals" and criticism of the program at a pivotal Communist Party Central Committee meeting Wednesday.

"Comrades have made comments like, 'Isn't it too much of a turn toward liberalization of the economy, toward capitalization? And what will the consequences be?'" he said after laying a wreath at Vladimir Lenin's mausoleum on the 121st anniversary of the Soviet founder's birth.

More than 3,000 Siberian gold

miners held a one-day warning strike Monday in Magadan and Chukotka, according to the Tass and Postfactum news services.

The gold miners expressed solidarity with hundreds of thousands of striking coal miners, who stopped work March 1 and are demanding Gorbachev's resignation and wage indexation to compensate for inflation.

Gorbachev has refused to step down. He urged strikers to put aside personal grudges and work together for "the fatherland, state, country and condition of the people."

Pavlov described the dire state of the economy in presenting the latest attempts to cure it. "The situation in the country can only be characterized as a general crisis."

He told the Supreme Soviet legislature "the number of unemployed may reach 18 million and a social explosion could erupt before the year is out" and that industrial output will drop 20 percent if the program is not

adopted.

First-quarter figures already showed the Soviet equivalent of the gross national product fell 8 percent and labor productivity 9 percent, compared with the same period a year ago.

If the country decides to switch quickly from a centrally planned to a free-market economy, production and incomes will fall more than 30 percent and 30 million people will lose their jobs, Pavlov said.

The most controversial point in the plan is the sale of some state-owned businesses to private groups or individuals. Two-thirds of small businesses in the service and consumer sectors would be denationalized by the end of 1992.

He advised a third, gradual course, which would include denationalization, promotion of commercial credits, improvement of the tax structure and encouragement of foreign investment to avert collapse.

Time short for Gorbachev, U.S. analysts conclude

WASHINGTON - U.S. officials are reluctantly concluding that Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev's government is paralyzed and the initiator of world-shaking reforms at home and abroad may not hold power much longer.

Kremlin watchers in Washington are studying the most likely successors and considering what a post-Gorbachev Soviet Union may look like.

Gorbachev has enjoyed hearty support from President Bush, who made no secret of his hope that the Soviet leader would succeed. But Bush advisers and State Department analysts now say privately that Gorbachev appears unable to

regain control of his fractious country and that his time may be running out.

"He's getting pretty close to the edge," said one influential Soviet affairs analyst at State. "The situation looks very precarious," said another.

One official with long experience observing Soviet affairs said the administration has received recent signals from various sources indicating that Gorbachev is in serious trouble and is "maneuvering furiously to protect his flanks and undercut the opposition."

"He's very much aware of the threat," the official said.

Democrats trying to restart civil rights bill negotiations

WASHINGTON - Democratic congressional leaders, hoping to revive efforts toward a consensus civil rights bill, want to meet with corporate executives who called off negotiations after pressure from the Bush administration.

AT&T chief Robert Allen, who halted big business' talks on Friday, was said by a spokesman Monday to be hopeful that a compromise was still possible, though he had not agreed to resume negotiations.

Supporters of a Democratic-sponsored civil rights bill accused the Bush administration of putting enormous pressure on the business leaders, prompting them to halt talks just as it appeared they were nearing agreement with civil rights groups.

"What they did was reprehensible," Ralph Neas, executive director of the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights, said of White House officials. "They pulled out all the stops in an effort to scuttle the good faith negotiations."

Democrats and civil rights leaders accused President Bush of trying to sabotage efforts to reach agreement out of a desire to keep the issue of racial quotas alive as a political issue for Republican candidates in 1992. Bush contends the

Democratic bill would lead employers to use racial quotas for hiring.

"There's no question, especially in light of recent events, that the White House does not want a strong civil rights bill enacted into law. What the White House wants is a political issue around which to demagogue," Neas said.

Presidential spokesman Marlin Fitzwater reiterated administration support for its own bill and labeled the Democratic version a "quota bill." Asked if he were glad the corporate executives had pulled out of the talks, Fitzwater said, "Anyone is free to talk with anyone."

The Democratic sponsored bill is intended to reverse a series of Supreme Court decisions that made it more difficult for minorities to sue employers for job discrimination.

Bush has proposed his own less-sweeping alternative version. The Democratic bill has passed two committees and is awaiting floor action in the House, tentatively scheduled for the last week in April.

Allen, chief executive officer of AT&T, disclosed Friday that he was breaking off the talks with civil rights groups, citing "the absence of a bipartisan consensus" in Washington.

Sting operations

High court takes porn case

WASHINGTON - The Supreme Court Monday set the stage for what could be an important ruling on government sting operations, agreeing to review the case of a Nebraska farmer convicted of receiving "kid porn" through the mail.

The court said it will decide whether Keith Jacobson unlawfully was entrapped by Postal Service investigators.

Lawyers for Jacobson, 57, said his rights were violated because he was targeted by the undercover investigation even though government agents had no reason to believe he had committed, or was likely to commit, a crime.

Jacobson, who lives near Newman Grove, was convicted of receiving in 1987 a copy of a magazine called "Boys Who Love Boys," described in a catalog as "11-year-old and 14-year-old boys get it on in every way possible."

The catalog and magazine were mailed to him by postal inspectors who posed as pornography distributors.

Jacobson was sentenced to two years' probation and 250 hours of community service.

Police found Jacobson's name on a San Diego, Calif., pornography bookstore's mailing list in 1984. He had lawfully ordered two nudist

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8th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals

magazines and a brochure from the store.

Over the next 29 months, undercover postal inspectors repeatedly solicited Jacobson through the mail to buy illegal pornography.

A three-judge panel of the 8th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals threw out, by a 2-1 vote, Jacobson's conviction in January 1990. But the entire 8th Circuit court, voting 8-2, reinstated it nine months later.

"The Constitution does not require reasonable suspicion of wrongdoing before the government can begin an

undercover investigation," the appeals court said.

It rejected Jacobson's contention that the government conduct toward him had been "outrageous."

"The postal inspectors did not apply extraordinary pressure on Jacobson . . . Unlike face-to-face contacts, Jacobson easily could have ignored the contents of the mailings if he was not interested in them," the appeals court said.

Jacobson's contention that he had been entrapped also was rejected.

In a dissenting opinion, Chief Judge Donald Lay called the government's conduct "reprehensible."

"The government invested considerable time and money to prosecute a man who never would have committed a crime but for the government's encouragement," he said.

Judge Gerald Heaney, in a separate dissent, said, "Had the government left Jacobson alone, he would have, on the basis of his past life, continued to be a law-abiding man, caring for his parents, farming his land and minding his own business. Now he stands disgraced in his home and his community with no visible gain to the Postal Service in the important fight against the sexual exploitation of children."

The case is Jacobson vs. U.S., 90-1124.