

U.N. accepts Iraqi proposal to end standoff

UNITED NATIONS — Moving to defuse the latest standoff with Saddam Hussein, the Security Council on Thursday accepted an Iraqi proposal aimed at ending the three-day detention of U.N. weapons inspectors in Baghdad. The inspectors have been held in a Baghdad parking lot since they uncovered documents describing Iraq's secret nuclear weapons program.

Under the plan, diplomats said, the documents, photographs and videotapes will stay in the possession of the inspectors while they and Iraqi authorities prepare a catalog of them.

Rolf Ekeus, head of the U.N. Special Commission charged with disposing of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction, estimated that it would take less than 24 hours to catalog all the documents, film and videotape, and that not all 44 inspectors would be needed for the task. It was

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not certain when the inspectors might actually be freed.

Ekeus said “we are not talking hours” before the team is released because arrangements need to be made with the Iraqis. But he added: “We have worked out very sound arrangements, and we expect Iraq to say ‘yes’ to that, and then we can work quickly.”

Iraqi citizens held government-sanctioned demonstrations across the nation Thursday, accusing the U.N. arms experts of being spies. “Death to the enemies of Iraq!” chanted the demonstrators, the official Iraqi News Agency said.

Encircled by Iraqi troops, the inspectors have struggled to keep their spirits high, hold-

ing lotteries to make calls home and improvising touch football games, the U.N. team's U.S. leader said Thursday.

“Everyone's in very good spirits, good health,” David Kay told The Associated Press in a satellite telephone interview from Baghdad.

Before the Security Council decision, Kay said the inspectors had the ability to catalog the documents if U.N. officials decided they should do so.

“All we need to know is, what are the guidelines and what is practically required, and we'll worry about finding ways to do it once policy is set,” he said.

Kay said the documents were secured in one of the cars “in the center of our little circle” in the parking lot.

Spring economic downturn greater than early estimates

WASHINGTON — The U.S. economy declined at a worse-than-expected annual rate of 0.5 percent in the spring and there was a big jump in laid-off workers seeking jobless benefits early this month, the government said Thursday.

The downward revision in the gross national product and the 8.9 percent increase in the number of Americans filing for unemployment benefits were the latest signs of a struggling economy, analysts said.

Analysts had been expecting the GNP report to show newfound weakness from April through June, but they were surprised that the drop was put at 0.5 percent with consumer and government spending and business

restocking of inventories all revised lower.

It marked the second straight downward revision. Originally, the economy was thought to have actually been growing at an annual rate of 0.4 percent in the spring. That was revised last month to show a 0.1 percent decline.

The increase in jobless claims to 439,000 for the week ending Sept. 14, up from 403,000 the previous week, was seen as even more worrisome because it showed that layoffs, which should be declining in a normal recovery, are beginning to rise again.

The increase left jobless claims at their highest level in three months. Analysts said only part of the jump

could be explained away by the fact that it reflected a rebound following a holiday-shortened filing period in the previous week.

The Bush administration continued to insist that the recovery from the recession has begun and that the GNP will rebound and begin growing at annual rates of between 2 percent and 3 percent in the last half of the year.

“We still believe we are coming out of a recession. It is a process that is under way,” presidential spokesman Marlin Fitzwater said. But he added, “We want to do everything possible to keep the economy going. These numbers certainly show that we cannot be complacent.”

Romanian premier bows to violent protest, resigns

BUCHAREST, Romania — Premier Petre Roman resigned Thursday, bowing to violent protests against his economic reforms. The move failed to stop chaotic demonstrations by thousands of enraged miners and other citizens, who demanded that the president also step down.

Roman became the first of Eastern Europe's post-Communist leaders to fall victim to a backlash against reforms that countries across the region are imposing to treat decades of Communist malaise.

The government's Western-backed reforms have sliced standards of living, widened the gap between rich and poor, and sent inflation soaring to 170 percent.

Thousands of miners arrived in Bucharest Thursday on trains they commandeered in central Romania to join the 4,000 colleagues who came a day earlier.

“Don't be afraid, (President Ion) Iliescu will fall,” jubilant miners shouted from captured trucks they drove through the city.

Three died in riots Wednesday, and by Thursday afternoon, the number of injured had climbed to 284, the state news agency Rompres said, without elaborating.

The ruling National Salvation Front called on the army and Interior Ministry to restore order, urged Iliescu to summon the country's Supreme Defense Council and appealed to Romanians to stay home.

Senate approves defense bill including B-2 bomber funds

WASHINGTON — The Senate passed a 1992 defense spending bill Thursday that keeps alive the B-2 stealth bomber program, but puts off until next year a final decision by Congress on whether to spend \$3.2 billion on four more planes.

The bill, providing \$269.7 billion for the Pentagon in the budget year starting Oct. 1, meets most of President Bush's requests for big-ticket weapons, including \$4.6 billion for the Strategic Defense Initiative to build a missile defense.

The bill was passed on a voice vote. The measure cuts the active-duty military force by 106,000 people and makes other changes to accelerate the shrinking of the American military.


The main element of the bill that conflicts with administration policy is a provision permitting U.S. servicewomen and spouses of servicemen to have abortions performed at their own expense at U.S. overseas military installations.

The House version of the defense spending bill contains no abortion provision. Bush has said he would veto the defense bill if abortion were included.


In votes on a series of amendments to the bill during two full days of debate, the Senate:

— Defeated a proposal to cancel B-2 bomber production after the 15 already authorized by Congress. The vote of 51-48 was the narrowest margin of victory for B-2 supporters in numerous B-2 votes in recent years, including one just two months ago. The House bill eliminates money for further purchases of B-2s.

— Killed plans to spend \$225 million for tests on a rail-based mobile MX nuclear missile. Opponents of the test said it was a waste of money because the Pentagon currently has no plans to convert the silo-based MX intercontinental ballistic missile to one that could be fired from rail cars. The House bill includes \$250 million for the test.





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Number of poor increases sharply to 33.6 million

WASHINGTON — The number of Americans below the poverty line rose sharply last year to 33.6 million, the Census Bureau said Thursday. The increase, the first since 1983, left nearly one in seven people in poverty, and experts said the total was still climbing.

One-fifth of the nation's children and one-third of its blacks were considered poor.

Experts said the higher poverty rate would likely mean more people would lose their homes or succumb to health problems and the strain of trying to make ends meet. Some also predicted increased racial and ethnic tension and more crime.

In 1990, a family of four earning \$13,359 or less before taxes was considered poor. That definition does not include any property the family may own or some forms of assistance it may receive.