

Bush keeps 'total confidence' in Thomas High court nominee called to White House

Women following Hill's lead

Anita Hill is not alone. Working women around the country have joined her, crossing beyond confusion and fear about sexual harassment to share experiences of their own.

"We've had a real outpouring of calls," said Barbara Otto of 9 to 5, the National Association of Working Women. "It's like they're coming out of the closet to tell their dirty secret. They're saying: 'Enough!'"

In the minds of many, sexual harassment remains vaguely defined. The bounds of acceptable workplace behavior often seem murky and victims are unsure when they've been crossed.

This confusion was underscored when Hill's allegations against

Supreme Court nominee Clarence Thomas were made public on the eve of his confirmation vote, and because the Judiciary Committee was accused of giving them short shrift.

The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission defines sexual harassment as any sexual advance, request for sexual favor, sexual remark or conduct that affects job or promotion decisions, interferes with work performance or creates a hostile, offensive or intimidating atmosphere.

The vast majority of victims decline to report clear-cut cases of being touched or threatened with a demotion. Even fewer are likely to stand up against subtler but no less inappropriate workplace behavior.

WASHINGTON — President Bush on Wednesday declared he still had "total confidence" in Clarence Thomas and called his embattled Supreme Court nominee to the White House for a picture-taking session in a public display of support.

The day after the Senate decided to delay his confirmation vote until after public hearings on the allegations of sexual harassment against him, Thomas smiled for photographers and said he was feeling fine.

Asked whether he would be able to refute the accusations, he responded, "Just testify. Thanks."

The Senate Judiciary Committee is expected to hold hearings Friday and possibly Saturday to hear testimony from Thomas and from Anita Hill, the Oklahoma law professor who made the allegations.

Sen. John Danforth, Thomas' chief Senate sponsor, said the nominee would

"look the American people in the eye" and deny that he said or did anything improper to the former aide.

"I've got strong feelings but they all end up in strong support for Clarence Thomas," Bush said. "I support Clarence Thomas and there's no wavering, there's no condition. And that's where it is. And that's the way it's going to stay."

Senate Democratic Leader George Mitchell defended the Senate's handling of Hill's allegations that Thomas repeatedly made sexually explicit remarks to her when they worked together nearly a decade ago in the Reagan administration.

Mitchell rejected criticism by women's groups and others that the Senate had dragged its feet investigating the charges. He said the Senate's hands were tied because Hill had initially insisted on keeping her allegations confidential.

Before the allegations became public, Hill had insisted that only members of the Senate Judiciary Committee be told about her allegations "and it not be made available to anyone beyond that," the Maine Democrat said.

All the Democrats on the panel, but not every Republican member, were briefed about the allegations before the committee voted 7-7 and sent the nomination to the Senate floor without a recommendation.

"The reality is we did confront a very serious situation, there were conflicting interests and ultimately I believe the manner in which we agreed to proceed was appropriate and fair," Mitchell said.

Hill, who has said she will come to Washington to testify, told police in Norman, Okla., on Monday that she had received at least three harassing telephone calls after her allegations about Thomas were made public.

Nuclear sunset

What nuclear weapons facilities may do to survive.



Source: AP research

Iraqis skirmish with Kurds during 5th day of attacks

NICOSIA, Cyprus — Iraqi troops and Kurdish rebels skirmished in the area of a key northern city Wednesday, the latest in five days of fighting in which hundreds of people have been killed or wounded.

Tens of thousands of Kurds have fled the northern city of Suleimaniyah and surrounding towns since Iraqi bombardments began Saturday.

The Red Cross has evacuated hundreds of the refugees, a spokesman for the humanitarian organization said Wednesday.

Iraq's state-run newspaper, Al-Jumhuriya, claimed that the army had regained control of the area around Suleimaniyah early Wednesday. The two sides reached a cease-fire Tuesday afternoon, but fighting continued well past then.

The United States and its Persian Gulf war allies have expressed concern but refrained from intervening.

A Kurdish rebel spokesman, Serchil Qazzaz, on Wednesday decried the lack of Western military aid during the latest fighting. Qazzaz, a spokesman in the Turkish capital of Ankara for the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, said coalition forces reneged on a promise to intercede if the Iraqi army attacked.

Responding to reports that Kurdish guerrillas were massing on the Turkish border for an attack, Qazzaz said only that it was not unlikely.

"We learned that we should depend only on ourselves," he said.

The Kurdistan Democratic Party said in a statement issued in London that sporadic gunfire continued around Suleimaniyah on Wednesday.

Statements from the Kurdish groups

said an estimated 76 civilians had been killed and 750 Kurdish civilians injured since the bombardments began. They said medical supplies were running low in the city and that tens of thousands had fled Suleimaniyah and the surrounding towns.

The Kurdistan Democratic Party claimed that up to 4,000 Iraqi troops had been taken prisoner.

Saddam moved against the rebels as Kurdish leaders were planning to establish a rival provisional government in their mountain stronghold, in their latest attempt to overthrow the Iraqi president. Saddam's government and the guerrillas had been negotiating on a degree of autonomy for the Kurds in northern Iraq, but the talks foundered.

The Kurds rebelled in March after the gulf war cease-fire, seeking to win a decades-old battle for autonomy from the central government.

Tuesday's cease-fire agreement was signed by an Iraqi Defense Ministry official and the Iraq Kurdistan Front, a coalition of eight rebel factions fighting for autonomy from the Baghdad government.

There was no immediate independent confirmation about the situation, but both the British government and the Red Cross expressed strong concern.

In Geneva, the Red Cross spokesman, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the organization had evacuated hundreds of wounded in the past few days and the humanitarian group issued a statement expressing alarm about the fighting.

Cuts cause nuclear sites to readjust

Caught off balance by President Bush, defense installations that have battled since World War II for billions of dollars to build nuclear weapons are hurriedly being transformed into centers for taking them apart.

Bush stunned the defense industry and nuclear weapons critics last month by announcing a plan for unilateral nuclear cuts and new negotiations with Moscow to reduce nuclear arsenals.

With many nuclear weapons being reined in, the need for producing more of them has been thrown into doubt.

The president's move came as a surprise, and defense contractors are rushing to become the focus for dis-

mantling weapons, said Tom Zamora, a research analyst for the environmental group Friends of the Earth.

Other plants that can't reprocess bombs are competing for the estimated \$100 billion needed for cleaning up the environmental mess from more than four decades of weapons production.

"Everybody wants to be the dismantling center," Zamora said. "Pantex wants the job, Savannah River wants the job, and Rocky Flats wants the job. Everybody knows this is where the big bucks will be for the next few years."

Modernization of the arsenal will

continue, even if production of new weapons stops, said Deborah Smith, a spokeswoman for the Department of Energy, which builds nuclear bombs for the Pentagon.

"It is far too early to speculate on the effect of the president's initiatives on specific DOE facilities," she said. "However, we see no immediate change. The proposals may well lead to a smaller complex consistent with a greatly reduced nuclear stockpile."

Bush said the United States will scrap much of its short-range nuclear arsenal. On Sept. 28, strategic bomber crews across the country ended a four-decade alert.

Pioneering fetal transplant shows signs of curing genetic ailment

WASHINGTON — A pioneering transplant of fetal tissue into a developing fetus to cure a genetic ailment shows initial signs of success, doctors said Wednesday.

Esmail Zanjani of the University of Nevada in Reno said the transplanted tissue has taken hold in the recipient, who was born in November. Five to 10 percent of the child's blood-making cells are descendants of the transplanted cells, he said.

"Has it succeeded to the point of

curing? We don't know yet," Zanjani said at the Eighth International Congress of Human Genetics.

Further tests will be required to determine whether the child, afflicted with a severe genetic abnormality called Hurler syndrome, is developing symptoms of the disorder, he said.

Such transplants could theoretically be used to treat a wide variety of genetic disorders, said Dr. Mitchell Golbus of the University of Califor-

nia, San Francisco.

The case highlights the thorny issue of whether research using fetal tissue should be allowed. The government has opposed fetal tissue research over the strong protests of medical researchers.

Transplants of fetal tissue into mice, cats and sheep have been successful, but transplants of adult tissue into animal fetuses have not succeeded, said Zanjani.

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