

## Democrat urges new investigation of Iraq loans

WASHINGTON — The chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee called Wednesday for an independent counsel to investigate why the FBI, CIA and Justice Department withheld information in a case involving illegal bank loans to Iraq.

Sen. David Boren, D-Okla., wrote Attorney General William Barr saying that "a truly independent investigation is required to determine whether federal crimes were committed in the government's handling" of the politically charged case.

Boren said his committee's investigation had found that the country's top law enforcement and intelligence agencies withheld information from each other, and from the prosecution in the case of the Atlanta branch of an Italian bank which made \$5.5 billion in illegal loans to Iraq.

Barr refused last summer to appoint an independent counsel to the case and Boren joined several other senior congressional Democrats who have urged him to reverse that decision.

Some have accused Barr of rejecting an independent probe because it would spotlight the administration's failed support for Iraq in the 1980s and its subsequent handling of the politically embarrassing consequences.

In his letter, Boren told Barr that intelligence documents which have come to light in recent weeks under congressional pressure raise serious doubts about the prosecution of the manager of the Atlanta branch of the Italian government's Banca Nazionale del Lavoro.

The prosecution has based its case on the assumption that Christopher Drogoul acted alone in lending Iraq the \$5.5 billion, used in part to buy weapons and guaranteed partly by the U.S. government.

## Aftershocks jolt Egypt, tumble buildings

CAIRO, Egypt — Aftershocks from a deadly earthquake jolted Cairo on Wednesday, toppling more apartment houses and sending thousands of residents of another hard-hit city into the streets in panic.

The government said the death toll from Monday's quake had reached more than 450, but there were no new casualties due to the collapsed buildings.

Two aftershocks rippled through Cairo and the surrounding area. Ezzeddin M. Ibrahim, a government earthquake expert, said seismographs registered one at dawn at 3.7 on the Richter scale and another measuring 3.6 six hours later.

Officials at the government's

earthquake operations center refused to say how many buildings fell Wednesday. On a main street in downtown Cairo, police cordoned off an area surrounding two damaged apartment houses.

Before Wednesday's collapses, the government said 536 buildings nationwide had crumbled or were seriously damaged.

Much of the construction in Cairo is so shoddy that the city is known for buildings that fall even without earthquakes.

"Cairo is a time bomb," said Saad Eddin Ibrahim, American University sociologist and urban planning expert. "It just takes catastrophes to bring it out."

In Fayoum, 70 miles southwest

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of Cairo and close to the epicenter of Monday's quake, many residents there spent Monday and Tuesday night sleeping under the stars for fear of more deadly jolts. Thousands ventured inside on Wednesday, only to flee again to the streets when the aftershocks struck.

President Hosni Mubarak told

reporters that the earthquake killed more than 450 people and injured more than 4,000 nationwide.

Dr. Mamdouh Gabr, secretary-general of the Red Crescent Society, Egypt's equivalent of the Red Cross, estimated the number of injured at 10,000 but said most only needed first aid.

## Candidates gear up for round two

President Bush and Bill Clinton prepped privately on Wednesday for their second showdown in a campaign growing testier by the day. Rivals Dan Quayle and Al Gore sparred at a distance, as if locked in a debate without end.

"I think this administration is unraveling. George Bush is in a political panic," Gore said.

Quayle countered with a reprise of his Tuesday night debate charge that Clinton wasn't a man to be trusted.

He also suggested in an ABC interview that it had been an act of courage for Bush to raise taxes in 1990.

Independent Ross Perot stayed out of public view. Running mate James Stockdale told an ABC interviewer he had been "a little taken aback by the

rapidity at which these guys turned on the faucet and just started coughing out" their comments.

Bush spent about 90 minutes in mock-debate with Budget Director Richard Darman standing in for Clinton and former White House Chief of Staff John Sununu for Perot.

"The overall strategy is to be strong and presidential and forceful," said spokesman Marlin Fitzwater.

Pressed for details, he added, "I'm not giving anything away."

There seemed little doubt that Bush needed a dramatic debate performance to energize a campaign running roughly 10 percentage points behind Clinton.

Clinton was in Williamsburg, Va., nursing a throat made raspy by allergies and overuse.

He, the president and Perot will debate Thursday in Richmond, Va., and again on Monday in East Lansing, Mich.

Republicans conceded privately what the public polls showed: that neither the first presidential debate nor the vice presidential encounter had produced the kind of marked shift in voter preference that Bush needs.

One indicator of the potential impact of the two remaining debates will be the size of the viewing audience. A large drop-off from earlier viewership might suggest that many voters have already made up their minds.

There were these other developments Wednesday:

- Clinton's campaign released letters from his doctors reporting the Democratic candidate is in generally good health, suffers from allergies and struggles with his weight.

- The president's campaign announced a series of 65 radio commercials targeted to individual areas. One dealing with auto efficiency standards will air in Michigan and Missouri, aides said.

- Volunteers said the mood at Perot headquarters was dampened somewhat by the reviews Stockdale received.

"He had a little stage fright, I think," said Paul Richards, a phone bank volunteer.

"The American people want to have a president that they can trust, and can they really trust Bill Clinton?" Quayle asked on ABC's "Good Morning America."

He said Clinton changes his mind repeatedly on issues. When asked whether there's a difference between that and Bush's acceptance of a tax hike despite a "no new taxes" pledge, the vice president replied, "There's a difference of doing something and changing your mind when it's for the best interests of the country, and in Bill Clinton's case, he'd change his mind for what's in his own personal best interests. One's called courage and one's called expediency."

## Stockdale defends skills in Atlanta debate's wake

ATLANTA — James Stockdale conceded Wednesday he was "kind of out of it" during the vice presidential debate but said voters shouldn't think that means he isn't up to the job.

Political analysts said his debate showing could only hurt Ross Perot's against-all-odds presidential hopes. But one Republican strategist doubted there would be any serious erosion in Perot's modest standing in the polls, arguing that most of the Texan's supporters realize he cannot win and are merely planning protest votes.

In morning-after interviews, Stockdale attributed his sometimes uncertain or fumbling answers in Tuesday night's debate to a matchup of an everyday citizen against two polished politicians with programmed answers to every question.

The 68-year-old retired admiral and former prisoner of war also appeared determined to quash any concerns about his health that might have been raised by his debate performance.

"I'm going to live another 20 years at least," Stockdale said.

He was accompanied on the morning talk shows by his wife, Sybil, who defended him strongly. For example, when it was brought up that he had said at one point in the debate that his hearing aid was set too low for him to hear a question, she jumped in to say his hearing problem was from flying jet fighters, not from aging or poor health.

Mrs. Stockdale said her husband had agreed to be Perot's running mate last spring while she was

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— Stockdale vice-presidential candidate

away, and she added with a smile, "I'll think carefully before I go out of town again."

But she said more seriously that his choice "was a wonderful thing."

And Stockdale added, "Don't ever doubt that I'm qualified for the job. What we need in this thing is leadership, and I've been a leader in the most extreme circumstances you can imagine" — a reference to his time in captivity after being shot down over Vietnam.

"I don't think either one of those people up there on the platform with me last night could have handled it," Stockdale said.

Still, political strategists and academics said the retired admiral's debate performance couldn't help Perot's efforts to climb from a distant third.

"You can't get mad at the guy and he was wonderful in his own way," said Atlanta pollster Claiborne Darden. "But he puts the brakes on any Perot momentum and turns it to a hard skid."

Some Perot supporters said Stockdale's performance had made them less likely to vote for the Texas businessman — a sentiment also found in post-debate polls.

## Bushwhacked George

### Analysts say president needs miracle to overcome Clinton

WASHINGTON — Halfway through the debates and three weeks from Election Day, many political analysts believe the presidential race is essentially over and Bill Clinton has won.

GOP leaders across the country say it will take a bolt of lightning for President Bush to win and suggest his only shot may be to follow Vice President Dan Quayle's lead and be more combative.

"America has decided. It's Clinton," said Henry Graff, presidential historian at Columbia University. He cites trends in Gallup Polls going back to 1936 to bolster this assertion.

On the eve of the second presidential debate, GOP advisers seemed hard pressed to suggest what Bush could do to turn things around.

The GOP party line, repeated Wednesday with different degrees of enthusiasm by Republicans: Bush should follow his vice president's example and step up his attack on Clinton's character and trustworthiness.

Dan Quayle in Tuesday's vice presidential debate repeatedly suggested that Clinton was incapable of telling the truth.

"If George Bush runs too combative a campaign, he's going to be seen as too negative and his own negatives are going to go up," said Stuart Rothenberg, a Republican who publishes a non-partisan political newsletter.

Clinton is "running away with the election," said Thomas Hopper, state GOP chairman in Tennessee. "The president needs to be very tough and very specific, because Clinton's message is selling."

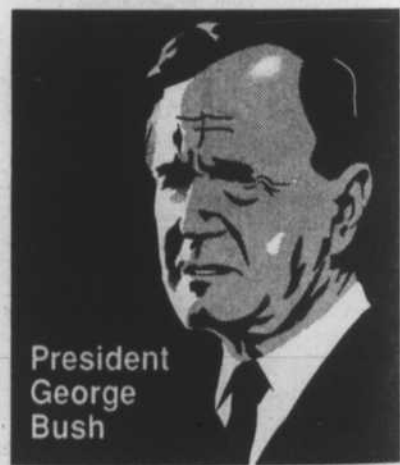
"Lightning would be helpful," said Richard Schwarm, Iowa GOP chairman. Short of generating heavenly bolts, Bush's best hope may be to try to wear Clinton down with repeated body blows, Schwarm said.

Bush is about 6 points down in Iowa. That's better than nationally, but "at this point I'll have to concede that things aren't going as well as they should be," Schwarm said.

Republicans have long since written off California and Illinois and Bush is way behind in the traditional battleground states of Ohio, New Jersey and Michigan.

Graff, the presidential historian at Columbia, says history suggests that the race usually begins to firm up by Labor Day and that polls taken after mid-September almost always accurately reflect the outcome.

Graff projects that Clinton will win by about 11 points.



President George Bush

Brian Shelton/DN

The most recent Gallup poll shows Clinton at 48 percent, Bush at 33 and Perot at 12.

"No one has closed that large a gap and come back to win in the history of the poll," said Frank Newport, editor-in-chief of the Gallup Poll.

He noted that Ronald Reagan in 1980 was down 4 points in mid-October, and 8 points in late October and came back to win. No one has come back from more than an 8-point deficit in the poll's history, Newport said.

In the famous 1948 election that Bush likes to cite as his own model of a come-from-behind victory, Harry Truman was just 5 points down in mid-October, Newport said.

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