

Defense abruptly rests its case in Rodney King trial

LOS ANGELES — Defense attorneys in the Rodney King beating trial stunned a federal court Thursday by abruptly resting their case, a move one lawyer said was designed to unnervingly prosecutors.

Attorney Harland Braun, who had told Assistant U.S. Attorney Steven Clymer he had 10 witnesses waiting to testify but then called none, said outside court: "I just wanted to keep Clymer up till 3 in the morning... they can't deal with surprise."

Braun and attorney Paul De Pasquale, who represents former police officer Timothy Wind, halted the defense by resting without calling any further witnesses Thursday morning.

The attorney for Officer Laurence Powell rested late Wednesday.

The lawyers denied they stopped their case because several witnesses had backfired on them, most notably a highway patrolwoman who wept on the stand as she recalled

the brutality of King's beating.

"We got together and we decided less is better," Braun said.

Braun denounced the prosecutors outside court saying, "They're bad people, evil people. They're overly anal people. They can't deal with surprise."

"One thing I never forget when I deal with the government is this is a political prosecution," he said of racially charged case. "They indicted an innocent man, my client, for strategic reasons, not based on

the evidence. I assume they are scum and I treat them as scum."

Of Justice Department attorney Barry Kowalski, Braun said: "He's just like an S.S. officer for the civil rights division."

Only one of the four white policemen on trial, the sergeant who commanded the March 3, 1991, videotaped beating of the black motorist, took the stand in the federal trial. Other defendants said

Sgt. Stacey Koon adequately defended them.

"Stacey Koon speaks for everyone who's willing to accept responsibility for their actions," said Braun. "We salute Stacey Koon."

He acknowledged his client, Theodore Briseno, disagreed with Koon's handling of King's arrest and testified so at the state trial, which ended in acquittal on most charges. That verdict set off three days of deadly rioting.

Clinton: Russia's renewal a top U.S. priority

ANNAPOLIS, Md. — In an impassioned plea for spending scarce tax dollars on Russian aid, President Clinton said Thursday that America should help "not out of charity" but as a crucial investment in peace and prosperity.

"The danger is clear if Russia's reforms turn sour, if it reverts to authoritarianism or disintegrates into chaos," Clinton said.

The world cannot afford to see Russia turn into a much-larger version of chaotic Yugoslavia "armed with a vast arsenal of nuclear weapons," Clinton said. He made his case in a speech before a convention of the American Society of Newspaper Editors, meeting at the U.S. Naval Academy.

"The success of Russia's renewal must be a first-order concern to our country," Clinton said.

Russian President Boris Yeltsin is looking to the West for money and technical assistance to ease Russian misery resulting in part from belt-tightening economic reforms.

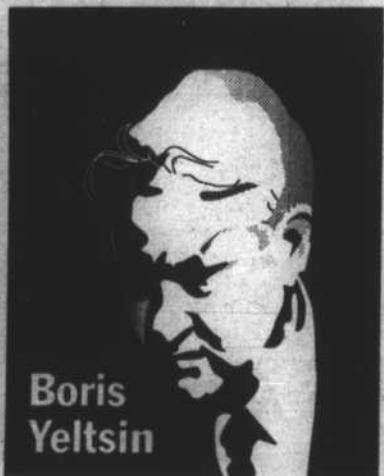
The Russian leader also hopes Clinton can boost his prestige before an April 25 referendum on who has ultimate authority: Yeltsin or the Communist-era Congress.

The president urged Americans to be patient with Russia's faltering pace of reforms and said they should not be concerned by "every growing pain



President
Bill Clinton

Scott Maurer/DN



Boris
Yeltsin

Brian Shellito/DN

within democracy." He recalled that America's own history was marked by revisions of the Constitution and even fist fights in Congress.

"You can't be so impatient about what's happened in the short stretch of time from (Mikhail) Gorbachev to Yeltsin to the present crisis," he said.

"Despite today's troubles, I have great faith that Russian reform will continue and eventually succeed," the president said.

Clinton said "I speak for Americans everywhere when I say: We are with you."

He said that many Americans ask, "Why in the world should we help a distant people when times are so tough

here at home?"

Clinton said, "We must act now, not out of charity, but because it is a wise investment. ... While our efforts will entail new costs, we can reap even larger dividends for our safety and our prosperity if we act now."

The president said America had spent trillions of dollars on the Cold War. "If Russia were to revert to imperialism or were to plunge into chaos, we would need to reassess all our plans for defense savings. We would have to restructure our defenses to meet a whole different set of threats than those we now think will occur. That means billions of dollars less for other uses."



Preparing aid for Russia

On the table:

- ▶ Modernization of farms and factories
- ▶ Creation of effective transportation system
- ▶ Rebuilding of state industries into private businesses

Other issues:

- ▶ Loan guarantees for housing Russian soldiers
- ▶ Consideration of assistance to rebuild oil and gas facilities
- ▶ Loan guarantees for food aid

Clinton promised his aid would not be wasted on a Russian government known for its bloated bureaucracy and inefficiency.

He said the aid would be designed to develop small businesses, acceler-

ate the privatization of state enterprises, improve food processing and distribution, ease the transition to private markets, and repair Russia's leaky oil and gas production system.

Millions of viewers will pay 10 percent less for cable TV

WASHINGTON — Millions of Americans will pay 10 to 15 percent less for cable TV under a rule adopted Thursday by regulators reasserting their authority over an industry criticized for skyrocketing prices.

The Federal Communications Commission voted 3-0 to cut cable rates 10 percent from their Sept. 30, 1992, level and erase any increases operators imposed since then.

The rollbacks will apply to 57 million viewers who subscribe to more than 11,000 cable systems licensed by communities. Local authorities must apply the FCC guidelines for basic service.

The FCC's rate formula also applies to so-called expanded basic service. The FCC will take com-

plaints from consumers that they are paying unreasonable charges for that service.

Subscribers are not likely to see any reductions for six months, FCC officials said. Cable operators are free to cut unreasonably high rates now to avoid paying refunds.

The FCC also adopted new rules that require programmers to make their channels available to competing cable operators at similar prices. Companies offering new services have complained of unfair discounts they say stifle competition.

Commissioner Ervin H. Duggan said this rule would have a more lasting benefit for consumers by promoting competition between cable TV and new services which will be offered by direct satellite broadcasters or phone companies.

Senate passes first piece of economic plan in record time

WASHINGTON — The Senate gave final approval to the first piece of President Clinton's economic program on Thursday, as united Democrats hurried a mammoth budget-cutting blueprint through Congress in record time.

The five-year, \$496 billion outline for tax boosts on the rich and Pentagon reductions cleared the Senate on a virtual party-line 55-45 vote. On Wednesday, representatives also divided by party had approved the House-Senate compromise on a 240-184 roll call.

In Annapolis, Md., Clinton told a group of newspaper editors, "Congress is acting this week to break gridlock and to build our prosperity by passing the heart of our economic program."

"It is probably a quirk of fate that we're voting on this budget on April Fools. The American people are indeed being fooled."

—Domenici
New Mexico senator

Democrats were able to fight off GOP efforts to weaken the jobs measure. On a 54-45 tally, they killed a Republican measure that would have forced cuts in other domestic programs to pay for the new job spending.

As remarkable as the Democrats' speed and unity was their resolve. The deficit-reduction measure assumes

unpopular steps like higher taxes on energy users and on higher-income Social Security recipients, most of which remained intact.

"It is probably a quirk of fate that we're voting on this budget on April Fools," said Sen. Pete Domenici, R-N.M., ranking Republican on the Senate Budget Committee. "The American people are indeed being fooled."

Refugees tell of their hardship in Bosnia

TUZLA, Bosnia-Herzegovina — A family of eight shared one blanket. A night's shelter cost more than 30 pounds of precious corn, so most people slept on the street or in shelled, roofless buildings.

This has been the life of many Muslims on the run from Serbs for up to a year.

Thousands of refugees poured into the eastern town of Srebrenica in recent weeks seeking food, shelter and safety.

What they found were more freezing nights, during which they warmed themselves around street bonfires and ate horse meat to survive.

Most of the refugees came from nearby Cerska and Konjevic Polje after the Serbs launched a blistering

attack in early March. Hemmed in by front lines, Srebrenica was the only town they could reach.

The town was nearly as desperate as the refugees because it had received little aid since Dec. 10. U.N. refugee officials say they have enough food and blankets for the people trapped in Srebrenica but cannot get the aid past Serb lines into the town.

This week about 5,000 refugees jammed U.N. trucks and were evacuated to the relative comfort and safety of Tuzla.

Crowded into a sports hall in this government-held town 45 miles north of Srebrenica, they are exhausted and brokenhearted. Along the way, some have lost husbands and wives, brothers and sisters.

"It was snowing and raining and we were outside," said Safeta Turnadzic, who trudged for days with three children, carrying her son, Admir, 13, his scalp shredded by shrapnel.

Admir was wounded when two shells ripped through the roof of his Cerska home as the Serbs advanced. The family fled to Konjevic Polje.

When that town fell soon after, they trudged on to the village of Jaglice.

"But no one could treat my child," Mrs. Turnadzic said. "I had to go to Srebrenica."

Srebrenica residents "didn't even let us take water," she said. "You had to give them something and then they gave you water."

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