

Bodyguard claims Harding conspired in assault plan

PORTLAND, Ore. — Tonya Harding knew of the plot to attack Nancy Kerrigan and at one point complained it was taking too long to carry out, her bodyguard told The Oregonian newspaper in an interview published Thursday.

"You know, you need to stop screwing around with this and get it done," Shawn Eckardt quoted Harding as saying.

Eckardt also told the newspaper that Harding's ex-husband, Jeff Gillooly, offered a \$10,000 U.S. Figure Skating Association check as a bonus if the attack on Kerrigan was carried out immediately. Top figure skaters get financial aid from the sport's governing body.

The newspaper interview was published a day after Gillooly's arrest and the release of an affidavit from a sheriff's deputy implicating Harding in the Jan. 6 attack for the first time.

In the affidavit, which accompanied Gillooly's arrest warrant, Eckardt claimed Harding made two phone calls to find out Kerrigan's practice schedule at a skating rink near Boston and later devised an alibi to explain the calls.

"Tonya categorically denies those allegations," said Harding's attorney, Dennis Rawlinson. "We believe Mr. Eckardt's lack of credibility is already well documented."

Eckardt; Gillooly; Shane Stant, the alleged "hit man" in the attack; and

Derrick Smith, the alleged getaway driver, have been charged with conspiring to injure Kerrigan. Harding has not been charged and has denied any involvement.

Eckardt told The Oregonian that he met with Gillooly several times to plan the attack. At one midnight meeting around Dec. 31, while Stant was in Boston seeking a chance to attack Kerrigan, they talked while Harding practiced at a rink, he said.

Harding skated over and said "she was disappointed these guys didn't do what they said they were going to do," he told The Oregonian. Eckardt said he suggested Harding call Stant, but she replied, "No, I want you to do it."

Harding remains under investigation, Assistant District Attorney John Bradley said. She was questioned for 10 hours by the FBI and the district attorney on Tuesday.

Claire Ferguson, president of the USFSA, said figure skating officials will vote next week on whether to keep Harding on the U.S. Olympic team. Harding could appeal to the U.S. Olympic Committee and go to court as well, Ferguson said.

Gillooly, who has also denied any involvement, was released on \$20,000 bail Wednesday. Gillooly and Harding, 23, were divorced in August, then reconciled in September. Harding announced Tuesday that she was separating from him again.

Whitewater counsel named

WASHINGTON — Former Republican U.S. attorney Robert B. Fiske Jr. Thursday was named special counsel to probe President Clinton's ties to a failed Arkansas savings and loan when he was governor. He pledged a "complete, thorough and impartial investigation."

Fiske said it was certain that he would question both the president and the first lady under oath as part of his investigation.

The appointment, announced by Attorney General Janet Reno at a morning news conference, came on the first anniversary of Clinton's inauguration.

Fiske said the scope of his review would be as broad as necessary, and it would determine "whether any individual or entity have committed a violation of any criminal law" in dealings surrounding the Whitewater Development Corp. and the Madison Guaranty Savings & Loan.

He said the investment dealings of the president and Hillary Rodham Clinton would be closely reviewed, as would the July suicide of White House deputy counsel Vincent Foster. A file on the Clinton's Whitewater investment was among the items found in Foster's office after his death.

White House officials said the

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—Dole

Senate Republican Leader

Clintons would cooperate with Fiske.

Asked about Fiske's promise to talk to the Clintons under oath, Press Secretary Dee Dee Myers said, "He hasn't done it yet. We'll deal with that when it comes."

Reno's selection of the 63-year-old Wall Street attorney answered suggestions that the special counsel be a veteran attorney and, to demonstrate independence, a Republican.

Senate Republican Leader Bob Dole of Kansas, who had called for a special counsel, told reporters today: "I don't know Robert Fiske, but my reaction is to wait and see what happens. They've chosen someone. That's what we asked them to do."

"As far as I know, people who

know him think he is extremely well-qualified, is independent. He has some Republican leanings," Dole said, adding: "Some of the conservative Republicans have not been happy with him."

Fiske ran the U.S. attorney's office for the Southern District of New York in Manhattan from 1976 to 1980.

Fiske said he would conduct the investigation as quickly as possible, but could not set a timetable. He said he would hire his own legal team to conduct the investigation and also planned to meet with Justice Department lawyers who have been conducting a government investigation of Whitewater and its dealings with a failed Little Rock savings and loan, Madison Guaranty.

Russian finance minister quits

MOSCOW — A key reformer quit as Russia's finance minister Thursday after President Boris Yeltsin appointed a new Cabinet dominated by conservatives opposed to rapid economic reforms.

"I have no intention of staying in the government," Boris Fyodorov said at a news conference.

Fyodorov, who has earned the confidence of Western leaders and the International Monetary Fund, had been asked to stay as finance minister.

He was the most important reformer remaining in the government after the resignation Sunday of First Deputy Prime Minister Yegor Gaidar, widely considered the architect of Yeltsin's economic reforms.

Fyodorov said he had offered to stay in the Cabinet if State Bank Chair-

man Viktor Gerashchenko and Deputy Prime Minister Alexander Zaveruykha were removed, but this demand was not met.

Fyodorov is an advocate of tight credit policies to fight inflation. Reformers blame Gerashchenko and Zaveruykha for huge low-interest loans to state farms and enterprises that sent inflation soaring last year.

Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin announced Thursday that both Gerashchenko and Zaveruykha would remain in the Cabinet, while most of Russia's bold young reformers were removed or demoted.

Chernomyrdin told reporters that "the period of market romanticism has ended" and that the reforms must be moderated to "make people's lives easier."

Job report shows negative sign

WASHINGTON — The number of Americans filing initial jobless claims surged 23,000 to the highest level in six months, the government reported Thursday, demonstrating that the nation's job market remains as volatile as ever.

The Labor Department said a seasonally adjusted 380,000 people filed claims for the first time during the week ending Jan. 15, up from a revised 357,000 the previous week.

It was the steepest increase reported since July 24, 1992, when 395,000 people sought unemployment compensation for the first time.

Job losses were reported in construction, textile and service industries, but there were no broad-based

layoffs to provide a conclusive explanation for the steep rise.

Most economists had predicted a sizable decline in the number of initial claims to about 340,000 after the previous week's 3,000 increase.

The four-week moving average of initial jobless claims also posted an increase, rising 12,500 to 346,000.

Economists pay more attention to that figure because it is less volatile than the weekly number and is considered a more accurate measure of hiring trends.

The job market has shown wide fluctuations for months, but economists still insist that the job market is steadily improving, with most new hires coming in smaller companies.

President still striving to deliver

WASHINGTON — A year ago today, President Clinton used his inaugural address to package a long list of campaign promises into a simple, guiding theme: "We pledge an end to the era of deadlock and drift, and a new season of American renewal."

Clinton can look back at the one-year mark with satisfaction at the promises he kept — from signing the family leave, motor voter and Brady handgun control laws to creating a new national service program, turning Reaganomics on its head and reversing the anti-abortion policies of successive Republican administrations.

Beyond the specifics, even Clinton's harshest critics concede he has tried to deliver on his campaign and inaugural calls for a more activist and diverse government.

He intervened to end an airline strike, got the warring parties in the Northwest's timber vs. owl dispute to the bargaining table and named a record number of women and minorities to his Cabinet and other senior jobs.

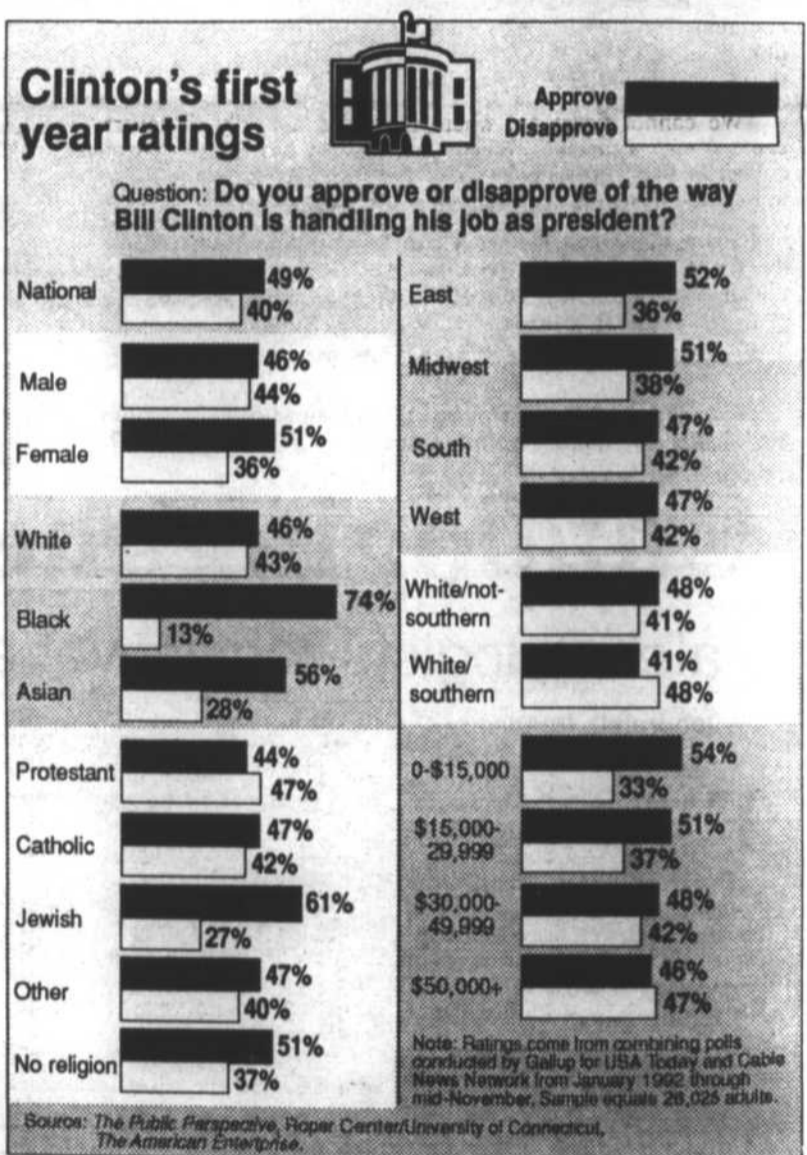
But the president's track record is not without bruises, blemishes and considerable compromise.

Sober budget realities swallowed Clinton's middle class tax cut, pared the spending increases promised for Head Start and whittled down the scope of his plan to make college money available to every American regardless of income.

Political realities also took their toll, compromising if not killing many of Clinton's promises, as well as changing the president himself.

His campaign pledge to open the military to homosexuals became a muddled "don't ask, don't tell" compromise that left neither side happy. His fellow Democrats held hostage Clinton's hope for a line-item veto. And bickering among lawmakers in both parties kept any campaign finance reforms from reaching Clinton's desk in the first year.

And as a newcomer on the global stage, Clinton quickly found he could not deliver on a few specific promises he had made about world affairs. His harsh rhetoric about the civil strife in Bosnia never escalated into the tougher actions he promised as a candidate. Haitian boat people were turned away despite candidate Clinton's promise to accept them. Jean-Bertrand Aristide remained a refugee in America de-



Source: The Public Perspective, Roper Center/University of Connecticut, The American Enterprise.

spite Clinton's pledge to restore the deposed Haitian leader.

Clinton kept some promises that translated into foreign policy successes.

He had pledged to overcome deep opposition in his Democratic Party and enact the North American Free Trade Agreement, and he did. And part of his promise to help the economy at home was to somehow settle the global trade talks known as GATT. He did that, too, ending a seven-year stalemate.

Because he pushed on so many fronts in his first year, both his boosters and critics have plenty of ammunition when it comes to assessing

Clinton's commitment to his promises.

"The problem with his promises is they always sound great," said the Republican National Committee chairman, Haley Barbour. "But what he does often has nothing in common with what he says."

But Clinton's first year closed with the economy on the upswing — inflation at a record low, the unemployment rate creeping lower and a sluggish housing market showing signs of life.

"The fundamental promise was to get the economy moving again," said Stephanopoulos. "That was a commitment kept."

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