

Clinton nominates Perry to fill defense position

WASHINGTON — Filling an embarrassing gap in his national security team, President Clinton promoted the Pentagon's No. 2 man to defense secretary Monday. He called William J. Perry "a real pro," a man "you can depend on."

The reaction from Congress was enthusiastic, with predictions Perry would win easy confirmation. Though he is little known to the general public, senators dealing with military issues are familiar with him from frequent testimony at hearings.

Seemingly a reluctant warrior, Perry said he told the White House Saturday he could not say yes at that point because "I did not want to drive my family into a decision - my decision - without their support."

After a talk with Vice President Al Gore and then a meeting with family members, he telephoned the White House on Sunday to say he would accept an offer if one were forthcoming.

"I did not have to be persuaded to take this job," Perry said.

Perry, 66, would replace outgoing Secretary Les Aspin, who announced his resignation under pressure from the White House last month. Clinton's

first choice to take Aspin's place, Bobby Inman, withdrew last week in a news conference filled with complaints about attacks from columnists and lawmakers.

Despite Inman's shocker - and comments from a handful of other job prospects that they were not interested - Clinton said hiring a new Pentagon chief was easy.

"It wasn't hard to fill," Clinton said. "I asked Secretary Perry and he said, 'Yes.'"

Perry, who also served in President Carter's Pentagon, is a former engineering professor and mathematician, a key early supporter of stealth technology who was later proven right. Unlike Clinton, he is also an Army veteran, perhaps positioned to help his commander-in-chief improve relations with military leaders and wrestle with a shrinking Pentagon budget.

Republican as well as Democratic senators were quick to praise the nominee.

"A great choice ... a real professional with depth of experience," said Sen. Joseph Lieberman, D-Conn., a member of the Senate Armed Services Committee.

"I have worked well with Dr. Perry in the past and he has done a good job," said Sen. Strom Thurmond of South Carolina, the ranking Republican on the committee.

Clinton said he made the choice "based on his lifetime of accomplishments and his solid leadership at the Pentagon."

"He has the right skills and management experience for the job. He has the right vision for the job," said Clinton, who credited Perry with being on the "cutting edge of defense issues."

Clinton predicted Perry would reform Pentagon spending procedures, keep a tight reign on the shrinking defense budget and maintain the nation's strong military force.

He said many people have told him, "Bill Perry is real pro - you can depend on him."

Crime, health care top address

WASHINGTON — President Clinton fine-tuned and practiced his first State of the Union address Monday, a speech aides said would emphasize the need to move this year on health care, anti-crime and worker retraining legislation.



President Bill Clinton

"He's still thinking themes" even though he has been through at least five drafts, an aide said.

In the nationally broadcast speech to a joint House-Senate session Tuesday night, Clinton will reach out to middle-class Americans with a strong pitch for federal action against crime while trying to rekindle interest in his universal health-care plan.

Senate Republican Leader Bob

Dole of Kansas will deliver a Republican response, his office announced.

Although health care remains the prime priority of Clinton in his second year, polls suggest that crime may be outpacing it as the major concern of most Americans.

"He won't be laying out the specifics of any new policy," said White House press secretary Dee Dee Myers.

"He'll be talking about health care, why that's important; crime, and how that affects us and what we need to do about it; welfare reform, a little further down in his speech, but not because it's less important. And he'll talk about his accomplishments from last year."

The president spent several hours working on the latest draft of the measure after getting past the major event of the day: announcing his selection of William Perry to succeed Les Aspin as defense secretary.

Although Clinton's economic speech to Congress last February had many of the trappings of a State of the Union address, Tuesday's address will be his first official one.

Although presidents rarely announce major policy initiatives in a State of the Union address, Clinton's aides were portraying this as a pivotal one designed to build support for his second-year initiatives.

The nation's improving economy and Clinton's recent improvements in public-opinion polls have allowed the flexibility to move beyond the economic proposals that were the cornerstone of his presidential campaign.

In addition to health care, crime and welfare reform, the president is expected to stress "worker retraining and lifetime learning and...ideas about re-employment," Myers said.

Colombian officials search for gunmen

APARTADO, Colombia — Felix Rodriguez stood trembling outside the morgue.

"Why did they kill my son?" he asked a reporter.

The 17-year-old youth was one of at least 33 people gunned down as they danced and drank in the street early Sunday.

It was the worst massacre in five years in a country where 200 people died the past 12 months in political violence in this region of northern Colombia.

Hours later the victims lay piled atop each other in the small morgue of this steamy, banana-growing town. Family members, moaning and crying, waited outside.

The shack-lined, rutted dirt road where people were partying hours before was a scene of blood stains buzzed by flies, overturned chairs,

empty bottles of booze and terrified residents.

No one claimed responsibility for the massacre. Government officials blamed leftist rebels. But several other massacres in Colombia initially blamed on rebels turned out to have been committed by army troops or right-wing death squads.

President Cesar Gaviria held an emergency security council meeting, then clamped a dusk-to-dawn curfew, prohibited the sale of alcohol and the carrying of weapons in Apartado, 300 miles northwest of Bogota.

Gaviria promised to send more soldiers and issued a \$625,000 reward for information leading to the arrests of guerrilla leaders.

Survivors denied government reports the street party had followed a rally at the same site for the Hope, Peace and Freedom party.



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Court limits anti-abortion protests

WASHINGTON — Abortion rights advocates may use a federal racketeering law to sue protesters who block women's access to abortion clinics, the Supreme Court ruled unanimously Monday. The ruling threatens Operation Rescue and other anti-abortion groups with financial ruin.

The decision, while focused only on interpreting a federal law, is a big victory for the National Organization for Women, which took the case to the high court, and for the Clinton administration.

Lower courts had thrown out NOW's nationwide class-action lawsuit that invoked the anti-racketeering law against Operation Rescue and other groups. Monday's decision reinstated that lawsuit.

Wendy Wright, a spokeswoman for Operation Rescue, called the decision "a complete travesty of justice. The Supreme Court justices obviously do not understand how far-reaching this case is."

"This opens the floodgates for RICO to be used against anybody who uses free speech in a way that offends somebody else, or freedom of religion or freedom of assembly."

Eve Paul of Planned Parenthood said, "We're delighted. NOW has to go back and establish the facts, that there were criminal acts. I'm sure NOW will be able to do that."

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—Wright Operation Rescue spokeswoman

However, the ruling falls far short of resolving all legal issues surrounding anti-abortion activities.

Just last Friday, the high court agreed to clarify — by July — how far courts and local governments may go in restricting protesters outside abortion clinics.

That case pits the free-speech rights of anti-abortion protesters against the rights of women seeking abortions and of abortion clinic employees to be free from harassment, intimidation and other illegal conduct.

The court in 1992 reaffirmed the core holding of its landmark Roe vs. Wade decision of 1973 — that women have a constitutional right to abortion.

The focus of Monday's ruling was more on illegal conduct than on peaceful protest outside abortion clinics, and whether such conduct can lead to lawsuits under the federal Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations

Act, called RICO.

Writing for the court, Chief Justice William H. Rehnquist said RICO can be invoked to sue over ideologically motivated crimes, not just economically motivated crimes.

Under RICO, a pattern of racketeering amounts to two or more "predicate acts" from a long list of underlying crimes, including extortion. NOW's lawsuit alleges that a coalition of anti-abortion groups are engaging in extortion by use of harassment, assault, destruction of property and other illegal acts.

In his opinion, Rehnquist said, "We granted (review) to determine whether RICO requires proof that either the racketeering enterprise or the predicate acts of racketeering were motivated by an economic purpose. We hold that RICO requires no such economic motive."

Judge rules Packwood must turn over diaries

WASHINGTON — A federal judge ruled Monday that Sen. Bob Packwood must turn over his diaries to the Senate Ethics Committee, which is investigating allegations of sexual misconduct, obstruction and witness intimidation.

U.S. District Judge Thomas Penfield Jackson acknowledged that

the material sought by the committee was "extremely personal and private in nature."

But he said the committee, which subpoenaed the diaries, will review the materials in a manner that "respects Senator Packwood's legitimate expectations of privacy and is, therefore, reasonable" un-

der the Fourth Amendment to the Constitution.

Jackson also said Packwood enjoyed "no Fifth Amendment privilege against self-incrimination."

Jackson set a hearing for Thursday to decide procedures for the diaries to be provided. The diaries currently are in the court's custody.

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