

Mitchell withdraws from court search

WASHINGTON — President Clinton's Supreme Court search was scrambled Tuesday as Senate Majority Leader George Mitchell abruptly withdrew from consideration. Mitchell said he was convinced health care reform, and I don't want to do anything to detract from that," Mitchell said.

promise to shepherd health care reform through the Senate this year. Congress has "a rare opportunity" to enact "comprehensive, meaningful health care reform and I don't want to do anything to detract from that," Mitchell said. Mitchell served briefly as a federal judge in his native Maine, and his political skills were viewed as an important asset on a court narrowly divided on many controversial issues.

Solicitor General Drew S. Days III is another contender along with two federal appeals court judges, Richard Arnold of Arkansas and Amalya Kearse of New York. They were described as the "most active" prospects from a list of a dozen compiled by Clinton's search team. Administration officials said it was possible Clinton could suggest or request new names, and not out of the question that he might look for another political figure. Clinton advisers said a firm timetable for filling the vacancy had not been established, but it would be only

a few weeks at most. Cabranes, Days, Kearse and Arnold also were on Clinton's initial list last year. Cabranes, 53, a native of Puerto Rico, was also considered during the Bush administration. He was recently passed over by the White House for an appeals court vacancy. Administration officials said he was a top contender, and some Clinton political advisers not involved in the search said naming Cabranes could give the president a boost with the fast-growing population of Hispanic voters. Arnold, 58, is a moderate who has

been repeatedly praised by Clinton in conversations with friends, associates and key senators about Supreme Court prospects. However, Clinton may be reluctant to turn to a fellow Arkansan. Kearse, who has a moderate to liberal judicial record, was mentioned frequently early in Clinton's search a year ago before falling from contention. If chosen, she would be the first black woman named to the court. Days, 52, is among the administration's highest ranking black officials. As solicitor general, his job is to argue the administration's views before the Supreme Court, and the position has served as a springboard in the past.

Rebels surround Kigali as foreign refugees flee

KIGALI, Rwanda — Amid the crash of mortar fire, French and Belgian paratroopers evacuated the last large group of foreign refugees Tuesday as a major rebel force began pushing into Kigali from the north. With the advance of the rebels, tensions in the capital were extremely high. A trip through the outskirts gave the impression of an entire city primitively at arms. The roadsides were lined with Hutu men, some dressed in new, warm winter coats apparently looted from stores, others barefoot and armed with clubs, machetes, axes and makeshift spears and bows-in-arrow. "They are afraid of the rebels, and I don't blame them," said Guy Steimes, a Belgian businessman. "The rebels call themselves the Rwandan Patriotic Front, but they'll probably start killing Hutus, just like the presidential guard killed Tutsis." An estimated 20,000 people have been slain in a week of violence. Ten Belgian soldiers taking part in a U.N. peacekeeping operation died during the first day of fighting, which was sparked by a plane crash Wednesday at Kigali's airport that killed the presidents of Rwanda and Burundi. Six Belgian civilians and at least three French also have been killed.

The dispute is decades-long, reflecting the enmity between the Hutus, who dominate the government and comprise 90 percent of the country's 8.5 million people, and the Tutsis, who make up 9 percent of the population. Two rebel battallions of about 500 men each pushed into Kigali late Tuesday and had the airport nearly surrounded. One group moved east and then south of the airport, as the other tried to cut off the main road running west from the airport to the city. They hadn't succeeded by nightfall, said Col. Marc Emonts-Gast, a Belgian military spokesman. Mortar and recoil-less rifle blasts shook the airport all afternoon. The airport has been turned into an operating base for French and Belgian troops, as well as journalists. French TV journalists slept Tuesday night on conveyor belts at the international check-in desk. U.N. spokesman Joe Sills in New York said the rebels and government forces have agreed in writing not to interfere with the evacuation of foreigners. Sills and other officials were unable to confirm reports that members of the interim government had fled a hotel in Kigali where they had holed up for days.

Rwanda unrest

Fighting was reported Monday between the Rwandan army and rebels outside the capital, Kigali. The fighting broke out after the deaths of the presidents of Rwanda and Burundi in a plane crash five days earlier. The rebel group, the Rwandese Patriotic Front, is made up of members of the Tutsi ethnic group who were driven from Rwanda to Uganda in the 1960s and '70s by the Hutu-dominated government.



Clinton takes firm stance on air strikes in Bosnia

WASHINGTON — President Clinton said American-led air attacks against Bosnia's Serbs may extend beyond the Muslim enclave of Gorazde to five other "safe areas" in Bosnia. "I wouldn't rule anything out," Clinton said. The president, talking with reporters in the Cabinet Room Tuesday, said U.S. warplanes are at the disposal of the U.N. commander, British Lt. Gen. Sir Michael Rose, if he feels U.N. personnel are threatened. "We're working very closely with Gen. Rose, and he's got a very aggressive view of his role, which I think is good," Clinton said. He spoke with the press as he opened a meeting with Democratic and Republican leaders of Congress on Bosnia and the legislative agenda. After two days of NATO air strikes on Serb troops, there were indications from Gorazde that the town's Muslim defenders were firing at Serbs in an attempt to provoke a response, which could bring more NATO air raids. "We have cautioned the Bosnian government forces not to try to take advantage of this and violate the understandings themselves," Clinton said. "And Gen. Rose has been very firm on that this morning." Clinton said he had assured Russian President Boris Yeltsin, who objected to the attacks, "that we have no interest in using NATO's air power to affect the outcome of the war, but we do want to protect the U.N. mandate, and we do want a negotiation. And I think that's what we're going to get." "Every time we have been firm ... in the end it's been a winner for the peace process, and I think it will be here," the president said.

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He said until the Serb assault on Gorazde, "I thought we were getting pretty close, not just to a cease-fire, but perhaps to a cessation of hostilities and a real serious bargaining position. We could get back there in a hurry." The rationale for NATO's strikes was that about a dozen U.N. peacekeepers in the town could be in danger if Serb shelling was not halted. The NATO attacks also aimed to hammer the Serbs back into negotiations on an overall settlement of the two-year war in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The bombing of the Serbs serves to erode any claim of neutrality by the Clinton administration or NATO. But Vice President Al Gore maintained Monday that "it is not an abandonment of neutrality when you defend the peace process against those who are violating it and aiming artillery shells at the peacekeepers." "Gorazde was declared a United Nations safe area and there was a clear understanding on the part of everyone that an offensive by the Serbs into this area would be met with forceful resistance, and it has been and that's proper," Gore said on NBC.

Snow causes power outage across state

Power lines were draped across a highway, closing a 12-mile stretch, and more than a dozen western Nebraska communities remained without electricity Tuesday after heavy snow and ice dragged down lines and snapped utility poles. Utility officials said it could be days before the lights are back on in some areas. "The snow is just so heavy, it was like putting a plaster cast on every wire," said Charlie Brogan, program director at Lexington radio station KRVN. The storm that dumped as much as a foot of snow on parts of Nebraska Monday lingered in the eastern half of

the state Tuesday. Schools closed. Roads closed. Children built April snowmen. At the height of the storm, about half of the state was affected and about 200,000 people were without power, said Sharon Soltero, a Nebraska Public Power District spokeswoman in Columbus. Power was restored to major cities but remained out Tuesday in mostly rural areas, including Lexington, a south-central Nebraska city of about 7,000. Counties hardest hit included Lincoln, Hayes, Hitchcock, Red Willow, Frontier, Furnas, Gosper, Dawson, Custer, Valley, Sherman, Buffalo,

Phelps and Kearney, NPPD officials said. Light rain and snow persisted Tuesday in central areas of Nebraska and drizzle fell in the east, the National Weather Service said. But sunshine increased in the west, and highs ranged from the upper 60s in the west to the mid- to upper 30s in the east. Partly sunny skies were expected Wednesday with highs in the 70s in the west and the 60s in the east. Clouds could return to the state Wednesday night, and it could rain Thursday, with highs Thursday from the upper 50s in the west to near 70 in the southeast.

New York Times wins three more Pulitzers

NEW YORK — The New York Times added three Pulitzers to boost its collection to 69 on Tuesday in a contest that honored gut-wrenching photographs and stories about violence against women and victims of radiation. The Times won its first Pulitzer for photography in addition to prizes for features and spot news. The Chicago Tribune claimed two, for editorials on child abuse and science writing. "We were kind of hoping for more than one," said Max Frankel, the Times' retiring executive editor. "It's my last as editor. What a way to go!" Edward Albee ended a nearly 20-year drought of commercial and artistic recognition, capturing the 1994 Pulitzer in drama for "Three Tall Women." The play, which reopened off-Broadway on Tuesday night, grew out of Albee's stormy relationship with his mother — "an exorcising of demons," he said. The other arts winners were E. Annie Proulx, fiction; former Wash-

ington Post reporter David Remnick, general non-fiction; biographer David Levering Lewis; poet Yusef Komunyakaa; and composer Gunther Schuller. No history award was given. The 1994 journalism winners captured America's conscience: gut-wrenching photos from foreign lands and stories that sought to right wrongs against women, children and victims of government. The national reporting prize went to Eileen Welsome of The Albuquerque (N.M.) Tribune for her stories about Americans unwittingly used in government plutonium experiments a half-century ago. She spent years tracking down the story after learning of brief government reports. "I hope the Pulitzer will be an inspiration to all newspapers, big and small, and to the public who are out there just like us trying to batter down the stubborn bureaucratic walls," said Welsome, who was in New York to receive a Polk award for the same series.

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