

GOP recasts anti-crime bill

WASHINGTON — Methodically recasting last year's crime bill, the House voted unanimously Tuesday to entitle victims to restitution and looked ahead to more contentious measures to strengthen the hand of prosecutors and curb death row appeals.

President Clinton mounted an uphill effort to head off another element of the Republican "Contract With America" that would threaten plans to place 100,000 new police officers on the streets.

Chagrined House Republicans were maneuvered into voting against the Fourth Amendment of the Constitution, with its protection against unreasonable search and seizure. Members of the black caucus sought to substitute it for a GOP plan to allow the use of certain unlawfully obtained evidence, but their bid failed, 303-121.

Democrats conceded that Republicans, with a House majority for the first time in four decades, would ultimately win approval for its crime package over the next several days.

For its part, the Senate neared its first votes on the proposed balanced budget amendment to the Constitution. Republicans said they had the strength to turn aside a Democratic demand that they identify the spending cuts to be

used to erase the federal deficit. But neither side seemed certain of victory when the final vote is taken on the House-passed amendment, probably in two or three weeks.

The "Contract With America," a campaign manifesto blending lower taxes, less government and a stronger emphasis on crime, was moving on several fronts through the House.

One subcommittee announced plans to begin drafting sessions on a welfare reform measure next week, while other panels took testimony on Clinton's budget in advance of drafting a GOP blueprint likely to cut deeply into hundreds of federal programs.

House Republicans have postponed action on the most controversial crime-related measure likely to come before Congress this year. A provision backed by the National Rifle Association — and subject of a veto threat by Clinton — to repeal last year's partial ban on assault-style weapons has been shelved for several weeks. It will be combined with a bill to stiffen penalties for crimes committed with a firearm. By design of the GOP leadership, the first of six crime measures to reach the floor was utterly without controversy, sailing through on a vote of 431-0.

State wants criminals paddled

JACKSON, Miss. — When it comes to punishing scofflaws from graffiti artists to petty thieves, some lawmakers think the best idea is a good, old-fashioned spanking.

Of several states that have considered the idea, Mississippi has gone the furthest. The state House adopted a bill Monday that would allow judges to order paddlings instead of going to prison.

The legislation does not spell out how, when, where or by whom the punishment would be administered. It would not apply to the most serious crimes, like murder or rape.

"We have been packing them in the (prisons) by the thousands and still there's no end," said Rep. Steve Holland, a Democrat who pushed the proposal through. "I think this is a

strong policy statement against crime."

Opponents believe it is more: unconstitutionally cruel, humiliating, and uncomfortably reminiscent of the whippings doled out to slaves and the beatings endured by civil rights demonstrators.

The last state to whip a criminal was Delaware, which flogged a man who broke into a house and beat a woman in 1952. It abolished the punishment 20 years later. In 1989, a state senator proposed whipping drug dealers, but the bill never came to a vote.

The idea took hold again after American teen-ager Michael Fay was flogged in Singapore last May for vandalism.

Another juror replaced in OJ trial

LOS ANGELES — Another juror in the O.J. Simpson trial was replaced Tuesday, and the judge sternly warned the newly reconstituted jury not to discuss anything in the case — not even what the lawyers are wearing.

Judge Lance Ito's office said the woman was removed because her arthritis doctor may be called as a witness for Simpson, who claims bad knees and arthritis rendered him incapable of stabbing to death his ex-wife and a friend.

The 63-year-old white juror, a retired legal secretary, was replaced by an alternate, a 54-year-old black man and postal operations manager.

The 12-person jury now has nine blacks, one white and two mixed-race members; there are seven women and five men. Nine alternates remain.

Prosecutors, meanwhile, began presenting witnesses to establish the timeline for the June 12 murders of Nicole Brown Simpson and Ronald Goldman.

Ito did not explain to the rest of the jury why one member was replaced.

The move came after a two-hour private meeting between attorneys and the judge that dealt with what Ito told the jury were "very delicate matters."

Later, in dismissing the jurors for lunch, he elaborated on his usual warning not to discuss the case.

"You are not to discuss how long the case is taking. You're not to discuss what goes on at sidebar," he said. "You're not to discuss the apparel of the attorneys. You're not to discuss the personalities of the courtroom personnel. Anything that is connected with this case, you may not discuss amongst yourselves."

He did not say what prompted the warning.

Two other jurors were dismissed last month without explanation from the judge. But news reports said one, a Hertz employee, had met Simpson during a company function, and the other, a woman, was in an abusive relationship.

"We're down to nine alternates in a trial that has presumably four months to go," said Robert Pugsley, another law professor at Southwestern.

Drug search sets off explosion

PANAMA CITY, Panama — Antinarcotic agents using a blowtorch to cut into a steamroller suspected of containing drugs set off a powerful explosion Monday. At least two people were killed and 23 injured.

The steamroller was found to be stuffed not with drugs but with assault rifles and ammunition.

The explosion rocked a dock at Cristobal, the Atlantic entrance of the Panama Canal, said Hugo Torrijos, director of the National Port Authority.

The steamroller was part of a shipment of road-building machinery headed for Ecuador, Torrijos said. That country is in the midst of a 2-week-old border war with Peru.

Drug agents suspected the steamroller had drugs concealed in a wheel

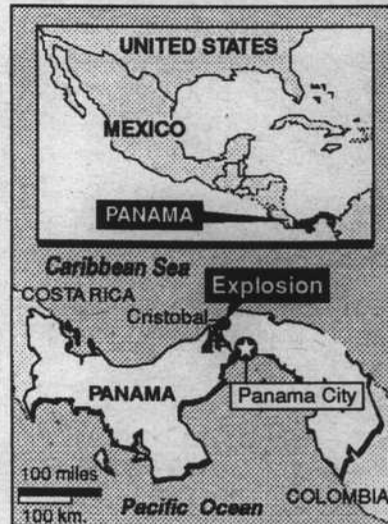
and were drilling into it with the blowtorch when the explosion occurred, Torrijos said.

Witnesses said there was at first one small explosion, followed by smoke, then a second huge blast.

Two vehicles parked nearby were destroyed, as well as a small office building and a concrete wall a few yards away.

Torrijos said the two people killed, a man and a woman, worked at the port. The wounded included police officers, drug agents and office workers. Three of the injured were in serious condition.

Port security director Blas Velasquez said firefighters found 90 Soviet-style AK47 assault rifles and ammunition when they tore open a second wheel.



AP/Alex Sibirny

News... in a Minute

Aristide lauds inauguration date

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti — For the first time, President Jean-Bertrand Aristide celebrated the anniversary of his 1991 inauguration in his own country on Tuesday.

Still, despite the adulation he still commands, some of Aristide's own supporters say his government has done nothing for them.

Thousands of schoolchildren crowded the lawn of the national palace for the ceremony. Civilian marching bands played. The only military uniforms in sight were those of U.S. soldiers providing security.

"Democracy for us Haitians is gold," Aristide, wearing a presidential sash of red, blue and gold, told the crowd. "Today, we are fighting for gold."

Aristide, who took office Feb. 7, 1991, was ousted seven months later in a military coup and spent the next three years in exile in the United States.

Jewish group wants PJs pulled

PARIS — A Jewish group today demanded a fashion designer withdraw striped pajamas that it says resemble death camp uniforms worn by Holocaust victims.

"The pajamas, worn by an emaciated model, evoke images of a nightmare. It is shocking," said Serge Cwajgenbaum, secretary general of the European Jewish Congress.

The pajamas, by Japanese designer Rei Kawabuko, were presented two weeks ago at the "Comme des Garçons" men's fall and winter collection.

Cwajgenbaum said he "took note" of a letter from "Comme des Garçons" house director Adrien Joffe. He quoted it as saying that Kawabuko would "in the future be more attentive to the possible interpretations of her creations."

A spokeswoman for the Jewish group indicated later that the pajamas would be pulled from the designer's collection.

There was no immediate confirmation from "Comme des Garçons."

19 indicted of military theft

PHILADELPHIA — Federal agents set up a fake scrap dealership for a sting operation that netted 19 people accused of walking off with hundreds of thousands of dollars worth of equipment from military facilities.

Authorities announced indictments today against 18 uniformed and civilian defense employees, plus an ammunition dealer who is also accused of defrauding a program to give military surplus goods to non-profit groups.

The indictments said the men stole \$600,000 worth of items such as shell casings, sewing machines, a dump truck and computers from the Philadelphia Naval Shipyard, the Naval Air Station in suburban Willow Grove and the Defense Personnel Support Center.

Among the items were bolts made of a special alloy that cost taxpayers \$50 a piece but were sold for scrap at \$1.25 a pound, said Robert J. Sotack, special agent in the Naval Criminal Investigative Service.

The three-year undercover sting operation was run by that agency and the FBI. Agents operated an undercover scrap business in South Philadelphia where uniformed, active military personnel showed up to sell stolen goods, authorities said.

Charges against many of the defendants include unauthorized sale of government property, conspiracy and theft of government property.

Simpson Jury

Judge Lance Ito Tuesday dismissed a juror who has the same arthritis doctor as O.J. Simpson. The makeup of the jury:

Men	Women
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● 52-year-old married man, half American Indian and half white, high school teacher● 32-year-old single man, half Hispanic and half black, delivery man● 46-year-old married black man, courier● 43-year-old married black man, marketing representative	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● 50-year-old divorced black woman, vendor● 25-year-old single black woman, flight attendant● 37-year-old married black woman, post office employee● 38-year-old married black woman, employment counselor● 38-year-old single black woman, environmental health specialist● 52-year-old divorced black woman, clerk● 22-year-old single white woman, handles insurance claims
<p>Added</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● 54-year-old married black man, postal worker	<p>Removed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● 63-year-old married white woman, retired legal secretary
<p>Alternates: The pool of alternate jurors has now shrunk from 12 to nine. They include one black man, four black women, three white women and one Hispanic woman.</p>	

Daily Nebraskan

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472-1766
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FAX NUMBER 472-1761
The Daily Nebraskan (USPS 144-080) is published by the UNL Publications Board, Nebraska Union 34, 1400 R St., Lincoln, NE 68588-0448, Monday through Friday during the academic year; weekly during summer sessions.
Readers are encouraged to submit story ideas and comments to the Daily Nebraskan by phoning 472-1763 between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. Monday through Friday. The public also has access to the Publications Board. For information, contact Tim Hedegaard, 436-9258.
Subscription price is \$50 for one year. Postmaster: Send address changes to the Daily Nebraskan, Nebraska Union 34, 1400 R St., Lincoln, NE 68588-0448. Second-class postage paid at Lincoln, NE.
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