



Gates buys large photo archive

BELLEVUE, Wash. — Microsoft Chairman Bill Gates has bought The Bettman Archive, one of the world's largest photo collections, for his privately-held digital media company.

Corbis Corp., said Tuesday that it acquired Bettman's 16 million photos, including the entire United Press International collection and other news and historical material, from the Kraus Organization Ltd. for an undisclosed sum.

The purchase represents a major advance in Gates' efforts to create a huge bank of images available to consumers for a licensing fee. It also raises questions about who, ultimately, will control the world's visual history.

Hurricane heads to Mexican resorts

MERIDA, Mexico — Tourists fled beachfront hotels on the Yucatan Peninsula by the thousands Tuesday, but honeymooners and hardy souls hunkered down as Hurricane Roxanne marched toward Mexico's Caribbean resorts.

Roxanne, the 10th hurricane of the busy Atlantic storm season, threatened to turn into one of the worst storms since Hurricane Gilbert swept through the Caribbean in 1989, killing 300 people.

As night fell in Merida, the streets became mostly abandoned. The only businesses open were grocery stores filled with people buying candles, batteries and purified water.

The hurricane formed Monday in warm Caribbean waters and gained strength rapidly over two days, taking aim at palm-studded beaches with sustained 115-mph winds.

"Please be careful. This is a dangerous storm," warned meteorologist Fiona Horsfall at the U.S. National Hurricane Center in Miami.

Probe of Amtrak derailment focuses on 'Sons of Gestapo'

HYDER, Ariz. — FBI agents hunting the saboteur who derailed an Amtrak train worked Tuesday to determine whether the "Sons of Gestapo" is really an anti-government terrorist group or just someone with a grudge against the railroad.

Fifty-five miles away in downtown Phoenix, authorities found a device capable of derailing a train placed on a track. The FBI refused to discount the possibility it was a second sabotage attempt.

The FBI expanded its painstaking search for evidence to a mile-square area surrounding the gulch where the Sunset Limited lurched off a damaged track and asked the public for help finding the culprit.

The train jumped the tracks at the damaged section early Monday, toppling 30 feet from a bridge, killing a crew member and injuring at least 78 people.

A letter found at the scene mentioned federal raids on right-wing extremists at Waco, Texas, and Ruby Ridge, Idaho. It was signed "Sons of Gestapo," raising fears the sabotage was the work of anti-government extremists.

A passenger who saw one version of the note said Tuesday that it didn't specifically claim responsibility for the derailment, was written in a sort of verse and gave the impression the writer "wanted to be some sort of poetic martyr."

"It was a lot of gibberish. It started out with something about women and

children praying as it gets dark, then it talked about how they didn't have any electricity," said Michelle Cruz, a psychiatric nurse from Sacramento, Calif., who saw the letter about 8 to 10 feet from the coach, held down by a rock. The FBI was mentioned along with other government agencies she couldn't recall.

There apparently are several versions of the letter, said Gov. Fife Symington, who said he has read one version. He wouldn't talk about what it said, except to say he was told there were multiple versions that were "comparable in terms of content."

FBI officials held a brief news conference six miles from the scene Tuesday, but offered little insight into the investigation called Operation Splitrail, refusing to comment about the letter.

With about 90 agents on the scene, Larry McCormick, acting special agent in charge of the Phoenix office, said he believed it was the bureau's second-biggest crime scene investigation after the Oklahoma City bombing.

"We are going to pursue every bit of evidence and every lead very thoroughly ... until we find the person or persons who committed this crime," said U.S. Attorney Janet Napolitano.

Acting on a tip from a trucker who heard a noise and saw two men acting suspiciously around a Southern Pacific track in downtown Phoenix, police Tuesday recovered a device used in rail yards that can derail a train.

The so-called derailer — two heavy pieces of metal with a hinge between — is normally used to get trains back on the rails, but could have caused a derailment if a train had come by, said Mike Furtney, spokesman for Southern Pacific Railroad in San Francisco.

"It wouldn't absolutely derail a train, but I'm glad we found it before we found out if it would have worked," Furtney said.

The FBI was looking into the matter and wouldn't rule out the possibility that it was related to the derailment, said agent Al Davidson.

However, he noted that the derailer is a standard piece of railroad equipment, while the derailment was caused by sabotaging rails; the derailer was on a line used by freight rather than passenger trains; and "copycats come out of the woodwork when things like this happen."

The Amtrak case was put under the supervision of Assistant FBI Director Robert Bryant, who runs the bureau's national security division, according to a senior Justice Department official who spoke to The Associated Press in Washington on condition of anonymity. The division handles terrorism cases.

"Bryant's national security division has the case because it has the potential to become a terrorism case, but we have not reached any conclusions yet whether terrorism is the motive or not," the source said.

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Banning laws for homosexuals makes some justices skeptical

WASHINGTON — Colorado's solicitor general ran into skeptical questions from several Supreme Court justices Tuesday when he argued the state's citizens have the right to prohibit laws that protect homosexuals from discrimination.

"I would like to know whether in all of U.S. history there has ever been anything like this," Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg told the state's lawyer, Timothy M. Tymkovich, who asked the high court to reinstate the ban.

Tymkovich did not provide a specific example. But he argued that voters have the right to bar all state and local laws giving homosexuals "special protection" from bias in housing, employment and public accommodations.

The case is the most important involving homosexual rights to come before the court in nearly 10 years.

In a 1992 referendum, 53.4 percent of Colorado voters approved the amendment to the state's constitution. But the Colorado Supreme Court invalidated the amendment before it could take effect, saying it denied homosexuals an equal voice in government.

Jean E. Dubofsky, lawyer for the cities and individuals who challenged the amendment, said it denies homosexuals a political right enjoyed by everyone else — the chance to seek protection from discrimination.

Tymkovich said Colorado voters approved

the amendment in response to the success homosexuals had in winning enactment of anti-bias ordinances in Denver, Boulder and Aspen.

But Justice David H. Souter was skeptical. "Why is discrimination against one group dealt with under state law differently than discrimination against other groups?" he asked.

Justice John Paul Stevens added, "What is the rational basis for the people outside of Aspen telling the people in Aspen they cannot have this nondiscrimination provision?"

Justice Antonin Scalia appeared more sympathetic to Tymkovich's argument that ordinances protecting gays against bias constitute special — not equal — protection.

"They are laws that provide special protection to that particular category of person," Scalia said. Other forms of discrimination are not banned, he said, adding that employers can refuse to hire someone "because you don't like the way they comb their hair."

Scalia asked Dubofsky why, if states can outlaw homosexual conduct, Colorado cannot bar legal protections for homosexuals.

The case does not address the morality or legality of homosexuality or gay conduct. But the justices' ruling, expected by July, could indicate their views on the continuing validity of the high court's 1986 ruling that let states outlaw consensual homosexual conduct.

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