

## Chechen rebels free all 2,000 hostages

MOSCOW — Chechen rebels freed all 2,000 hostages they seized in southern Russia, a news agency reported Wednesday.

The Interfax news agency said the rebel guerrillas released the captives, which included men, women and children held all day in a hospital, then left Kizlyar in the neighboring Dagestan republic on 11 buses bound for Chechnya.

No further details were immediately available on the end of the siege, which had left scores dead in fighting Tuesday. Last June, a similar rebel hostage-taking siege in another southern Russian town left more than 100 people dead.

Earlier Tuesday, the Chechen rebels demanded a full Kremlin withdrawal from their secessionist republic where Russian troops had been for 13 months in exchange for the hostages' freedom.

It was not clear why they decided to drop that demand though on Tuesday some Kremlin officials threatened to use force against the guerrillas if talks between the hostage-takers and Dagestan authorities failed to produce results.

The negotiations in Kizlyar, just outside Chechnya in Dagestan, resumed early Wednesday, said Dagestan's deputy interior minister, Gennady Shpigun.

In talks earlier, the rebels had demanded buses and passage to Gudermes, the second-largest town in Chechnya, Shpigun told Interfax.

Officials in Dagestan said Tuesday night that rebel demands were changing constantly, except that of a Russian withdrawal. Other demands were said to include direct talks between the Kremlin and rebel leader Dzhokhar Dudayev and the resignation of the Moscow-backed government in Chechnya.

Tuesday's raid on Kizlyar was a copycat version of the June attack in which Chechen separatists seized hundreds of hostages in a hospital in the southern town of Budyonovsk.

At least 100 people died before negotiations won the hostages' release in exchange for the guerrillas' free passage out and peace talks in Chechnya, which have since collapsed.

Moscow poured troops into Chechnya in December 1994 to re-

claim the small southern republic from Dudayev. The war has killed up to 30,000 people, most of them civilians, and uprooted more than 600,000.

The overwhelming military might has given the Kremlin nominal control, but the Russians and their Chechen allies are still facing rebel attacks in and around the borders of Chechnya.

The rebels in Kizlyar were led by 28-year-old Salman Raduyev, Dudayev's son-in-law and once a senior official in Gudermes.

"We can turn this city to hell and ashes," the bearded Raduyev, who sported a green Islamic war band around his forehead, said in an interview broadcast Tuesday evening by Russian TV.

"Budyonovsk and Kizlyar will be repeated again until Russia recognizes Dudayev and the Chechen republic."

Raduyev said his fighters arrived into Kizlyar, a town of 44,000 people about 60 miles northeast of the Chechen capital, Grozny, aboard five trucks and one bus "absolutely without any problems," Interfax reported.

## Budget negotiations suspended for now

WASHINGTON — President Clinton and Republican congressional leaders broke off budget talks Tuesday, adding a new element of doubt to their hunt for a compromise for eliminating the federal deficit by 2002 and cutting taxes.

After nearly two weeks of face-to-face White House negotiations, the two sides said their sessions would pause for a week or more. But they offered divergent interpretations of what the suspension means, bringing new confusion to a year-long battle between Republicans and the administration over paring the size and scope of government.

Clinton was upbeat, telling reporters at a news conference, "A final agreement is clearly within reach."

He said the bargaining would halt until next Wednesday at the latest, and said he had made a new offer to Republicans that narrowed their differences further. But he conceded, "It will require some additional steps to bridge the gaps."

Republicans were less encouraging.

Senate Majority Leader Bob Dole of Kansas and House Speaker Newt Gingrich of Georgia said the talks would recess for about seven to 10 days and said they would await a new offer from Clinton.

"I think it's the president's move," said Dole. "We have some fundamental differences. We have not ironed those out. So they are not narrow differences. They are wide differences. ... If the president or somebody suggests that we come back, we'll be here."

Republican congressional aides, speaking on condition of anonymity, were even more negative, saying the effort to craft a compromise now seemed likely to fail.

"It's a breakdown," said one.

Wall Street agreed. Prices of Treasury bonds tumbled nearly a point and yields soared in late afternoon trading. Regular trading hours in the stock market had ended before the news broke.

The suspension will allow Clinton, Dole and Gingrich time to make political trips as the 1996 election campaigns move into more serious phases. Participants on both sides said that was a factor in their

decision to put the bargaining on hold.

In a last-gasp effort to strike a bargain, Clinton offered to cut \$37 billion deeper into Medicare, Medicaid, welfare and the earned income tax credit over seven years, bargainers said, speaking on condition of anonymity. But that still left Republicans seeking about \$100 billion more in savings from those programs than Clinton wants.

GOP participants said Clinton also proposed boosting the size of his tax cut offer. But they said the latest offer still left the president seeking tax cuts roughly half the amount of the latest Republican proposal.

White House chief of staff Leon Panetta said "the point of greatest friction" in Tuesday's discussion was the size of the tax cuts.

Another failure to reach a compromise would raise the possibility of a third partial federal shutdown starting Jan. 27, when temporary spending authority for many programs lapse and hundreds of thousands of workers could face yet another furlough. The latest three-week shutdown ended over the weekend, and there was a six-day closure in November.

"It is our hope not to" have another shutdown, Gingrich, R-Ga., told reporters, but he shed no light on what Republicans would do to avoid one. A GOP congressional aide said it seemed unlikely that another closure and furlough of workers would occur, saying, "There is a sense that strategically it didn't help us much."

A permanent breakdown of the talks would all but ensure that this year's election campaigns would be dominated by battling over the budget and each party's vision of government. The GOP would accuse Clinton of blocking a balanced budget in defense of bloated, useless programs, and Democrats would countercharge that Republicans heartlessly tried to slash aid to the elderly and needy in order to award tax breaks to the rich.

The last Republican offer was to trim \$328 billion in projected growth from Medicare, Medicaid and welfare over the next seven years, an easing of \$72 billion from their previous offer.

### News in a Minute



#### Violence hinders South African voting

PIETERMARITZBURG, South Africa — The main rivals in violence-wracked KwaZulu-Natal province agree the bloodshed requires urgent attention prior to local government elections scheduled for May.

Officials of the African National Congress and the Inkatha Freedom Party told a news conference Monday that intolerance and easy availability of guns made for a volatile combination.

Inkatha official Philip Powell accused the ANC of using violence to drive away opponents, while an ANC official, Zweli Mkhize, said KwaZulu-Natal appeared to be "sliding into a state of undeclared war."

Inkatha is a Zulu nationalist group that seeks autonomy in the province, which includes the traditional Zulu kingdom, from ANC control. The ANC heads the national government and wants elected governing bodies to replace tribal chiefs as local governing structures in the region.

#### Clinton case may go to trial

WASHINGTON — An Arkansas sexual harassment case against President Clinton can go to trial, a federal appeals court ruled Tuesday, setting the stage for a Supreme Court battle.

Clinton's attorney argued that Clinton should not be questioned under oath on such matters while serving as president. But an appeals panel in St. Louis decided on a 2-1 vote that the case brought by a former Arkansas state employee, Paula Jones, can proceed.

Jones, a former Arkansas employee, alleges that Clinton sexually harassed her during an encounter in a Little Rock hotel suite in 1991. She has said she rejected Clinton's suggestion that they engage in sex.

"The president, like all other government officials, is subject to the same laws that apply to all other members of our society," the court ruled.

#### Woman in coma for decade raped

ROCHESTER, N.Y. — A woman comatose since a 1985 car crash was raped at a nursing home and is five months pregnant, her family's lawyer said Tuesday. The family wants her to give birth, a source said.

Police said several of the nursing home's employees were being investigated for the rape of the woman sometime last August.

They would not say whether they include John Horace, 51, a nurse's aide who is charged with sexually abusing a 49-year-old female resident in September.

#### Abortions of females banned in India

NEW DELHI, India — India has banned abortions of healthy female fetuses, an attempt at eliminating the widespread practice of aborting female fetuses in this male-dominated culture.

For first offenders, the law prescribes imprisonment of three years and a fine of \$300 — two months of an average middle-class salary. Subsequent offenses will draw up to five years in prison and a fine of \$1,500.

Most Indian families prefer sons because they bring parents wealth in the form of dowry. In Hindu families, sons inherit family wealth and light their parents' funeral pyre, opening the way for their souls to go to heaven.

## Grenade hits streetcar in Sarajevo

SARAJEVO, Bosnia-Herzegovina — A grenade blamed on Bosnian Serbs landed in Sarajevo's notorious Sniper Alley on Tuesday, tearing a hole in a streetcar and in Bosnia's tentative peace. One man was killed and at least 19 people were wounded.

The attack was the worst cease-fire violation since an Oct. 12 truce by Bosnia's warring factions, which signed a U.S.-brokered peace agreement Dec. 14.

The White House announced Tuesday that President Clinton would travel to Bosnia this weekend to visit American peacekeeping troops who are part of the 60,000-member NATO-led force enforcing the peace accord.

The attack may have been designed to test the resolve of troops that replaced U.N. forces in the Bosnian capital three weeks ago. It also marred modest celebrations marking the end of one of the few U.N. successes of the Bosnian war — the longest aid airlift in history.

Maj. Peter Bulloch, a spokesman for the NATO-led Implementation Force, or IFOR, confirmed that the lethal grenade was fired from a Serb-held position above the central city.

"The firing came from within Grbavica," a Serb-held suburb, Bulloch said.

The Bosnian Serb news agency, SRNA, denied Serbs were to blame. It cited sources close to rebel leader Radovan Karadzic.

American soldiers traveling in a passing vehicle at the time escaped injury by sheer luck. Their four-seat unarmored Humvee was hit by a fragment of the grenade as it exploded, NATO spokesman Maj. Simon Haselock said late Tuesday.

The 12-inch section, including the grenade's entire tail fin, embedded itself in the left-hand front splash guard of the vehicle, Haselock said. The vehicle was returned to base. He provided no other details.

Bosnian Vice President Ejup Ganic said the government expects "a swift and significant reaction" from NATO.

"This is a test for (NATO). Now is the time to react," Ganic said in a statement to Bosnian state television.

## Clinton vetoes Republican welfare bill

WASHINGTON — President Clinton, just as he promised, on Tuesday vetoed a Republican plan to overhaul the nation's primary welfare programs and end the federal guarantee of aid to the poor.

Clinton complained in his veto message that the Republican bill "does too little to move people from welfare to work," but said he was willing to work with Congress on a new version "to enact real, bipartisan reform."

But Clinton waited until two weeks of White House talks with Republicans broke down Tuesday over ending federal deficits by the year 2002 and simultaneously cutting taxes before taking out his pen for the welfare bill veto.

Republicans saw the bill as restoring the work ethic and binding families closer together. Democrats said they also support those values but complained that the GOP measure took away too much at the expense of children.

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