

Colombian president may face impeachment

BOGOTA, Colombia — In the biggest blow yet to President Ernesto Samper, the public prosecutor presented charges Wednesday that could lead to his impeachment for allegedly accepting drug-tainted cash in his 1994 campaign.

Prosecutor Alfonso Valdivieso issued a formal denunciation of the president, asking that Samper be charged with illicit enrichment, electoral fraud, falsifying documents and complicity.

It was the first time criminal

charges have been formally recommended against Samper, who has been dogged since his August 1994 election by accusations he took \$6 million in campaign contributions from the world's most powerful drug syndicate, the Cali cocaine cartel.

The prosecutor's office also presented the Supreme Court with evidence that could lead to an investigation of Samper's interior minister, Horacio Serpa, for his role in the case, judicial sources said.

Serpa was a key figure in the

Samper campaign.

Flanked by a large security detail, Valdivieso handed 40 file folders worth of documents and two videotapes to the secretary general of the congressional commission charged with investigating the president.

Valdivieso left the congressional office building without speaking to reporters.

Probably the most respected public figure among Colombians, Valdivieso also enjoys the confidence of U.S. officials, who believe him to

be free of the corruption plaguing his country.

Both the prosecutor's office and the commission confirmed Valdivieso's denunciation of the president. Neither would detail the charges he sought, but they were believed to stem from allegations that Samper knowingly received drug money, tampered with campaign ledgers and overspent the legal campaign limit of \$5 million.

Though a milestone in efforts to

force Samper's ouster, the denunciation sets in motion a process that could take weeks or months.

The Commission of Accusations now must decide whether to open a formal investigation against the 45-year-old president, who insists he is innocent and will be cleared.

Samper has refused to heed mounting demands for his resignation, calling the evidence and testimony compiled against him "a chain of lies converted into truths."

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Candidates aim attacks at Buchanan

MILFORD, N.H. — Pat Buchanan's "America first" trade and foreign policy views came under pointed criticism from three Republican presidential rivals Wednesday, attacks the commentator took as proof he was the man to beat in New Hampshire's pivotal primary.

Responding with confident defiance, Buchanan paid a Valentine's Day visit to a rose grower and said the business was being overwhelmed by foreign competition because of trade deals that please Wall Street but punish American workers.

Buchanan also was labeled "too extreme" in a new television ad aired by Senate Majority Leader Bob Dole's campaign. "He can't beat Bill Clinton," says the ad.

Buchanan attributed the Dole attack ad to "a campaign in desperation." Firing a salvo of his own, Buchanan called Dole a "big tax man

who hasn't balanced a budget in his last 25 years in Congress."

That Buchanan was at the center of the day's give-and-take was testament to his rising influence on the Republican race after strong showings in early battles in Louisiana and Iowa. Rival camps suggested Buchanan's positions would be a major focus in a televised candidates debate Thursday night.

"I have won the battle of Mr. Conservative in the Republican Party," Buchanan said on the very day Texas Sen. Phil Gramm withdrew from the race.

Gramm's withdrawal set off a scramble for his support. Most of the senators backing Gramm were likely to go Dole's way, though none did immediately. "I think Senator Dole probably has the best shot of defeating President Clinton," said Arizona Sen. John McCain, who was Gramm's

national campaign chairman.

Ignoring the politicians, Buchanan and former Tennessee Gov. Lamar Alexander made direct appeals to Gramm voters.


In parting, Gramm said he wasn't ready to endorse a candidate. But he also wasn't ready to stop criticizing Buchanan and trade views that Gramm labeled protectionist and anathema to the free-trading Republican Party.

"When the voters speak, I listen," Gramm said in bowing out after back-to-back losses.

Another candidate said he, too, was listening, but hardly ready to call it quits. On his first visit to New Hampshire after placing a distant fourth in Iowa, publishing heir Steve Forbes said he would stop attacking his opponents in television ads and return to a positive message anchored on his plan for a flat tax.

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Billboards

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role in hurting kids."

The Nebraska Dental Association also testified in support of the bill.

Executive Director Tom Bassett told the committee that people were forced to look at the advertisements whether they wanted to or not.

"You can't turn off a billboard, you can't close the cover, or flip to the next page," he said. "It's a form of advertising that stands out as a unique infringement on our sight, our skyline, our streets, highways and our thoughts."

Bassett cited Baltimore as one of the larger U.S. cities to outlaw the billboard advertising.

Opponents say the bill violates the U.S. Constitution.

Bill Peters, a lobbyist for the Tobacco Institute, said it was not only unconstitutional, but the bill violated the federal cigarette and advertising act as well.

"But if they get over that hurdle, which I don't think they will," he said, "it violates the First Amendment."

Peters said he also didn't necessarily agree that the abundant billboard advertisements directly contributed to young people beginning to smoke.

"I see all the gambling signs and hear all the lottery commercials," he said, "and that doesn't lead me to gamble."

Martha Lee Church, vice president and general manager of Imperial Outdoor Advertising, said the bill "went too far."

Church told the committee that her industry already policed itself.

"We have always obeyed the 500-foot rule," she said.

The industry's 500-foot rule states that tobacco advertisements may not be placed within 500 feet of churches, schools, playgrounds, day care centers and cemeteries.

She said her company, which has offices in Lincoln, Omaha and Springfield, Ill., did business based on whether the product was legal.

"We still have the right to refuse service to anyone," she said.

"This bill is wrong because it puts a ban on advertising a legal product," Church said after the hearing.

Sniper bullets hit bus in Bosnia; hopes for peace dwindle

SARAJEVO, Bosnia-Herzegovina — In the morning, the bus seemed headed for a peaceful future — running between Serb- and government-held neighborhoods for the first time since 1992. But it ran into the hatreds that still boil and ended the day riddled with sniper bullets and stained with blood.

An elderly passenger and the bus conductor were wounded in the Wednesday attack, which U.N. aid agency spokesman Kris Janowski called "an outrageous and cowardly attack against civilians carried out by people who oppose the reunification of the city."

The attack was a slap at already-stumbling efforts to reconcile Bosnia's former enemies. Relief workers had hoped the resumption of bus service would lead to the easing of other restrictions on freedom of movement, one of the main requirements of the U.S.-brokered peace accord.

The United States and its allies plan to meet Friday in Rome with three Balkan presidents in an effort to tighten compliance with the accord, a senior American official said in Washington.

U.N. aid agency officials said originally that peace forces had promised to guard the buses, but later acknowledged that the request had been turned down. American soldiers with automatic rifles, flak jackets and helmets rode on the first few buses, but were not present on the bus that was hit.

Daily Nebraskan
Editor J. Christopher Hain, 472-1765
<http://www.unl.edu/DailyNeb/>
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, 436-9253, 9 a.m.-11 p.m.
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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