

Senate committee confirms Albright

Full Senate also expected to approve first woman secretary of state.

WASHINGTON (AP)—The Senate Foreign Relations Committee voted unanimously Monday to confirm Madeleine Albright as the nation's first woman secretary of state. Full Senate approval is expected Wednesday.

The committee met briefly in the Capitol as a throng gathered outside for President Clinton's second inaugural. The 12-0 vote, with six other committee members expected to add their approval later in the day, was the first on new members of Clinton's Cabinet.

Sen. Joseph Biden, D-Del., ranking Democrat on the committee, said he expects the nomination to "sail through the Senate as it did through the committee. This is the first and most visible example of bipartisanship."

Sen. Jesse Helms, R-N.C., committee chairman, has been referring to Albright as "secretary-to-be."

If confirmed as expected, Albright would be the highest-ranking woman ever in the federal government.

The first of President Clinton's second-term Cabinet nominees to go before the Senate, she earned support from many Republicans by advocating U.N. reforms, punitive measures against Cuba and other issues on the GOP agenda.

At a nearly eight-hour confirmation hearing Jan. 8, Albright repeat-

“*This is the first and most visible example of bipartisanship.*”

SEN. JOSEPH BIDEN
committee member

edly challenged Republican lawmakers to provide the money necessary for continued U.S. leadership abroad. She pointedly told them the State Department would not be able to achieve U.S. foreign policy goals "on the cheap."

Following the hearing, members submitted 215 additional questions in writing. Albright replied Friday.

Albright's responses indicated that any differences between her tenure as secretary of state and that of her predecessor, Warren Christopher, would be a matter of style rather than policy.

Because Christopher's resignation was effective with Clinton's swearing-in to a second term today, the post could remain open for a few days. Deputy Secretary Strobe Talbott will fill in as acting secretary of state.

Both at the confirmation hearing and in her written answers, Albright stressed the need for bipartisanship and cooperation with Congress in the conduct of foreign policy.

Albright also appealed to Congress to approve payment of \$1.4 billion that the United States owes the United Nations in outstanding debt.

Schizophrenia, smoking linked

WASHINGTON (AP)—Scientists have located a gene that may increase the risk of inheriting schizophrenia — a finding that could also explain why many schizophrenics chain smoke.

Essentially, nicotine appears to briefly override a brain defect characteristic of the devastating mental illness, providing frenzied patients a few minutes of calm. The findings appear in today's edition of Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences.

"Schizophrenics are the most heavy smokers of any psychotic patients," said Dr. Robert Freedman of the Denver Veterans Affairs Medical Center. "They had discovered this (effect) before we had, and it had been overlooked as a clue to the biology of schizophrenia."

Information overload

At issue is the inability of many schizophrenics to filter out unnecessary sights, sounds and other stimuli — that tapping tree branch or the refrigerator hum that healthy people can ignore — so they essentially suffer from information overload.

Freedman and colleagues at the University of Colorado discovered that this trait is inherited. And they linked a gene that appears responsible for that to a brain receptor that helps filter information, a receptor that can be stimulated by nicotine.

Nicotine gives brief relief

That means schizophrenics who smoke get enough nicotine to switch on this receptor for brief relief, Freedman said.

"All the patients report they feel great after a cigarette," he said.

The study is "an excellent piece of work," said Dr. Elliott Gershon, neurogenetics chief at the National Institutes of Health.



JIM MEHLING/DN

Gershon cautioned that while Freedman has strong evidence linking this schizophrenia trait to the nicotine receptor gene, he doesn't yet have proof — especially because Freedman has not found the gene mutation that would cause it.

But don't take up smoking...

While Freedman is searching for the mutation, he has begun working with drug companies to find treatments that target this receptor.

"We certainly don't recommend people take up smoking to try to combat their schizophrenia because the effect literally lasts just a few

minutes" and smoking causes killer diseases like lung cancer, he stressed. But the findings are "reassuring to family members who wonder why their (schizophrenic) children can't stop smoking."

One schizophrenia drug, clozapine, appears to help this filtering problem, and patients have reported smoking fewer cigarettes, Freedman said.

Some 4 million Americans suffer schizophrenia, a mental illness characterized by hallucinations, delusions, bizarre behavior and the inability to feel pleasure.

Nation/World

from The Associated Press

JAKARTA, Indonesia — Officials Monday blocked Indonesia's democracy leader from running for re-election to parliament in May.

The list of 2,293 candidates approved by election officials includes four of President Suharto's children, his half-brother, a daughter-in-law and a cousin.

Excluded was Megawati Sukarnoputri, whose ouster as leader of an opposition party last year led to anti-government rioting in which at least five people died. She has been a member of parliament since 1992.

WASHINGTON — Newt Gingrich will decide within two weeks whether to use personal funds, campaign money or some other method to pay a \$300,000 penalty for his ethics violations, the speaker's attorney said Monday.

The method he chooses could prompt lawyers to seek advice from the ethics committee, Federal Election Commission or other agencies, possibly delaying payment for months, attorney J. Randolph Evans said.

The House will vote today on a resolution to reprimand Gingrich for ethical misconduct and assess him \$300,000 for extra work he caused the ethics committee with misleading statements.

The committee found Gingrich should have known his statements were inaccurate when he denied involvement of his political organization in a college course financed with tax-exempt funds.

COLUMBUS, Ohio — Banc One Corp. is buying First USA Inc. in a \$7.3 billion deal that will create the nation's third-largest credit card operation with a combined 32 million card holders.

The merger, announced Monday, will marry Banc One, the 10th largest U.S. bank, with one of the nation's fastest-growing credit card companies.

First USA issues both Visa cards and Mastercards and controls First USA Paymentech, a processor of credit card payments. Alone, First USA ranks as the nation's No. 4 domestic issuer of Visas and Mastercards.

If the deal is completed, Banc One would trail only Citicorp and AT&T Corp. in the number of credit cards issued. The companies expect their merger to be completed by May 31.

MOSCOW — President Boris Yeltsin was released from the Kremlin hospital Monday to continue recuperating from pneumonia at his country home outside Moscow.

Presidential spokesman Sergei Yastrzhembsky did not say when the 65-year-old Russian leader would return to full-time work at his Kremlin residence. He said Yeltsin's recovery would be gradual.

"One should not expect a forceful return of Boris Nikolayevich to full-time work, including a return to the Kremlin," he said.

Quake hits Chinese province

BEIJING (AP) — A powerful earthquake struck China's remote northwestern province of Xinjiang on Tuesday, and one Chinese official said damage and injuries were likely.

The 6.4-magnitude earthquake, which struck at 9:47 a.m. local time, was centered in the Xinjiang region of Jiashi, near the market city of Kashgar, said an official of the Central Seismology Bureau who gave his

name as Tang. He said reports of damage and injuries had not been received because of poor communications with the region, but were likely.

The quake hit a remote desert area 2,000 miles west of Beijing that is prone to earthquakes.

Jiashi County, about 40 miles east of Kashgar, was hit March 19 by a 6.9 magnitude earthquake that killed 28

people. That quake leveled four towns, injuring 170 people and leaving 10,000 residents homeless.

A bustling commercial center, Kashgar is an oasis along the Silk Road, the trade route that linked China to the Mediterranean as early as 2,000 years ago.

The people of the area are mostly Muslim ethnic minorities, including Uygurs, Kyrgyz and Tajiks.

Bill Cosby victim of extortion try

NEW YORK (AP) — Two days after Bill Cosby's only son was slain, a woman claiming to be the entertainer's illegitimate daughter was arrested in an unrelated attempt to extort \$40 million, federal prosecutors said Monday.

Meanwhile, police in California located two possible witnesses to the killing of Ennis Cosby on Monday and turned them over to investigators for questioning.

Autumn Jackson, 22, demanded the money to keep from going to a tabloid. She and Jose Medina, 54, who was to write her story, were arrested Saturday at a New York law firm representing Cosby after signing a purported \$24 million settlement to "end everything," said U.S. Attorney Mary Jo White.

According to an FBI affidavit, the family of Bill Cosby apparently had made payments to Autumn Jackson for educational purposes for several years, as he does for numerous other young people in need of assistance.

Cosby denied that the woman is his daughter, according to family spokesman David Brokaw, who said Cosby's

lawyers had a copy of the woman's birth certificate proving he is not her father.

Jackson and Medina were scheduled to appear at a hearing Tuesday in federal court. If convicted of extortion, they each face up to five years in prison and a \$250,000 fine.

Even though both suspects in the extortion case were identified as being from Southern California, authorities say it appears unrelated to last Thursday's shooting death of Cosby's 27-year-old son in Los Angeles.

"There is no evidence that extortion scheme is connected with the death of Ennis Cosby," White said.

Meanwhile, as sketches of a suspect and a possible witness brought hundreds of calls to police, two witnesses were picked up by police at a drug store in the Los Angeles suburb of Torrance, and turned over to the LAPD.

KCBS-TV said officers went to the store after a neighbor reported seeing a blue hatchback that appeared to match one driven by a witness shown in one of the sketches.

But police emphasized that the

witnesses were not suspects, and wouldn't say whether they matched the sketches or the information about the car.

"The most I can tell you at this point in time is they are being identified as witnesses," said Torrance Police Lt. Steve Gilliam.

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