

News Digest

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Treaty created to ease clone threat

■ Several nations join in defiance of Dr. Seed's vow to clone a human.

PARIS (AP) — Less than a week after an American scientist announced he would clone a child, 19 European nations signed a treaty Monday that said cloning people violated human dignity and was a misuse of science.

Britain and Germany, however, balked at signing the measure that London considers too strict and Bonn too mild.

Although Monday's signing was planned months ago, it clearly took on a greater significance with the announcement last week by Chicago physicist Richard Seed that he will clone a child within two years.

"This is a horror story that the states present here ... will use every effort to prevent," said Jean Boucauris, Greece's director for European affairs.

The signing by 19 members of the Council of Europe — in a room filled with professors, philosophers and doctors as well as diplomats — came the same day French President Jacques Chirac called for an international ban on human cloning, and two days after President Clinton urged Congress to do the same.

The July 1997 presentation of

Dolly the sheep, the world's first cloned mammal, set off an international outcry over the implications for human biology.

Many U.S. and international leaders renewed their condemnation after Seed said that he planned to begin working on human cloning using a newly developed technique. Some physicians questioned whether Seed, who is not a doctor, had the expertise to successfully complete such an experiment.

Seed, unaffiliated with any institution, said he would move his enterprise to Tijuana, Mexico, if Congress bans human cloning in the United States.

The treaty says that cloning is "contrary to human dignity and thus constitutes a misuse of biology and medicine." Signatory nations agreed to enact laws that outlaw human cloning, but the protocol itself makes no mention of sanctions against those that do not carry it out.

Medical ethicists praised the treaty for drawing attention to an issue for which, they say, the vast scientific complications are dwarfed by the moral questions.

The countries that signed were Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Greece, Iceland, Italy, Latvia, Luxembourg, Macedonia, Moldova, Norway, Portugal, Romania, San Marino, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and Turkey.

Court returns policeman's job Omaha must pay disabled officer damages, back pay

OMAHA (AP) — A policeman who is blind in one eye hailed a U.S. Supreme Court decision Monday that lets him keep his job.

Without comment, the Supreme Court let stand rulings that required the city to rehire Royce Doane with nearly \$51,000 in back pay and pension benefits. Omaha also has been ordered to pay Doane \$50,000 in damages for illegally discriminating against him.

"This could have been settled for zero money," said Doane. "(City officials) continued to appeal and spent the public's money. They basically threw the public's money down the drain."

Doane worked as an Omaha policeman from 1973 to 1984. In 1975, he lost vision in one eye because of glaucoma, but with glasses his overall vision was corrected to 20-20.

In 1984, Doane was given an eye examination and was told thereafter that his police career was over. He took a 911 communications job, but

he sought to be rehired as a police officer several times.

He sued in 1992, invoking the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. The law bars discrimination against qualified people on the basis of an impairment that substantially impacts a major life activity.

City officials refused to make Doane a policeman because they thought his lack of vision from both eyes would constitute a danger to him, his fellow officers and the public.

They specifically noted his limited peripheral vision.

A federal trial jury ruled that the city had violated the law and awarded Doane \$50,000 in damages. A judge awarded back pay and pension benefits as well, and ordered him reinstated by telling the city to allow Doane to enter police-recruit training.

The city appealed, but the 8th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals also ruled for Doane, 53, who returned to work as a police officer in June.

The appeals court noted that

medical experts testified that Doane has learned to work with environmental clues to develop his own sense of depth perception and has kept in good physical condition.

The appeals court also rejected the city's argument that Doane has adapted so well he should not be deemed to be disabled.

"Doane's vision impairment stems not merely from overall poor eyesight but from total blindness in one eye," the appeals court said. He therefore is "a person with a disability entitled to the ADA's protection."

In the appeal acted on Monday, Omaha argued that the lower courts relied too much on Doane's past service as a policeman without requiring him "to prove that he could perform safely in the future."

Doane urged the justices to reject the appeal, calling it a "frivolous ... composite of misrepresentations of fact and law."

"Hallelujah!" Doane said after hearing of the Supreme Court's decision.

Iraq reinstates block on U.S.-led inspections

BAGHDAD, Iraq (AP) — Iraq will block U.N. weapons inspections led by an American Gulf War veteran it says is a spy, the government vowed Monday, setting the stage for a new confrontation with the United Nations.

In New York, U.N. chief weapons inspector Richard Butler said the monitoring teams — including the one led by ex-Marine Capt. Scott Ritter — would go ahead with their work as planned Tuesday.

Iraq has criticized Ritter, claiming he is an intelligence agent for the United States. Ritter denies the charge.

An Iraqi government spokesman said the presence of too many Americans on the teams was prolonging the inspections program and delaying the lifting of U.N. sanctions on Iraq, the official Iraqi News Agency reported.

The agency's statement came after Ritter and a team of U.N. inspectors reportedly visited a hospital and a prison in Baghdad. It said the ban on Ritter would begin Jan. 13.

Other U.N. inspection teams will be allowed to continue their work, said Iraq's U.N. ambassador, Nizar Hamdoon.

Butler, in a letter to the Security

Council, cited numerous U.N. declarations affirming that Iraq has no right to dictate the composition of the inspection teams.

"I propose to instruct the chief inspector (in Baghdad) to seek to proceed with his business tomorrow, 13 January, and if possible, until the planned program of inspections is completed," Butler said.

The inspectors are trying to verify that Iraq has destroyed its weapons of mass destruction, a condition that must be met before the United Nations will lift trade sanctions imposed on Iraq after its 1990 invasion of Kuwait.

In Washington, President Clinton said the United States has had "nothing whatsoever" to do with choosing members of the U.N. teams.

"Certainly Saddam Hussein shouldn't be able to pick and choose who does this work," Clinton said. "That's for the United Nations to decide."

He said he expects the U.N. Security Council to take strong action if the inspectors "are denied their right to do their job."

The American ambassador to the United Nations, Bill Richardson, said the Iraqi move would be discussed at a Security Council meeting Thursday.

State battles for control of child's rights

OMAHA (AP) — A comatose 2-year-old lies at the center of a bitter battle over whether the state can take away the parental rights of her mom and dad and remove her from life support.

A hearing is scheduled Feb. 2-3 in Douglas County Juvenile Court to determine whether Ronald Davis and Rhonda Renshaw should lose their parental rights to Tabatha Renshaw, who is in temporary custody of the state. The girl suffered severe brain injuries in January 1996 when she was 25 days old.

Douglas County Juvenile Court Judge Douglas Johnson last month sided with the Nebraska Health and Human Services System and declined a plan to reunite the baby with her parents.

The parents have faced a criminal investigation over Tabatha's injuries but have not been charged. They have said they did not hurt the girl and have opposed the state's attempts to remove life support from Tabatha.

Diana's car hit at 60 mph Computer simulation provides key

LONDON (AP) — The Mercedes in which Princess Diana was killed was traveling at 60 mph — twice as slow as reported earlier — when it crashed, a leading British accident investigator says.

All four occupants of the car would have survived if Paris' Pont de l'Alma traffic tunnel had been equipped with crash barriers, according to Professor Murray Mackay, a professor of transport safety at the University of Birmingham.

In a program to be broadcast Tuesday on Britain's Channel 4, Mackay said his conclusions were drawn from the French police investigation, as well as a visit to the tunnel.

The program includes a computer simulation of the Aug. 31 accident that killed Diana, her companion

Dodi Fayed and driver Henri Paul, who was found to be legally drunk. Only bodyguard Trevor Rees-Jones survived.

"Newspapers have talked of speeds of 120 mph, but looking at the damage tells a very different story," Mackay said. "It suggests an impact with the pillar of about 60 mph."

"This was a severe but a survivable accident, and what we now need to consider is why three people died. If the Mercedes had hit the post at 120 mph, the whole of the passenger compartment would have been destroyed," he said.

The 36-year-old princess had the best chance of survival because she was sitting in the rear right seat which would have suffered the least force when the car hit the pillar and spun, Mackay said.

Health care spending stabilizing

WASHINGTON (AP) — Health care costs have topped \$1 trillion in a single year for the first time, but the government says annual spending increases are slowing.

American spending on health care averaged \$3,759 per person in 1996, up 4.4 percent or \$126 from 1995, according to a Department of Health and Human Services report released Monday.

That's the lowest growth rate since the annual tally of health spending trends — tracking public and private spending on everything from medical research to Band-Aids — was first compiled in 1960.

And although the total hit a record \$1.035 trillion, that is the

same 13.6 percent share of the nation's booming economy medical expenses have taken since 1993.

"This report shows significant national progress in slowing the growth of health care spending," said Secretary of Health and Human Services Donna Shalala.

Low inflation, more people in managed care and new government spending curbs all have contributed to slower expansion of the nation's health care bills, after an average yearly growth of 11 percent throughout the '80s, the report said.

In 1996, almost 88 percent of America's health care dollars bought personal health care services and supplies.

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