

# News Digest

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## Peacemaking progress inches forward with Iraq

BAGHDAD, Iraq (AP) — Would-be peacemakers from around the world pressed Iraq on Wednesday to end a standoff over weapons inspections with diplomacy before Washington does it with air strikes.

Word emerged of possible progress, including an Iraqi offer at compromise.

Russia insisted there were signs of optimism, but President Boris Yeltsin, using language reminiscent of the Cold War, said a U.S. attack could lead to "world war."

Iraqi President Saddam Hussein, meeting with an envoy from France, said he was striving for "a balanced political solution," the official Iraqi news agency said.

Iraq has refused to allow U.N. inspectors into Saddam's palaces and other key sites, calling it a matter of national sovereignty.

CNN reported the Iraqis were offering to open some — but not all — of the suspected weapons sites to inspectors.

Since March 1996, inspectors have visited 63 sites where they believed the Iraqis were hiding contraband, Charles Duelfer, the deputy chief weapons inspector, said recently. Inspectors were delayed from entering 38 of the sites and flatly denied access to 14 others in the name of national security.

The United States increasingly is threatening to resort to military force to end the Iraqi defiance. Congress worked Wednesday on a resolution authorizing President Clinton to launch air attacks, and U.N. Ambassador Bill Richardson traveled the world seeking support from fellow U.N. Security Council member-nations.

Hoping to avert attack, the Arab League's secretary-general and Turkey's foreign minister arrived in Baghdad, joining envoys from Russia and France in pressing Iraqi leaders for a peaceful solution.

Quoting unidentified sources, CNN said that Iraq was offering to allow U.N. inspectors access to eight disputed sites for about a month.

CNN said the Iraqi proposal called for each of the 15 members of the Security Council to appoint five inspectors. The 21 countries represented on the U.N. Special Commission, which oversees inspections, would then each appoint two more.

It said that these experts would make "visits" to the palaces and would report their findings directly to the Security Council.

Iraqi government officials would not confirm the report, which was similar to an offer Iraq made in November.

The Americans rejected the earlier plan, saying it appeared to be an attempt by Baghdad to bypass the Special Commission and ignore the commission's mandate to set up long-term monitoring of suspected chemical, biological and nuclear programs.

At the United Nations, British Ambassador John Weston suggested the latest reported proposal would also prove unacceptable.

In Washington, Clinton said the United States' "bottom line" is to deny Saddam the capacity to develop and deliver weapons of mass destruction.

"The best way to stop Saddam from building nuclear, biological or chemical weapons is simply to get the international inspectors back to work with no restraints," he said.

Rijaa al-Shawi, head of the environment committee of the National Assembly, predicted U.N. inspectors will "sooner or later" be allowed into presidential palaces.

Saddam, in his meeting with French envoy Bertrand Dufourcq, spoke of meeting "the essence of Security Council resolutions" while, at the same time, pointing out "the necessity that Iraq's sovereignty, dignity and security be respected," the Iraqi news agency said.

He repeated his demand that U.N. sanctions, imposed after Iraq's invasion of Kuwait more than seven years ago, be lifted, starting with the ban on oil sales, the agency said.

The U.N. Security Council has said that the punishing sanctions will stand until U.N. inspectors certify that Iraq has eliminated its weapons of mass destruction.

Iraq says it has done so. But U.N. inspectors say Iraq still is hiding information and material related to biological and chemical weapons.

The full-force diplomatic missions to Baghdad included Viktor Posuvalyuk, sent by the Russian president last weekend. Russia brokered a compromise to an Iraq-U.N. standoff over inspections last November.

## Former aide: President must explain his story

WASHINGTON (AP) — As the White House considered trying to narrow grand jury questioning of presidential aides in the Monica Lewinsky investigation, one of President Clinton's closest former advisers said today Clinton's limited public response in the case is troubling.

"The longer the president goes without telling his side of the story, the more unease there will be in the public," said George Stephanopoulos. "It may be their only strategy," he said, but added the refusal to explain Ms. Lewinsky's numerous visits to the White House after she stopped working there "does raise an awful lot of questions."

"The president believes that he's already cleared the air," retorted White House press secretary Mike McCurry.

Stephanopoulos, who testified before the grand jury for nearly three hours on Tuesday, made his latest comments on ABC where he works as a consultant. Stephanopoulos had been among the first to speculate about impeachment when the allegations of a presidential affair and cover-up first surfaced.

The White House, meanwhile, was considering invoking executive privilege to limit the scope of further questioning of White House aides.

Executive privilege is the principle that the president's communications need to be protected on military, diplomatic or sensitive national secrets.

Lewinsky left town Tuesday, her lawyers apparently no closer to making a deal with Whitewater prosecu-

tor Kenneth Starr's office.

While the grand jury worked, the White House remained silent, offering no public explanation to disclosures that Lewinsky, 24, entered the White House — possibly as many as 37 times — after being transferred from the White House to the Pentagon in April 1996. Beyond flat denials of a presidential affair and cover-up, the Clinton administration is providing no public statements on the controversy.

Stephanopoulos became the fourth grand jury witness to tell reporters he knew of no improper relationship between Lewinsky and the president.

"I have no firsthand knowledge at all about the nature of the relationship, if any, between the president and Monica Lewinsky," Stephanopoulos said after just under three hours before the grand jury. He said he had met Lewinsky a few times.

His words mirrored those of former White House Chief of Staff Leon Panetta, former Deputy White House Chief of Staff Evelyn Lieberman and former White House intern Caroline Self. She signed for half a dozen envelopes Lewinsky sent to the office of Clinton's personal secretary in a two-month span starting in October.

Presidential lawyers had preliminary discussions about whether to instruct such White House advisers as John Podesta and Bruce Lindsey, Clinton's closest confidant, not to testify regarding their conversations with the president or presidential lawyers about Lewinsky, officials said. Podesta is deputy White House

chief of staff. Lindsey is deputy White House counsel and special assistant to the president.

ABC News reported Tuesday that Lewinsky was claiming Clinton told her in July that they had to cut off their physical relationship because a reporter was asking questions about another White House worker and sexual harassment. Lewinsky's attorney, William Ginsburg, declined comment on the report.

Separately, two individuals familiar with Clinton's legal strategy said the White House has been considering setting up a new legal defense fund that would solicit up to \$10,000 in donations from individuals to help defray his mounting legal bills, but that a formal announcement was not imminent.

Nearly two weeks after the Lewinsky controversy engulfed the White House, she took a first-class flight Tuesday to Los Angeles to spend time with her father. A crush of reporters and photographers watched from the street as Lewinsky embraced her father outside his house before going inside with Ginsburg and others.

"We're not planning any sort of extended stay," Ginsburg said in an interview. "We will be working with Monica to calm her down, advise her on her legal strategy and let her see her dad."

Ginsburg said his talks with prosecutors about whether his client should receive immunity from prosecution in exchange for her testimony remained "cordial" and that "generally speaking, we are where we want to be."

## Proposal to rename airport in honor of Reagan challenged

WASHINGTON (AP) — A bill to rename Washington's airport for Ronald Reagan is on its way to becoming law just in time for his 87th birthday — despite complaints from Democrats that Congress is trampling local rights.

President Clinton will sign the bill, said spokesman Mike McCurry, because "I think for him it came down to a question of honoring Ronald Reagan."

The Senate passed one bill Wednesday to rename Washington National Airport the Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport, 76-22. Later in the day, the House approved a slightly different bill, 240-186, leaving out the word "Washington." The House was expected to adopt the Senate's version today, the eve of Reagan's birthday.

House Speaker Newt Gingrich praised the renaming as a fitting tribute to an ailing president "who transformed the world" by helping bring down inflation and end the Cold War.

"I hope that the president and Mrs. Reagan, watching this happen, will have some small sense that there is enormous affection in this country for Ronald Reagan, and there is a deep sense of gratitude for the leadership that he showed," Gingrich said.

"Ronald Reagan is the most loved man in America today," said House Majority Leader Dick Armey. Reagan suffers from Alzheimer's

disease.

Despite the outpouring of sentiment, opponents of the bill promised a court challenge. They contend the measure violates the federal government's lease to a local airport authority, which Reagan in 1986 signed into law.

Rep. James P. Moran, Jr., who represents the Northern Virginia district where the airport is located, said changing the name would cost the businesses in and around it hundreds of thousands of dollars to change signs and stationery. His amendment to make the change subject to approval by Arlington County, Va., voters, failed.

"It is unprecedented to rename a facility ... in the jurisdiction of a member of this Congress when that member opposes that name," Moran said in a floor speech. "If we do this it will be an arrogant abuse of power, it will be partisan, and it will be wrong."

Several lawmakers and union members also said there must be more fitting tributes for a leader who fired 11,000 striking air traffic controllers, presided over a ballooning national debt and championed local control over projects.

Senate Democratic leader Tom Daschle noted that local agencies oppose the bill.

"How ironic that in the name of Ronald Reagan, we would do the very thing that he opposed the most," said Daschle, of South Dakota.

In the House, Democrat David Obey of Wisconsin proposed that instead the office that deals with debt should be renamed "the Ronald Reagan Bureau of Public Debt."

"He had about as much to do with Washington National Airport as I had to do with an airport in Tibet," Obey said in his floor speech.

Randy Schwitz, executive vice president of the Air Traffic Controllers' Association, said he was "dumbfounded" when he heard Congress was considering naming the airport after Reagan.

"Ronald Reagan never did anything for aviation in this country," Schwitz, whose group represents 14,700 air traffic controllers, said in an interview. "Congress just poured salt in the wound."

But others scolded opponents, chiefly Democrats, for playing politics with the legacy of a beloved leader.

"The purpose of this bill is to honor a great American president who is in the evening of his life," said Judiciary Committee Chairman Henry Hyde of Illinois. "This great honor for him has become the victim of what really is raw and petty politics."

The bill's passage comes after Grover G. Norquist, chairman of the Reagan Legacy Project, began an effort to name more public landmarks after the former president.

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