

News Digest

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New Northern Ireland legislature rehashes deadly attack

BELFAST, Northern Ireland (AP) — United in horror but divided by politics, Protestants and Catholics in Northern Ireland's new legislature Tuesday debated what lessons could be learned from the deadliest attack in the province's three-decade conflict.

In often raw and personal speeches, some Protestant Assembly members accused their IRA-allied Sinn Fein counterparts of complying with the perpetrators of the Aug. 15 attack in Omagh that killed 29 people.

The so-called Real IRA, a dissident offshoot of the Irish Republican Army, claimed responsibility for the car-bomb attack.

"There are those in this chamber who know who these people are. And they should be sharing such knowledge with the authorities," said Derek Hussey, a member of the Ulster Unionists, the north's major British Protestant party. As he spoke, he gestured toward the Sinn Fein benches.

He quoted Sinn Fein President Gerry Adams' recent pledge that violence should be "done with and gone."

"I ask the simple question," Hussey said. "Is it?"

Sinn Fein Vice President Pat Doherty didn't respond to the verbal attacks. He said the slaughter in Omagh placed "a great responsibility on us to sustain the peace process and to bring it to fruition."

Report: Swissair recorders failed minutes before crash

HALIFAX, Nova Scotia (AP) — The cockpit voice recorder aboard Swissair Flight 111 stopped six minutes before the jetliner crashed and killed all 229 people aboard, investigators said Tuesday.

The MD-11's flight data recorder also stopped six minutes before the plane plunged into the North Atlantic off Nova Scotia on Sept. 2.

The report on the voice recorder provides further evidence that the jetliner suffered a crippling failure of its systems. The finding also means investigators will never learn what, if anything, the two pilots said to each other in the final minutes of the flight.

The pilots' conversation with air traffic controllers ended with the pilots declaring an emergency because of smoke in the cockpit and saying they had to land immediately.

The flight data recorder, which was recovered from the ocean floor several days before the cockpit voice recorder, is being examined by experts at a laboratory in Ottawa.

House votes to exempt farm aid from spending limits

WASHINGTON (AP) — The House on Tuesday indicated its willingness to help farmers weather their severe economic crunch, voting overwhelmingly to exempt the aid from federal spending limits.

"This is a national problem that demands a national solution," said Rep. Marcy Kaptur, D-Ohio.

At the White House, President Clinton said lawmakers should act quickly.

"We cannot afford to walk away from this session of Congress. I don't care if there is an election. I don't care what else is happening. We cannot afford to walk away until we do something to stave off the failure of thousands of productive family farms in America," he told the National Farmers Union.

"I feel especially bad for the farmers," the president said, "because it's been such a good time for the rest of the country."

Brushing aside the concerns of fiscal conservatives, the House voted 331-66 against requiring cuts in other government programs to pay for farm aid.

Congress still must decide what form the assistance will take. Voting along party lines Monday night, the Senate rejected 53-41 a \$7 billion aid package endorsed by the Clinton administration. Republicans said they are working on a cheaper plan that would give farmers direct payments, possibly about \$2 billion.

Video shows Clinton testimony

House Judiciary Committee members debate its release

WASHINGTON (AP) — House Judiciary Committee members were holding intense discussions in private Tuesday over whether to release a potentially embarrassing videotape of President Clinton's grand jury testimony Aug. 17.

Republicans pushed to make it public this week. Democrats have opposed releasing a tape that would show Clinton's demeanor as he answered questions about his sexual conduct.

White House advisers have been concerned that Republicans could use the tape in political advertisements if it were made public.

Committee members also discussed a quick release of Monica Lewinsky's testimony about her sexual relationship with Clinton.

Rep. Asa Hutchinson, R-Ark., said the committee might meet in executive session today or Thursday to authorize quick release of the material — grand jury records and other information that back up Independent Counsel Kenneth Starr's report alleging 11 potential grounds for impeachment.

Hutchinson added: "It wouldn't be fair to release portions that are more incriminating to the president than what would be more exculpatory."

Rep. Zoe Lofgren, D-Calif., also on the committee, said she was concerned

Clinton under fire

that some lawmakers are rushing to release materials when the panel has until Sept. 28 to do so.

"For what?" she asked, contending the release should be "in orderly deliberative, responsible fashion" to avoid "a partisan witch hunt."

While some Democrats have suggested a censure as an alternative to impeachment, House Majority Leader Dick Armey, R-Texas, said he had spoken with lawmakers and concluded, "It's not an option that holds a lot of attraction."

"There's a lot of options being blathered about, most of it from the president's spin team," Armey commented.

Speaker Newt Gingrich told reporters Tuesday that when the House finishes legislative business this year, it will not formally adjourn. This would allow the Judiciary Committee to continue its inquiry into Clinton's conduct after the election and also would mean the House could be summoned back if necessary.

Gingrich said he hoped the committee would make a "truly bipartisan" decision on whether to proceed with an

impeachment inquiry. "We're still several weeks of hard work away from being able to say anything, and I don't want to prejudge anything," he said.

Presidential spokesman Mike McCurry said the president's advisers had expected that a transcript of the grand jury testimony would be made available. "But we expect the House to employ the video in a responsible way so that it doesn't get misused," he said.

The grand jury videotape, available so far only to members of the committee, could be critical to any decision to initiate a formal impeachment proceeding. Starr contends Clinton lied during the testimony when he denied perjuring himself in Paula Jones' sexual harassment case in January.

In a public display of solidarity by female Democrats in Congress, 26 congresswomen met this morning with first lady Hillary Rodham Clinton and later told reporters they were counting on her to help turn attention to other issues.

"With her help in our districts and in the states where members of the Senate are running, we can maintain and indeed increase our representation in the House and the Senate," Eleanor Holmes Norton, the House delegate from the District of Columbia, told reporters after the 40-minute meeting. "We could not be more encouraged."

Ban doesn't halt Albanians' rally

TIRANA, Albania (AP) — Albanian opposition protesters defied a ban and held a peaceful rally Tuesday, while the government ordered armed opponents to turn in their weapons in an effort to quell new violence after two days of riots.

In a nationally televised address, Prime Minister Fatos Nano said the government's patience was running out and it would not "wait endlessly for all weapons to be taken out" of the headquarters of his rival, former President Sali Berisha.

Nano guaranteed the safety of Berisha and his followers, and said he was willing to consider "in principle" any formula for resolving the crisis, presumably including his own resignation, as the opposition has demanded.

The Interior Ministry warned Tuesday it would respond with force to any resistance from Berisha supporters after clashes Sunday and Monday. Police were authorized to "shoot without warning" if opposed, the ministry said on state television.

About 3,000 of Berisha's supporters rallied in the main Tirana square, despite a ban by the Interior Ministry. The protest ended peacefully.

Many protesters flashed the two-fingered victory sign as Berisha coupled demands for Nano's resignation with exhortations that the demonstrators remain peaceful.

Dozens of police cars surrounded the protesters on Skanderbeg Square, lights flashing and sirens howling. The cars and several police vans were filled with officers carrying submachine guns and wearing stocking masks.

Sharpshooters took up positions on the roof of the nearby Interior Ministry building.

The weekend assassination of a popular Berisha ally touched off two days of unrest reminiscent of the nationwide anarchy that lasted for months in 1997 and sent refugees flooding into Italy, Greece and other European countries.

U.S. and European diplomats were seeking to negotiate a peaceful

end to the crisis. Many fear the unrest could spread, further complicating the situation in the neighboring Serbian province of Kosovo, where ethnic Albanian rebels are fighting for independence.

The top Serbian official in Kosovo, Veljko Odalovic, warned Tuesday that the stability of the southern Balkans was at stake. Berisha has openly supported Kosovo's ethnic Albanian rebels.

In southern Albania, police reported overnight shootouts between gunmen and border guards at the Kakavia crossing to Greece. They said the attackers, from the nearby Albanian city of Gjirokastra, wounded three people.

Foreign ministers of Italy and Germany recommended Tuesday that an international police force be sent to Albania and urged the European Union to increase aid to the country.

The Interior Ministry also urged Berisha supporters holed up at downtown Democratic Party headquarters to lay down their arms.

Russian leaders devise economic plan

MOSCOW (AP) — Russia's new government showed some of its cards Tuesday, proposing to print money to pay back wages and impose some Soviet-style controls over the market — but also making a key appointment to enhance its reform credentials.

The head of the centrist Our Home Is Russia parliament faction, Alexander Shokhin, was named deputy prime minister in charge of financial issues — a daunting job as Russia tries to pull itself out of its economic morass. He said he expected another member of his faction to be named to a Cabinet post later.

Russian liberals and media have been making doomsday predictions that the new government, under Prime Minister Yevgeny Primakov, will represent a retreat to Soviet-era economic policies.

Primakov, who conferred with President Boris Yeltsin on new Cabinet

appointments Tuesday, insists he is trying only to create a team that represents all the major political and economic factions, including the Communist Party.

Aside from a few preliminary measures, Primakov has not announced any economic program and appears to be seeking political consensus rather than quick economic action. He has asked to be given up to a year before his policies were assessed.

There have been indications that the government intends to play a stronger role in the economy.

Central Bank Chairman Viktor Gerashchenko called Tuesday for a return to the Soviet-era practice of requiring exporters to turn in all of their hard currency earnings to the government, in exchange for rubles at a state-determined rate.

The measure "is long overdue,"

Gerashchenko said. "That should have been done last year."

New First Deputy Prime Minister Yuri Maslyukov — a Communist Party member who nevertheless has shown himself willing to work in a reform-oriented government — also has advocated the measure.

No one in the government has called for reviving Soviet-era fundamentals such as fully nationalized industry, price controls or ending the free flow of capital and the ruble's convertibility.

The Communist Party, which has formed the most solid opposition to Yeltsin, has distanced itself from the new administration. Communist leader Gennady Zyuganov said the appointment of Maslyukov, a former central planner, and Gerashchenko, a former Soviet chief banker, was a Kremlin initiative, not a Communist proposal.

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