

News Digest

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U.S.: Troops may be needed in Kosovo

WASHINGTON (AP) - The Clinton administration raised prospects Tuesday that airstrikes against Serbs might require a follow-up international ground force of peacekeepers in the Yugoslav province of Kosovo. Defense Secretary William Cohen told Congress that U.S. participation in such a force was "a possibility," but not one he favored.

President Clinton warned that, unchecked, Serb violence in the province could lead to instability throughout the region.

"The stakes are high," Clinton said. "The time is now to end the violence in Kosovo."

Cohen, facing skeptical questioning from senators weary of the long U.S. presence in nearby Bosnia, said it was "my recommendation, my insistence" that any ground force be largely composed of Europeans.

Diplomatic activity intensified, here and in Belgrade, in an attempt to

persuade Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic to comply with all terms of the U.N. resolution designed to force him to end all hostilities against ethnic Albanians and to let some 250,000 refugees receive humanitarian aid and return to their homes.

Clinton's warning came in an address to a joint meeting of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. The president said world leaders "all agree that Kosovo is a powder keg in the Balkans. If the violence continues, it could spill over and threaten the peace and stability of Bosnia, of Albania, of Macedonia and other countries in the region."

NATO is prepared to act if Milosevic fails to honor the United Nations resolutions, he said, adding that U.S. envoy Richard Holbrooke was conveying that message directly to Milosevic in Belgrade.

At the Pentagon, a senior military

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PRESIDENT CLINTON

official said Washington has informed NATO that it could provide up to "several hundred aircraft" for military action involving Kosovo.

The official, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said the U.S. package is composed of about half warplanes and half "support" planes - such as tankers for refueling, reconnaissance and radar missions.

Clinton also talked by phone with British Prime Minister Tony Blair, who was in China on an official visit. A day earlier, he talked with Russian President Boris Yeltsin and derided the steps Milosevic has taken in response

to a Sept. 23 U.N. Security Council resolution aimed at ending the 7-month-old conflict in Kosovo.

In an apparent effort to head off NATO airstrikes, Milosevic has ordered most of his Serb army units back to their barracks, withdrawn police units and apparently ordered a halt to the burning of villages.

Cohen, testifying before the Senate Armed Services Committee, was asked if these concessions had lessened the likelihood of NATO strikes.

"I don't believe so," Cohen said. "He cannot simply avoid NATO action by picking one or two items."

Democrats attempt to limit impeachment inquiry scope

WASHINGTON (AP) - With the House set to begin a historic journey into presidential impeachment, outnumbered Democrats struggled Tuesday to craft an alternative to the Republicans' open-ended investigation.

The Democrats, facing defections, could not immediately agree on how to limit the time and scope of an inquiry.

The White House, meanwhile, complained the House proceedings were neither fair nor bipartisan.

"I can't speak for the Republican caucus, but it does appear after watching this for the last month that the leadership is pursuing a strategy for electoral advantage," said White House spokesman Joe Lockhart.

Later Lockhart said the White House saw little chance now of stopping a House vote in favor of impeach-

Clinton under fire

ment proceedings.

"There is a certain sense that the die is cast on this issue," Lockhart said, adding that the White House was not yet giving up.

The Judiciary Committee voted 21-16 Monday night to send the GOP resolution to the full House, which is virtually certain later this week to approve only the third presidential impeachment investigation in the nation's history.

Asked Clinton's reaction, Lockhart said Tuesday: "He's not surprised."

"It would have been hard to predict anything else, given the way the last month has gone."

Minority Leader Dick Gephardt, D-Mo., said Democrats would meet again today to discuss alternatives to the GOP resolution.

Several members said that beyond trying to win support for a Democratic alternative, they did not expect party leaders to twist arms to stop lawmakers from voting for an inquiry.

Rep. Charles Rangel, D-N.Y., who said he believed Clinton's conduct does not warrant an impeachment inquiry, said he wondered "whether you can be half pregnant" with any alternative proposal.

Rep. Rick Boucher, D-Va., playing a key role in writing an alternative, said his proposal, which lost in committee, would require - before an inquiry begins - a determination of whether the conduct of which Clinton is accused by investigators is grounds for impeachment.

Democrats clearly have a problem with conservatives in their party.

Rep. Charles Stenholm of Texas, who has a tough re-election race, said he supports the Republican resolution.

It has no time or subject limits, but Stenholm said he accepts the goal of the Judiciary Committee chairman, Rep. Henry Hyde, R-Ill., of finishing the House's work by the end of the year.

"My personal belief is no limitations makes good sense," Stenholm said.

"We have to realize who's in the majority and who's running the show. Republicans are running the show."

High court examines home visitors' privacy

WASHINGTON (AP) - Most people who temporarily visit someone else's home should not be protected against police searches without a warrant, the Supreme Court was told Tuesday by a prosecutor in a Minnesota drug case.

Such protection doesn't extend to two men arrested after a policeman peeked through a gap in window blinds and saw them packaging a white powdery substance, prosecutor James C. Backstrom told the high court.

"Criminal activity is not the kind of activity normally associated with the privacy of a dwelling," Backstrom said.

Attorney Bradford Colbert, representing the two men, said that in many cases short-term guests in a home should have the same protection against unreasonable searches as the Constitution's Fourth Amendment gives to homeowners.

Both lawyers and the justices themselves struggled over which house visitors are entitled to privacy protection.

Justice Stephen G. Breyer said there was no doubt homeowners were entitled to constitutional protection. But he added, "Why do we want to protect the pizza man?"

The Avon lady should not expect

her activities to be more private if invited indoors than if she made her sales pitch on the front step, suggested Justice Sandra Day O'Connor.

And Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg asked, "Would it be any different ... if they had gathered to play a game of poker rather than put together coke?"

Backstrom said most short-term guests do not have an expectation of privacy, but a frequent visitor might have a stronger argument.

"If they play (poker) five times a week they get standing, but if they play once they don't?" asked Justice David H. Souter.

The justices are expected to issue a ruling by July. Minnesota's highest court threw out the drug convictions of Wayne Thomas Carter and Melvin Johns.

The Clinton administration supported the state's appeal of that ruling. Justice Department lawyer Jeffrey A. Lamken argued that it is not a search when a police officer sees something that is exposed to outside view.

The high court ruled in 1990 that an overnight guest in a private home has the same privacy rights as the homeowner. The justices have not given such protection to someone who visits but does not stay overnight.

Man killed in Fremont store

FREMONT (AP) - Buying milk for supper, Joel Cherny was attacked from behind and stabbed to death in an apparently random attack, and the clerk ringing up his purchase was wounded.

Ronald L. Erickson, 33, of Fremont was booked on suspicion of homicide, assault and use of a weapon to commit a felony. No formal charges had been filed.

The attack, which took place at about 7 p.m. Monday, stunned people in this city of 23,900. It was the first homicide here since 1990, when an Omaha man was shot to death.

"It's scary to think that it just happened across the street," said Peggy Schneider, an attendant at a gas station. "And it happened at another convenience store. It really makes you think."

The suspect stabbed Cherny several times, then followed him behind the counter, where store clerk Charles

Horwarth, 35, also was stabbed, said Deputy Police Chief S. F. Tellatin. A knife was used, but had not been found, he said.

"There were two other employees and maybe - we're not sure - two or three other customers in the store at the time of the attack," Tellatin said. Police were locating and interviewing witnesses.

The suspect left the store, but police found him behind the building a short time later in the parking lot of an apartment complex.

No motive was known, and the suspect apparently did not know Cherny or Horwarth, Tellatin said.

Dodge County Attorney Dean Skokan said Cherny died shortly after arriving at the Fremont hospital. Horwarth's injuries were not life-threatening.

Skokan said he would study police reports and probably file formal charges in the stabbing case today.



Republicans pursue alternate tax cut plan

WASHINGTON (AP) - Acknowledging their \$80 billion tax cut has no chance of passing the Senate, Republican leaders are assembling a minimal package that would renew expiring business tax credits and possibly include a few nuggets for favored groups such as farmers and the elderly.

Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott, R-Miss., wouldn't officially pronounce the death of the House-passed bill Tuesday, insisting that "parts of it might still be salvaged" in the smaller package.

But Lott's chief of staff, J. David Hoppe, wrote the White House that the package fell victim to Democratic resistance. President Clinton vowed to veto the tax cuts because they would spend part of the projected budget surplus instead of reserving "every penny" for Social Security.

"Our attempt to help the American people by cutting their taxes will have to wait for another day," Hoppe wrote.

Albright: Peace attempts in Mideast are troubled

JERUSALEM (AP) - Israel and the Palestinians have failed to make the "tough choices" needed to conclude a West Bank accord and unless they do, Mideast peacemaking could fall apart, Secretary of State Madeleine Albright said Tuesday.

Her remarks, as she met with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in Jerusalem and with Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat in Jericho on the West Bank, seemed designed to spur the leaders to tackle their differences.

The key challenge appeared to be settling on security arrangements that would enable Netanyahu to sign off on a 13 percent pullback on the West Bank with high hopes of getting the deal through his rightist Likud coalition government.

Still, Albright set up a three-way meeting for today with Arafat and Netanyahu at Erez, on the border between Israel and Palestinian-held Gaza.

Russian government warns opposition on eve of protest

MOSCOW (AP) - The Russian government warned hard-line opposition leaders Tuesday they could face criminal charges for inciting armed revolt if they go ahead with nationwide demonstrations today.

Russian labor unions predict that up to 28 million people will take part in the strikes and rallies. Communist Party leader Gennady Zyuganov said up to 40 million will turn out, although most observers expect a much smaller turnout.

A similar protest last year drew an estimated 2 million people in hundreds of demonstrations across Russia.

Trade unions and the Communist-led opposition have pledged that the protests will be peaceful. Officials are preparing for unrest that could be sparked by growing popular anger over the government's inability to pay wages and pensions that are months overdue.

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