

News Digest

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U.S. warplanes mobilize in Belgrade

■ Stalled negotiations with Milosevic prompt the action, as Holbrooke is stepping up talks.

BELGRADE, Yugoslavia (AP) — Six U.S. bombers and other warplanes mobilized over the weekend for potential airstrikes on Yugoslavia after negotiations showed little progress.

After reporting no change in President Slobodan Milosevic's tough stand on Kosovo, U.S. envoy Richard Holbrooke accelerated talks with the leader Sunday.

The Americans and Europeans are demanding that Milosevic halt the crackdown he launched Feb. 28 against the separatist Kosovo Liberation Army, a group of ethnic Albanians seeking independence.

The major obstacle appears to be Holbrooke's

demand that Milosevic agree to an expanded international monitoring mission to verify compliance with demands of the U.N. Security Council.

Those demands include an immediate ceasefire, a withdrawal of special troops in the province, allowing refugees to return home and beginning talks with ethnic Albanians on Kosovo's future.

Holbrooke and Milosevic met into the night Sunday, meeting for the sixth time in seven days in talks that signaled U.S. determination to search for a peaceful way out of the deadlock.

Holbrooke said early Sunday that he would "continue an intense effort to find a peaceful, acceptable, fully verifiable compliance system as an alternative to the other choice" — meaning the use of force.

But he also said NATO would meet today to authorize action if his mediation effort fails.

In Washington, national security adviser Sandy Berger told CNN that Milosevic "is not in compliance as of this point."

"He can come into compliance or he can face military action by NATO" at any time, Berger said.

Washington, meanwhile, is continuing military preparations in case Holbrooke's mission fails. Six U.S. B-52 bombers arrived in Britain on Sunday and a contingent of A-10 anti-tank planes flew from Germany to Italy.

In Bucharest, the Romanian government agreed to allow NATO to use its airspace in "emergency and unpredictable situations" if the alliance launches airstrikes against Yugoslavia.

The positioning of more U.S. planes within range and preparing them for attacks were clearly designed to convince Milosevic of Washington's resolve to force compliance with U.N. demands.

Congress, Clinton seek middle ground on budget

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Clinton called for a budget "that is worthy of our children" Sunday, as White House and congressional bargainers sought a truce for their pending battle that would let lawmakers go home to campaign for re-election.

Budget negotiators met yet again at the Capitol to sort through scores of disputes over money and policy, even as top Republicans went on television trying to define the fight. They sought to portray a president who has been distracted by scandal and by repeated fund-raising trips, and who has rejected GOP proposals for tax breaks and vouchers aimed at students.

"Now, all of a sudden, he shows up. Where has he been all year?" asked House Majority Leader Dick Armey, R-Texas, on ABC's "This Week with Sam Donaldson and Cokie Roberts."

In an office just paces from where Sunday's tourists strolled through the Capitol's Rotunda, White House Chief of Staff Erskine Bowles and an administration team met for two hours with House Speaker Newt Gingrich, R-Ga., Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott, R-Miss., and other congressional leaders.

Bowles said the two sides discussed differences over education and the environment and "made some real progress," and would meet again this morning. Armey said, "We've got more to go," and aides said an agreement on all issues might be reached within two days.

Nearly two weeks after the government's new fiscal year began, eight of the 13 annual spending measures remain incomplete. A stopgap measure keeping the government operating expires tonight.

Neither side is willing to let the dispute escalate into a federal shutdown that could

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TRENT LOTT
Senate majority leader

hurt incumbents' re-election bids, and Clinton said he would sign another short-term bill to keep agencies at work.

"We're not going to shut the government down if we're working on this, of course," he told reporters at the White House. "No one is interested in doing that."

The eight unfinished spending bills for 1999 together are worth about \$500 billion, nearly one-third of the total federal budget.

Clinton wants about \$3 billion more for programs he favors, including more than \$1 billion for helping school districts hire 100,000 more teachers.

Republicans have signaled that they are willing to provide about \$2 billion but want some of the money spent for programs they prefer, such as education funds that states could dispense as they please.

"We want the money to get to the parents, the teachers, the administrators at the local level," Lott said.

But Clinton stuck to his insistence for more education spending, a theme that has tested well in Democratic polls for years.

"It's time once again for Congress to cross party lines and send me an education budget that I can sign that is worthy of our children and their future," he said.

High-profile bills get lost in the mix

WASHINGTON (AP) — It is the 105th Congress' wish list of rejects, the high-profile and little-known bills lost in the rush of the frantic last days of the legislative session.

The more prominent include an \$80 billion tax cut, a patients "bill of rights," sweeping overhauls of bankruptcy and financial services laws and a \$1-an-hour increase in the federal minimum wage.

With both houses heading toward adjournment, it is highly unlikely these measures, for all the attention they drew during the past two years, can make it through this Congress.

Away from the political footlights, other measures died with little fanfare.

Showing the muscle that a lone senator can flex under the chamber's rules, Tom Harkin, D-Iowa, was able to frustrate Silicon Valley. He blocked a vote on legislation to allow nearly twice as many computer-savvy foreigners and other high-skilled immigrants into the country next year after the measure was easily passed by the House.

Another missed opportunity: The House on Thursday laid the groundwork for U.S. ratification of treaties designed to enhance copyright protections for musicians, filmmakers, writers and software developers who send their works over the Internet. These treaties have been signed by more than 100 countries.

A compromise measure earlier had been worked out with the Senate, but Senate passage and subsequent treaty ratification failed to follow. The reason wasn't immediately clear.

Among other proposals that didn't make it: ■ A "flex time" bill that would apply to workers earning hourly wages in the private sector. It would have given them the same scheduling options accorded to federal workers and some management employees in private business, such as "time-and-a-half" compensatory time off.

■ A bill to establish national standards for class-action shareholder lawsuits against companies. It would have restricted the ability of investors to file such suits in state courts against companies whose stock trades on major national exchanges. Only minor differences were apparently needed for its passage by both the House and Senate, and the administration had expressed support.



Gay attack victim clings to life in Wyoming

LARAMIE, Wyo. (AP) — A gay college student was clinging to life Sunday as residents — gay and straight — condemned his brutal beating but defended Wyoming as a safe, fair-minded place to live.

Matthew Shepard, who was found savagely pistol-whipped and tied to a fence outside town last week, left Wyoming as a teen-ager, finishing high school in Switzerland. He overcame worries about coming back to attend the University of Wyoming here, but friends said he was happy with his initial experiences.

Shepard, 21, was unconscious Sunday at a Fort Collins, Colo., hospital, where he was listed in critical condition with severe head injuries. Hospital officials said his condition had deteriorated since the midweek beating. About 500 people attended a candlelight vigil Saturday night.

The beating of the 5-foot-2, 105-pound Shepard came just before National Coming Out Day, which was Sunday, and on the heels of an advertising campaign by groups urging gays to renounce homosexuality.

Police arrested two men in the attack, saying they lured Shepard from a campus hangout by telling him they were gay.

Report finds hundreds have died in restraints

HARTFORD, Conn. (AP) — Hundreds of people across the nation have died after being restrained in psychiatric and mental retardation facilities in the past decade, the Hartford Courant reported Sunday.

The newspaper's investigation confirmed 142 restraint-related deaths, many involving children, since 1988. The true death count may be three to 10 times higher because many cases are not reported to authorities, according to a statistical estimate commissioned by the Courant.

Restraints such as straitjackets and bed straps, supposed to be used only as a last resort, are commonly used for discipline, punishment or the convenience of staff at psychiatric and mental institutions, the newspaper said.

Pope decrees Jewish saint

VATICAN CITY (AP) — Under towering marble figures of the Jews who founded Christianity, Pope John Paul II on Sunday decreed the first Jewish-born saint of the modern era: Edith Stein, a nun killed in the gas chambers of Auschwitz.

From now on, the pope said, Catholics should commemorate all the Holocaust's murdered Jews each year when they mark the day Stein died — Aug. 9.

"In the martyr Sister Teresa Benedicta of the Cross so many differences meet and are resolved in peace," John Paul, using the name Stein chose when she became a nun, told the thousands filling St. Peter's Square.

It was a day filled with remarkable gestures of reconciliation: The Roman Catholic Church putting all its grandeur into a tribute to a woman of Jewish heritage. And relatives of Holocaust victims — Stein's family — shared a dais with the leader of Germany, Chancellor Helmut Kohl.

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First lady announces aid

SOFIA, Bulgaria (AP) — Far from the pressures of Washington and talk of her husband's impeachment, first lady Hillary Rodham Clinton announced new American aid grants and posed for pictures with former street children Sunday during a trip to promote women's rights.

Although Sunday was the Clintons' 23rd wedding anniversary, the couple marked the occasion apart, having celebrated on Friday with a dinner on the eve of the first lady's departure.

The first lady, on a four-day mission to Eastern Europe, addressed the opening session of a conference entitled "Women in the 21st Century" focusing on the role of women in social issues confronting southeastern Europe, much of which is still recovering from a half-century of Communist rule.

"The American people, the American government and the president of the United States will stand with

you as you press ahead to meet the challenges before you," she said.

"Democratic progress depends on the progress of women," she told delegates at the two-day conference. "Economic progress depends on progress of women. A vibrant civil society depends upon the full contribution of women."

She announced a \$15 million grant to bolster civil society in southeastern Europe, to be channeled through the U.S. Agency for International Development.

Later, at a meeting with activists at a Jewish center, Clinton praised Bulgarians for their tolerance and progress in establishing democratic principles since the fall of Communism.

A popular figure abroad, the first lady shook hands with some 50 local people and was cheered by foreign tourists as she walked to St. Sofia church, the oldest in Bulgaria's capital.