

News Digest

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Government outlines Kosovo plan

BELGRADE, Yugoslavia (AP) — Rushing to meet a deadline set by NATO, the government outlined its plan Tuesday to comply with a deal to solve the Kosovo crisis while foreign powers took the first steps to put 2,000 monitors in place to prevent cheating.

Threatened by NATO airstrikes, Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic agreed Monday to withdraw special forces from Kosovo, begin peace negotiations with separatist ethnic Albanians and allow international observers into the troubled Serb province.

But several agreements to put the deal into force are still not final, and it wasn't clear when ethnic Albanians who have fled Yugoslav security forces might begin to return to their villages.

NATO officials said they hadn't called off the airstrikes yet, and that they could still bomb any time after Friday, the deadline for Milosevic's compliance.

"We hope that this will mark a turning point ...

but the truth is not in what I am saying here today. The truth is in compliance," U.S. envoy Richard Holbrooke said after wrapping up week-long talks with the president.

If honored, the commitments should end a seven-month crackdown against Kosovo Albanian militants in the southern Serbian province that killed hundreds — most of them civilians — and left up to 300,000 displaced.

In a rare televised address, the first since the 1995 Dayton agreements that ended the Bosnian war, Milosevic sought to portray the agreements as a victory, saying they "avert the danger of a military intervention against our country."

"The agreements ... are entirely in accordance with the interests of our country," he added, citing "enormous pressures that we have been exposed to."

Since the crackdown began Feb. 28, Milosevic has insisted the crisis was an internal matter in which foreign powers should play no role. The crackdown was aimed at the rebel Kosovo Liberation Army

fighting to wrest Kosovo away from Serbia, the dominant republic of Yugoslavia.

Holbrooke said the key to the accord was Milosevic's decision to allow a 2,000-member "verification mission" and to permit aerial verification by non-combat aircraft that could begin as soon as the end of the week.

"They are not monitors, not observers," Holbrooke said. "They are compliance verifiers."

Despite the rush to implement the Kosovo accord, officials admitted Tuesday it could take weeks before the full complement of 2,000 international observers is on the ground to make sure Milosevic lives up to the agreement.

The Vienna-based Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, which is responsible for the ground component, lacks a large permanent staff. It will have to turn to its 54 member states, including the United States, Russia, Canada and European Union countries, to provide people with the proper training and skills for the job.



Gender gap closes in science

WASHINGTON (AP) — Girls are closing the gap with boys in math and science achievement but lag in computer skills, a women's advocacy group said Tuesday.

The American Association of University Women also said girls still choose jobs and careers based on stereotypes that persist. Guidance counselors are overworked to the point that they cannot steer girls into nontraditional fields, the group said.

The conclusions were among many in a 106-page synthesis of data, research reports and journal and newspaper articles. The book, prepared by a private research organization, comes six years after the group's influential report on gender equity in public schools, "How Schools Shortchange Girls."

The new publication, "Gender Gaps: Where Schools Still Fail Our Children," found that girls today are enrolling in more math and science courses while also taking more Advanced Placement courses in English, biology and foreign languages. In fact, a higher percentage of girls than boys studied geometry, biology and chemistry, according to 1994 data from the Education Department.

Woman freed from jail on bail

CLEVELAND (AP) — A forger who says she was sent to prison to prevent her from getting an abortion was freed on bail Tuesday on orders from a state appeals court.

"I want to be able sit down and think about if I do carry this baby to term, what steps I do need to take," Yuriko Kawaguchi said at a news conference shortly after she was released from Cuyahoga County Jail.

"Or if I do decide to have an abortion what kind of medical factors might be dangerous for me," she said.

Kawaguchi, a 21-year-old citizen of Japan, pleaded guilty in a credit card scam and had asked for probation so she could have an abortion.

Instead, Common Pleas Judge Patricia Cleary gave her six months in prison last week, a sentence Kawaguchi said was too harsh and designed to prevent her from terminating her pregnancy while she can legally do so.

The judge, who opposes abortion, has said she denied probation because of the severity of the crime, not because of her personal views.

Analyst charged with spying

WASHINGTON (AP) — A former analyst with the Pentagon's supersecret National Security Agency was charged Tuesday by the FBI with selling top defense secrets, including targets for U.S. nuclear weapons, to the Soviet Union during 1988-1991 for \$60,000.

The former employee of the government's top eavesdropping and code-breaking agency, David Sheldon Boone, 46, who has been living in Germany, was arrested after being lured to Washington by an FBI sting in which agents posed as spies for Russia trying to get him to resume spying, the Justice Department said.

Boone was charged with espionage, which carries a top penalty of life in prison, or death if certain conditions are met.

The government said the information he delivered to a Soviet KGB agent he knew as "Igor" included details of U.S. targeting of tactical nuclear weapons in case of a Soviet nuclear attack, the Justice Department said.

Agreement still sought on U.S. budget matters

WASHINGTON (AP) — Their differences dwindling but still knotty, White House and congressional budget bargainers hunted for agreement Tuesday on issues snarling a massive \$500 billion bill for the new fiscal year.

Though Republicans were ready to provide the \$1.1 billion President Clinton was demanding to reduce grade-school class sizes, the two sides fought over key details. Clinton wanted the money specifically set aside for hiring 100,000 teachers; Republicans wanted states to choose how to spend it and wanted money set aside for special education teachers.

Democrats also wanted to require most federal workers' health plans to cover prescription contraceptives, but Republicans wanted to let insurers opt out if they had moral objections. And Clinton — joined by Senate Minority Leader Tom Daschle, D-S.D. — was continuing to insist on billions of dollars more for farmers reeling under plummeting crop prices.

With the Nov. 3 congressional elections approaching, Republicans were aching to get to their districts to defend their House and Senate majorities.

"It's time to get back and campaign," said Rep. John Linder, R-Ga., chairman of the House GOP's campaign committee.

With Clinton spending a fourth straight day calling for more education spending, Democrats were happy to be

seen as fighting in Washington on behalf of schoolchildren.

"It's important people understand what Democrats are for," said Rep. Martin Frost, D-Texas, the House Democrats' campaign committee leader.

As a deal seemed to draw near, lawmakers from both parties searched for wins and losses in a package that seemed likely to give Clinton most of the spending he has wanted and triumphs for both sides on policy disputes.

Democrats said they were worried administration bargainers would settle for less than Clinton was demanding for teachers, school construction and family planning. They also were unhappy with a deal between the administration and GOP negotiators that would in effect lay aside for six months the fight over whether scientific sampling would be used in the 2000 census.

At stake was a giant bill covering nearly one-third of federal spending for the new fiscal year, including the departments of Health and Human Services, Agriculture, State and Interior. Of the 13 spending bills for the new year, the eight unfinished ones are being packaged together.

Fiscal year 1999 began Oct. 1, and a measure temporarily keeping many federal workers at their jobs expires tonight. If the mammoth overall bill isn't complete, lawmakers are likely to pass another stopgap bill for a day or two.

Violence prompts Netanyahu to deny Israeli pullback offer

JERUSALEM (AP) — On the eve of his departure for a make-or-break Mideast summit in Washington, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Tuesday that no deal would be signed on an Israeli troop pullback following the fatal shooting of a student.

The violence near a communal farm outside Jerusalem underscored the key issue of Thursday's summit: Netanyahu's demand that the Palestinians do more to prevent terror attacks against Israelis.

"In light of this gloomy reality, there is absolutely no chance, at this stage, of signing an agreement," said a statement released by Netanyahu's office.

On Tuesday, an unknown assailant fired a pistol at two Israeli men bathing in a spring near Ora, west of Jerusalem.

Itamar Doron, a 24-year-old student from Ora, was killed and his friend, who was not identified, was in critical condition in Jerusalem's Hadassah hospital with gunshot wounds to the chest and stomach. The assailants' car was later found abandoned near the West Bank.

Netanyahu said that if the assailants fled to Palestinian territory, as has been the case in the past, Yasser Arafat's Palestinian Authority must work immediately to apprehend them.

Netanyahu has agreed in principle to hand over 13 percent of the West Bank, with some restrictions. The

United States wants Netanyahu and Arafat to conclude the agreement on the troop withdrawal.

In exchange Israel wants security guarantees from the Palestinians.

Israel TV, quoting an unnamed source close to the talks, said CIA director George Tenet had completed a deal on security favored by both sides. Tenet was in the region last week and met with Arafat and Israeli officials.

Netanyahu has come under increasing pressure from right-wing members of his government and newly appointed Foreign Minister Ariel Sharon, who oppose ceding land to the Palestinians.

The key issue to be tackled in Washington is an agreement on what constitutes a good faith Palestinian crackdown on Islamic militants.

On Tuesday, Netanyahu's cabinet made a list of nine demands Palestinians must meet before a withdrawal can take place.

The Cabinet also said the Palestinians must remove clauses from their charter calling for Israel's destruction, arrest and extradite suspects in terror attacks and fight terror.

Netanyahu said he would bring back any deal for approval before signing. Michael Kleiner, who represents a powerful 17-member right-wing bloc in Netanyahu's coalition, said any indication that Netanyahu would agree to a pullout could topple his government.

High court lets stand denial of discrimination protection

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Supreme Court Tuesday let stand a Cincinnati city charter amendment that denies discrimination protection to homosexual people. Two years ago, the high court struck down as unconstitutional a similar measure in Colorado.

The justices turned away a gay-rights group's argument that the voter-approved 1993 amendment violates homosexual people's equal-protection rights just as the Colorado amendment did.

Tuesday's action is not a decision and sets no national precedent. It likely will create confusion over government policies toward homosexual people's rights.

Three justices took the unusual step of emphasizing that the court's action "should not be interpreted either as an independent construction of the charter or as an expression of its

views about the underlying issues that the parties have debated at length."

Justice John Paul Stevens wrote a brief opinion playing down the court's denial of review. His opinion was joined by Justices David H. Souter and Ruth Bader Ginsburg.

The nation's highest court provided a dramatic victory for gay-rights advocates in 1996 when it threw out a Colorado state constitutional amendment that forbade state and local laws protecting homosexuals from discrimination.

The amendment unlawfully singled out gays and sought to "make them unequal to everyone else," the court ruled then.

The Cincinnati amendment bans any city ordinance or policy that provides gays "any claim of minority or protected status, quota preference or other preferential treatment."

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