

# News Digest

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## Clinton, aides ponder Iraq report

WASHINGTON (AP) - President Clinton on Monday predicted that Iraq's announced decision to stop all cooperation with U.N. arms inspectors will backfire and only stiffen the international community's resolve to compel Iraqi disarmament. He pointedly left open the possibility of a military response.

"Saddam Hussein's latest refusal to cooperate with the international weapons inspectors is completely unacceptable," Clinton said at a White House event on his proposal for a patient's bill of rights.

"Once again, though, it will backfire," Clinton said of the Iraqi president's action. "His obstructionism was immediately and unanimously condemned by the United Nations Security Council. It has only served to deepen the international community's resolve."

Clinton said his national security team would be consulting with allied nations to consider how to respond.

"Until inspectors are back on the job, no

options are off the table," he said without explicitly mentioning military force.

"For Iraq, the only path to lifting sanctions is through complete cooperation with the weapons inspectors - without restrictions, runarounds or roadblocks," he added.

The State Department, meanwhile, said Monday that despite Iraq's announcement, it was halting all cooperation with U.N. weapons inspectors, the search for illegal weapons is proceeding and Iraq has not made a move to expel the inspectors.

Clinton made his remarks shortly after meeting with his top national security aides.

Defense Secretary William Cohen dashed back to Washington on Sunday, cutting short a planned Asia trip in order to huddle at the White House for a series of crisis-response meetings. Also meeting with Clinton were Secretary of State Madeleine Albright and CIA Director George Tenet.

There was little indication the Clinton administration was moving toward a quick military

response.

At the State Department, spokesman James P. Rubin said a technical team has tended to a monitoring camera and groups of inspectors have gone to suspect sites for a second consecutive day.

Iraq's announcement Saturday is regarded as "a very serious matter," Rubin said. "Iraq has confronted the international community with an escalation by refusing to cooperate."

The spokesman again raised the threat of force to compel Iraq's compliance, and said the United States reserved the option of acting alone, if need be.

The administration appears ready to let the U.N. Security Council take the lead in confronting Iraq over the country's refusal to permit inspections for weapons of mass destruction.

Iraq banned U.N. inspection teams from working in the country Saturday after the Security Council renewed its refusal to lift economic sanctions against Iraq. The council then demanded unanimously that Iraq reverse the ban.



### Arafat, Netanyahu delay fulfillment of agreement

JERUSALEM (AP) - In a surprising show of good will, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat agreed Monday to delay the implementation of the new Mideast peace agreement.

Netanyahu promised Arafat that their land-for-security agreement would be carried out as efficiently as possible. Specifically, Israel said it would attempt to meet the target date of Nov. 16 for the initial troop pullback from the West Bank.

But an overdue Palestinian action plan to fight terrorism could knock back implementation even further. Israel said the plan, at the heart of the new accord, needed to be submitted by today so the Cabinet could ratify the deal.

### International warrant issued for Chilean leader's arrest

PARIS (AP) - A French judge on Monday issued an international arrest warrant for former Chilean leader Augusto Pinochet on charges of "sequestration followed by torture," judicial officials said.

The officials, who requested anonymity, said Paris Judge Roger Le Loire had issued the request, a necessary step before France can officially ask for Pinochet's extradition.

Last week, a lawyer, representing three French families whose relatives disappeared in Chile after Pinochet took power in 1973, filed a complaint with a French court, asking for Pinochet's extradition to face charges of crimes against humanity.

Pinochet, 82, is under police guard at a hospital in north London.

### Eiffel Tower workers strike over lack of personnel

PARIS (AP) - The Eiffel Tower, the most visited monument in the City of Light, stood empty again Monday while striking workers refused to relent on their demand for more personnel.

The press office for the Eiffel Tower declined to predict when the "grande dame" of Paris monuments would reopen.

Workers, mainly hosts and hostesses, went on strike late Friday afternoon, shutting out up to 35,000 visitors over the All Saints Day holiday weekend and an expected 8,000 visitors today, the press office said.

Striking workers are demanding that seven more people be hired.

### Report: Car Diana crashed in had no mechanical problems

PARIS (AP) - A chief judge investigating the car crash that killed Princess Diana received two key reports Monday, one on the driver's blood and another showing that the vehicle had no mechanical problems, judicial sources said.

The reports, which bring the probe closer to completion, were not made public.

Two sources close to the investigation told The Associated Press 10 days ago that the results of tests on the Mercedes in which Diana was riding show the car was mechanically sound. They also show that the car was going slower than originally believed and that it brushed against a Fiat Uno, the sources said, speaking on condition of anonymity.

## Spending rate up; savings rate down

WASHINGTON (AP) - Americans spent at a brisk pace in September, but to do it they had to raid their savings for the first time in nearly 40 years. Economists warned that people can't keep that up for long.

"We are spending a lot of money. It cannot continue," said economist Sung Won Sohn of Northwest Corp. in Minneapolis. "This low savings rate doesn't augur very well for economic growth in the future."

The savings rate - savings as a percentage of after-tax income - was minus 0.2 percent, the worst performance since 1959, when the government began tracking the rate on a monthly basis, the Commerce Department said Monday.

Negative saving occurs when people finance their spending through credit cards, home equity credit lines and other loans, by selling stocks or other investments or by using past savings.

On an annual basis, the rate hasn't been negative since the Depression year of 1933. But the latest rate is not as bad as it looks: Stock market gains and money taken out of home equity during refinancings don't count as income, but they've given people more money to spend.

"Americans have been feeling wealthier ... so they spend more ... and they don't feel they have to save as much," said Commerce Undersecretary Rob Shapiro.

Nevertheless, the trend is unmistakably down. So far this year, the savings rate has been running at a positive 0.6 percent, down from 2.1 percent in 1997 and 2.9 percent in 1996.

"There is an issue of concern here," Shapiro said. "Not everyone has financial assets, and there are reasons to be concerned that Americans are not saving enough for retirement."

The drop in the savings rate in September came as personal incomes rose an unexpectedly modest 0.2 percent and spending increased at a robust 0.5 percent, on a seasonally adjusted basis.

It was the biggest increase in spending in four months. But there hasn't been a weaker income gain since November 1994.

## Mudslides follow Hurricane Mitch

CHINANDEGA, Nicaragua (AP) - Overwhelmed by death and chaos, Central American officials on Monday estimated more than 7,000 people died in floods and mudslides triggered by Hurricane Mitch.

As Nicaraguan officials here struggled to account for 1,500 people feared buried by a mudslide, Honduran President Carlos Flores Facusse made an emotional appeal for international aid and announced he was declaring the equivalent of a state of siege to combat looting.

"There are corpses everywhere, victims of landslides or of the waters," the president said in a nationally broadcast speech. "The most conservative calculations of the dead are in the thousands, not in the hundreds."

"I ask the international community for human solidarity," he said.

The same was true across the border: As many as 1,500 people were buried near this town in northwest Nicaragua when the crater lake of the Casitas Volcano collapsed, sending a wall of mud and debris onto villages below.

"It looked like a line of helicopters flying really low and coming at us. You could see houses, trees, everything being covered," said Ricardo Antonio Garcia, a 23-year-old farmer whose leg was amputated after being crushed in the mudslide.

Nicaraguan Vice President Enrique Bolanos said the slide apparently killed 1,000 to 1,500 people and that some 600 other people died elsewhere in the country.

"We perhaps will never know how many people died," he said.

In neighboring Honduras, "more than 5,000 people" probably died, Dimas Alonzo, operations chief for the National Emergency Committee, told a local radio station. He said the exact number would never be known.

Many parts of Honduras remained cut off almost a week after Mitch barreled into the Bay Island of Guanaja with 180-mph winds. The storm pounded across the isthmus, dropping up to 25 inches of rain in a six-hour period, before dissipating Monday in southern Mexico.

Flores Facusse said "the floods and mudslides erased from the map many villages and households as well as whole neighborhoods of cities."

"We have before us a panorama of death, desolation and ruin throughout

"We perhaps will never know how many people died."

ENRIQUE BOLANOS  
Nicaraguan vice president

the national territory," the president said.

He announced a "state of exception" suspending constitutional liberties that allows authorities the right to seize property, detain suspects and unlimited searches to help officials fight looting and vandalism.

Virtually all of Honduras suffered flooding, from the lowland marshes on the Atlantic Coast to the mountains, hills and plateaus of the interior.

In Chinandega, about 50 miles northwest of the Nicaraguan capital, Managua, Garcia said relatives pulled him from the debris after the mudslide Friday. He and 40 others were taken to a one-room, hilltop shack overlooking the village of Rolando Rodriguez.

"We thought that help would come, but it never did," Garcia said.

He said a 3-year-old girl beside him was so badly injured she could not move. "When she asked me for water, I would drink some and give it to her from my mouth."

By the time rescuers finally arrived Sunday, three of the injured had died. But the 3-year-old girl survived.

Miguel Rostran Laguna, 42, who was in a hospital bed beside Garcia, said that from the door of the shack, "all you could see was mud where the village had been. Nothing is left of Rolando Rodriguez."

It was unclear how many residents of Rolando Rodriguez and nearby villages had escaped. By early Monday, soldiers had found 360 bodies, army spokesman Capt. Milton Sandoval said.

The international Red Cross on Monday tripled its appeal for assistance to those hit by Mitch, to \$7.4 million.

At least one rescue effort led to additional deaths: The mayor of the Honduran capital and three others died Sunday in a helicopter crash while surveying flood damage. Tegucigalpa Mayor Cesar Castellanos, 49, had been seen as a likely presidential candidate in the 2001 elections.

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