

News Digest

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Livingston controls speaker race

WASHINGTON (AP) — Rep. Bob Livingston, a pragmatic conservative from Louisiana, took command of the race to succeed House Speaker Newt Gingrich on Monday as his only rival dropped out and the second-ranking Republican leader paid a courtesy call.

"The truth is, the vote is in. Bob Livingston is going to be our next speaker and I'm withdrawing my name for that reason," said Rep. Christopher Cox of California, who was a formal candidate for less than 72 hours.

Majority Leader Dick Armey of Texas left the Capitol to visit Livingston in his office in a congressional building across the street, said his spokeswoman Michele Davis. "He went over there to congratulate him," she said.

Armey, too, has enough votes to ward off challenges, Davis said. Even so, Rep. Jennifer Dunn of Washington announced a bid to topple Armey, joining Rep. Steve Largent of Oklahoma in that race. "I am asking you to support me as a member who will serve as a fresh face for the party," Dunn said in an e-mail sent to GOP lawmakers.

Gingrich returned to the Capitol for the first time since Republicans lost seats in last week's midterm elections, an event that led to his stunning decision Friday to step down as speaker. The Georgian did not speak to reporters as he arrived. A handwritten sign was posted at the

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CHRISTOPHER COX
House representative, California

entrance to the suite where he presided over the Republican Revolution the past four years: "Office closed to tours."

Inside the Capitol, Gingrich was a lame duck, his power ebbing as Republicans jockeyed for position in the Congress that convenes in January.

Influence was flowing to Livingston, 55, who chairs the Appropriations Committee and was elected last Tuesday to his 11th full term. Cox announced his decision on ABC's "Good Morning America," then wrote a letter to fellow Republican lawmakers, saying Livingston "deserves our unanimous support as he takes on this daunting challenge."

The maneuvering continued in the House while in the Senate, any threat of a challenge to Majority Leader Trent Lott, R-Miss., disappeared during the day. Sen. Don Nickles of

Oklahoma, the GOP whip, was sending a letter to colleagues saying he will seek a second term as second-in-command.

Livingston, as a veteran of the House Appropriations Committee, has spent a career making deals with lawmakers of both parties to build support for legislation. While solidly conservative — he is firmly opposed to abortion, for example — he bristled at several points over the past few years when other conservatives wanted to use the spending bills that came out of his committee to carry controversial amendments dealing with social issues.

Normally genial — on one recent day he lingered to explain details of a diet that has enabled him to shed several pounds — Livingston also has occasional outbursts of temper. Past targets of his anger say it passes quickly.

Hoover's remarks on JFK case released

■ The FBI director condemned some agents' missteps in keeping an eye on Oswald.

WASHINGTON (AP) — After President Kennedy's assassination, an angry J. Edgar Hoover scribbled stinging remarks in the margins of an FBI memo detailing how agents had failed — sometimes for "asinine" reasons, Hoover wrote — to keep a close eye on Lee Harvey Oswald in the months before the 1963 shooting.

The FBI memo was among more than 400,000 Kennedy-related documents released Monday at the National Archives.

It has long been known that the FBI mishandled its pre-assassination investigation of Oswald, who had been watched by agents since 1959 when he defected to the former Soviet Union. But archivists say this is the first time they've seen the Dec. 10, 1963, memo containing Hoover's curt, handwritten remarks about how the bureau bungled the case.

The 11-page memo to Clyde Tolson, the No. 2 official at the FBI, was written by James Gale, who conducted an internal probe that revealed "a number of investigative and reporting delinquencies in the handling of the Oswald case."

The memo argues that based on Oswald's

defection and other details known to FBI agents, Oswald should have been placed on the FBI's Security Index, a list of people considered threats to public officials or national security.

The list is available to the Secret Service, which uses the information in its efforts to protect the president. FBI field personnel told Gale they did not think Oswald met the criteria for being on the list.

If Oswald had been on the list, law enforcement officials may have been more aggressive in checking his status before Kennedy traveled to Dallas.

"Certainly no one in full possession of all his faculties can claim Oswald didn't fall within this criteria," Hoover wrote at the bottom of the memo.

John Newman, a University of Maryland professor and former intelligence officer who has written a book on Oswald, said Hoover was angry because FBI agents in Washington, Dallas, New Orleans and New York all had been following Oswald's movements yet were "flat on their feet" in the weeks before the assassination.

"Hoover is saying in earthy terms the obvious: How could they have been so incompetent?" Newman said. "Hoover's written remarks make clear the level of incompetence and embarrassment of the bureau's handling of

Lee Harvey Oswald."

Gale's memo cites several FBI missteps in Dallas.

FBI Agent James Hosty, who was assigned to Oswald in Dallas, said the bureau wanted to interview Oswald's wife, Marina, but didn't do it in March 1963 because Oswald had been "drinking to excess and (had) beat up (his) wife on several occasions."

Hosty said the Dallas bureau opted for a "60-day cooling-off period."

This is "certainly an asinine excuse," Hoover wrote.

After the cooling-off period, the FBI couldn't find Oswald or his wife. The pair surfaced a few months later in New Orleans.

In mid-December 1963, Hoover quietly censured and placed on probation more than a dozen agents, including Hosty, for shortcomings in handling the Oswald case. (In his book on Hoover, author Curt Gentry wrote that in obtaining his personnel file years later, "Hosty discovered that his answers to Inspector Gale's questions had been falsified.")

Gale also suggested the bureau change the criteria for placing an individual on the Security Index "rather than take the position that all of these (FBI) employees were mistaken in their judgment."

Hoover disagreed again, writing: "They were worse than mistaken."



CIA: Don't give Iraq time to rebuild weapons

WASHINGTON (AP) — Iraq could rebuild its chemical and biological arsenals if international arms inspections ceased, the CIA said Monday as the Clinton administration prepared options on the latest standoff.

Iraq has "the capability to quickly resurrect weapons of mass destruction production absent U.N. sanctions," the CIA reported to lawmakers.

Ten days ago, Saddam Hussein declared a halt to cooperation with the U.N. Special Commission that searches for chemical and biological weapons. President Clinton's national security team has developed options for him that include air strikes.

At the State Department, spokesman James Rubin sought to dispel suggestions that the United States was alone in its effort to isolate and punish Iraq for noncompliance with international arms inspectors.

"The blame of the whole world is resting clearly and squarely on the doorstep of Iraq and the shoulders of Saddam Hussein," Rubin said. "We don't feel lonely."

It appeared that only Britain was ready to join the United States in a threat of force against Iraq. British Defense Secretary George Robertson warned during a visit to Kuwait on Monday that the international community's patience was "draining away."

Adams asks Blair to continue pressure

LONDON (AP) — Sinn Fein party leader Gerry Adams implored British Prime Minister Tony Blair on Monday to break the impasse in Northern Ireland peacemaking by putting pressure on the North's Protestant leaders.

Protestant leader David Trimble is refusing to form a new administration for Northern Ireland that includes Adams' Irish Republican Army-allied party unless the IRA starts disarming.

April's historic accord — supported by both Trimble's Ulster Unionist Party and Sinn Fein — envisioned forming a new coalition government by last month and securing IRA disarmament by mid-2000.

Trimble insists the IRA needs to show its July 1997 truce is sincere by starting to disarm, or Sinn Fein won't be eligible to help govern the divided province.

But Adams asserted that April's accord doesn't require the IRA to disarm, and that the truce should be sufficient "proof of the goodwill of the IRA."

Blair made no comment after the meeting.

Britons: Queen should remain on throne

LONDON (AP) — Most Britons do not think Queen Elizabeth II should abdicate the throne to allow her oldest son, Prince Charles, to become king, according to a poll released Monday.

A poll commissioned for the Daily Mail tabloid and a British television station found that 67 percent believe the queen should remain the monarch for the rest of her life, the paper said.

The prince, who celebrates his 50th birthday on Saturday, recently has been at the center of some controversy. A television documentary that aired Sunday quoted an unnamed "senior royal aide" as claiming that Prince Charles would be "privately delighted" if his mother, 72, abdicated.

The prince issued a strong denial on Friday, following publicity about the London Weekend Television program. The producers have said they stand by their report.

German Jews remember Kristallnacht

BERLIN (AP) — With a "march of silence," Germany's Jewish community marked the 60th anniversary Monday of Kristallnacht — the "Night of Broken Glass" — when Nazi storm troopers burned and ransacked Jewish businesses and temples.

Germany's Jewish community, which numbered 530,000 before the Nazis took power, now stands at around 70,000 and is growing.

Neo-Nazi incidents are on the rise, and Jewish leaders are more determined than ever that the Holocaust not be forgotten — fighting what they see as a trend toward emphasizing Germany's future at the expense of remembering its past.

Politicians, including Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder, religious leaders and members of the Jewish community gathered for anniversary speeches in a cavernous, mosaic-covered Berlin synagogue where windows were shattered during the Kristallnacht violence that

presaged the Holocaust.

They discussed how to remember the past while moving Germany into the 21st century and its seat of government back to Berlin. Underscoring all the speeches was the theme that Germans still struggle for the right way to preserve the horrors of the Holocaust as a lesson for future generations.

Ignatz Bubis, the leader of Germany's Jews, lambasted what he called an "intellectual nationalism" represented in comments by a prize-winning German author who says repeated media references to Nazi atrocities are designed to perpetuate German guilt.

The Kristallnacht anniversary has particular significance this year, which saw the election of politicians too young to have memories of World War II.

The generational change, coupled with the move to Berlin and the new government's emphasis on a forward-looking Germany, has sparked concern that

there is a desire to return to a "normal" Germany unburdened by the Holocaust.

"For me, normality is to be a Jew and to be able to live in Germany again," Bubis said. "Normality cannot mean that we supplant memory and live with a new anti-Semitism and new racism."

Berlin's Jewish community held its first "march of silence" Monday in remembrance of Kristallnacht. Some 2,000 to 3,000 people formed a sea of umbrellas on a dark, drizzly afternoon. A march also was held in Duesseldorf, along with ceremonies in Buchenwald, Frankfurt, Hamburg and Munich.

They marked the "Night of Broken Glass," when Nazis rounded up Jews and burned and broke windows in synagogues and Jewish businesses.

When the rampage ended Nov. 10, more than 1,300 synagogues were destroyed and more than 30,000 Jews had been sent to concentration camps. Several hundred people died.

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