

News Digest

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PAGE 2

Tensions on the rise in Persian Gulf

IRAQ from page 1

ed private U.S. citizens in Kuwait should leave.

The United Nations withdrew several hundred weapons inspectors and other U.N. staff from Baghdad in light of the possibility of American airstrikes. The U.N. Security Council called an emergency meeting as Secretary-General Kofi Annan appealed to Saddam to immediately resume cooperation with inspectors. Annan said he was "saddened and burdened" by Iraq's defiance.

The Security Council passed a res-

olution this week condemning Iraq's noncooperation, but it did not include an explicit go-ahead for military action. The Clinton administration contends that earlier resolutions concerning Iraq give it the right to use force, although some U.N. members dispute that.

The timing of any possible U.S. action was unclear.

Clinton, in his speech, issued no explicit threat to attack Iraq but made clear he believed that failure to enforce the U.N.'s demands for arms inspections would be a costly mistake.

"If the inspectors are not permitted to visit suspect sites or monitor compli-

ance at known production facilities, they may as well be in Baltimore, not Baghdad," Clinton said. "That would open a window of opportunity for Iraq to rebuild its arsenal of weapons and delivery systems in months - I say again, in months - not years."

Attitudes toward Baghdad appeared to be hardening elsewhere. Foreign ministers from Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Finland and Iceland jointly condemned Iraq's refusal to cooperate with U.N. inspectors, according to a statement issued Wednesday in Oslo, Norway.

In Moscow, Vladimir Zhirinovskiy's

ultranationalist party failed today to win approval for a parliamentary motion calling for sanctions against Iraq to be lifted.

However, Prakash Shah, the U.N. envoy to Iraq, said Iraq's Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz told him Wednesday that Iraqi officials would not change their position.

"They will not be able to desist from their position unless the Security Council takes some action in regard to the sanctions on Iraq," Shah said, summarizing Aziz's views.

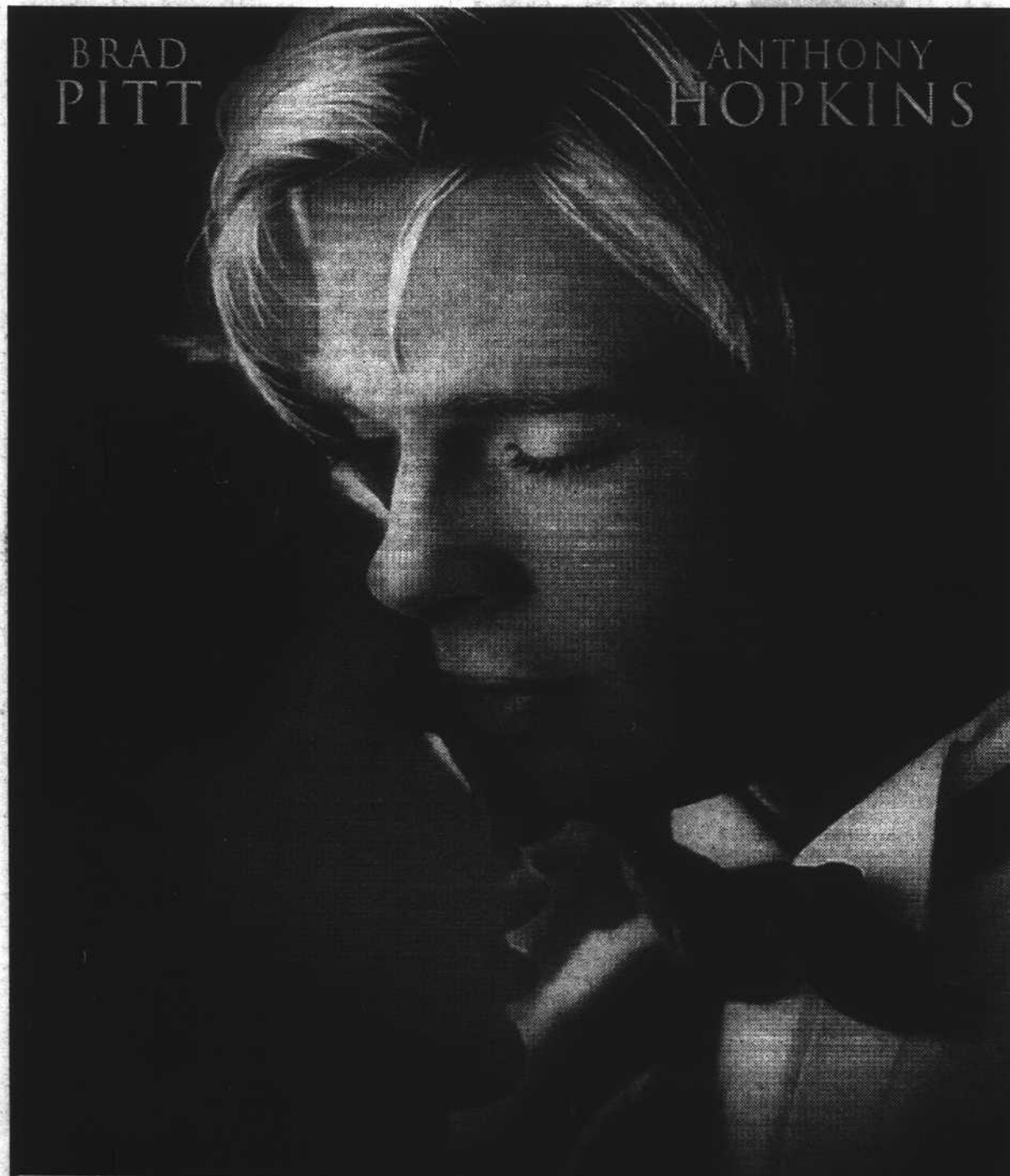
A leading Arabic newspaper quoted diplomats today as saying the

United States and Britain have planned a three-phase strike against Iraq that could involve the deployment of troops in the country.

The United States and Britain maintain there is Middle East backing for a military strike, but Arab officials have offered no public support.

Jordan's Prime Minister Fayez Tarawneh met Wednesday with Saudi Arabia's King Fahd and Crown Prince Abdullah and said later the two countries "are in agreement that the crisis ... should be solved diplomatically."

"It appears that attempts to defuse the crisis could be late."



Israeli Cabinet narrowly passes peace agreement

■ Ratification of the accord will lead to a troop withdrawal from the West Bank by early next year.

JERUSALEM (AP) - The Israeli Cabinet narrowly ratified the peace agreement with the Palestinians Wednesday after a two-week delay and some U.S. prodding, setting the stage for a troop withdrawal from 13 percent of the West Bank by the end of January.

The accord was approved by eight of the 17 ministers after a seven-hour debate. Five ministers abstained and four voted against in what appeared to be a political blow for Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who had expected broader support.

Over the past two weeks, with Netanyahu postponing Cabinet debate four times, the United States urged Israel to try to stick to the original timetable of the land-for-security agreement.

Saying that it was difficult to "part with even one square centimeter" of the land, Netanyahu attached four stipulations to the agreement that could cause new disruptions.

Under one of the conditions, Netanyahu said he would bring each stage of the phased pullback over the next three months to the Cabinet for separate approval. Ministers will be asked to determine whether the Palestinians have met their security obligations under the accord, he said.

Netanyahu also demanded that the Palestine National Council hold a formal vote by mid-December to revoke clauses in the PLO founding charter

that call for Israel's destruction.

The third stipulation said Israel reserved the right to annex areas of the West Bank if Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat went ahead with plans to unilaterally declare a Palestinian state in May, at the end of the five-year autonomy period.

In a fourth clause, Netanyahu said that in an additional pullback to which Israel committed itself last year, the Palestinians would receive no more than 1 percent of the West Bank.

Despite the new conditions, Netanyahu pledged to go ahead with implementing the agreement. Israel already has fallen behind in the 12-week time table negotiated at last month's Mideast summit.

Netanyahu said he would permit the opening of the Palestinian airport next week and also would begin releasing Palestinian security prisoners at that time. In all, 750 Palestinians held by Israel for security offenses are to be freed by January.

Another key Israeli commitment, to withdraw from 2 percent of the West Bank by Monday, likely will not be carried out on time, said Netanyahu adviser David Bar-Illan. The troop redeployment cannot take place until parliament has approved the deal Tuesday and will likely be carried out a week late.

Palestinian negotiator Hassan Asfour said he believed Netanyahu attached new conditions to please Israeli hardliners.

"We appreciate the Cabinet approval, but we will close our ears and eyes to the conditions, because they are for them and not for us," Asfour told The Associated Press.

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NOVEMBER 13

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