

NEWS DIGEST

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PAGE 2

Crisis in Kosovo



House limits Clinton's power

■ A divided House voted to require that the president obtain congressional approval before sending ground troops into Kosovo.

WASHINGTON (AP) — In a challenge to President Clinton over Kosovo, a divided House voted Wednesday to limit his authority to use ground forces in Yugoslavia despite his appeal for the nation to speak "with a single voice."

The Republican-sponsored measure, approved 249 to 180, would require Clinton to obtain congressional approval before sending "ground elements" to Kosovo or other parts of Yugoslavia.

Clinton told lawmakers he still considers a ground campaign unnecessary — but promised to seek congressional approval if he changes his mind.

Even as Congress debated limiting the war, the Pentagon announced the Air Force had alerted B-52 crews in the United States to be prepared for the possible deployment of 10 additional bombers to Europe to join the NATO air campaign.

They would be among nearly 300 additional aircraft — mostly fighters, refuelers and other support planes — that NATO commanders have requested in order to accelerate the bombing of Yugoslavia.

Suggesting the House-passed legislation was a veto candidate, Democratic leaders said the "ground elements" wording was so vague it could even apply to forces already in the region, or to the use of U.S. Apache helicopters in Albania.

Republicans said the measure was intended only to apply to ground combat missions.

"We should not even be in the Balkans," said Rep. Floyd Spence, R-S.C., chairman of the Armed Services Committee. "The national security of this country is not at stake."

The Senate has not acted yet on the measure, although it voted last month to support the airstrikes.

Meanwhile, Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman Jesse Helms, R-N.C., scheduled a hearing before his panel for today to vote on a measure by a bipartisan group of senators led by Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz., to authorize Clinton to use "all means necessary," including ground troops, to prosecute the war.

At a White House meeting shortly before the House vote, lawmakers said Clinton told them he would seek congressional approval if he decides a ground campaign is needed.

"I can assure you that I would fully consult with the Congress," he later told House Speaker Dennis Hastert, R-Ill., in a letter.

Republican leaders said they wanted to hold him to his word — and fulfill their constitutional responsibility for warmaking.

But Democrats said the vote, during the first extended debate on the crisis since the NATO bombing campaign began on March 24, interfered with Clinton's role as commander in chief and would send a message of mixed U.S. resolve.

Milosevic fires deputy premier who criticized Yugoslav policies

BELGRADE, Yugoslavia (AP) — A deputy premier who dared criticize Slobodan Milosevic was fired Wednesday in what NATO said was a sign of growing dissent in Yugoslavia over the Kosovo crisis.

Vuk Draskovic, a former Yugoslav opposition leader who in recent days denounced the Milosevic government and even Milosevic's politically powerful wife, was dismissed because of "public statements which were contrary to the government stands," the Tanjug state news agency said.

Speaking after his ouster, the 52-year-old Draskovic said: "I don't know what precipitated my removal. I haven't spoken to Milosevic."

The firing came the same day that NATO said it was seeing signs of serious discontent inside Yugoslavia.

Draskovic had said the Yugoslav leadership should stop lying to its people about the situation in the country after weeks of bombings and recognize "we cannot defeat NATO."

Draskovic, however, is the only official who has spoken out against the regime during the airstrikes, and his firing cast doubts about any significant weakening in the government.

NATO spokesman Jamie Shea said "it does President Milosevic a dishonor that once again he reacts to any criticism or any opposing views by immediately firing those who are connected with these opinions."

Brave voices such as Draskovic's are starting to speak out against Milosevic's policies, publicly blaming Belgrade for the NATO attacks and calling for political change, Shea said without elaborating.

But Draskovic, a maverick who joined the government only in January, sounded a

"I don't know what precipitated my removal. I haven't spoken to Milosevic."

VUK DRASKOVIC
former Yugoslav opposition leader

nationalistic tone after his dismissal and denied any rift.

"Maybe some people in the West believed that I could be the man of tomorrow with whom NATO could cooperate," he said.

"No! NATO is the aggressor. ... We are victims of this blind revenge against a whole nation."

The latest exodus of ethnic Albanian refugees from Kosovo, meanwhile, has left overcrowded camps "on the verge of rioting," a spokesman for the U.N. refugee agency said.

Tent cities in northern Macedonia are heavily overcrowded, facing unrest as well as disease outbreaks, said Kris Janowski of the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees, said.

More than 4,000 Kosovo refugees crossed into Macedonia, telling of a heightened Serb campaign to flush them from the province.

"We may be seeing some sort of final push here," said Ron Redmond of the U.N. refugee agency.

Over the past 24 hours, 4,000 refugees also entered Albania, where at least 350,000 of Kosovo's ethnic Albanians on the run have taken refuge.

World and Nation DATELINES

■ Washington, D.C. Percentage of traffic deaths blamed on alcohol is down

The Associated Press — The proportion of traffic deaths blamed on alcohol use has fallen from 57 percent to 39 percent since the states started cracking down on drunken driving in the early 1980s, according to a government-sponsored study released Wednesday.

The study covers 1982 through 1997. Over that same span, the percentage of the United States population living under a .10 blood-alcohol drunken driving limit has increased from 32 percent to 98 percent.

■ Washington, D.C. Amendment banning flag desecration may fly high

The Associated Press — A constitutional amendment banning flag desecration appears to have its best chance of passage in years, thanks to a change in Senate membership and second thoughts by some lawmakers opposed in the past.

Activists predict one to three votes could determine the outcome. The proposal fell three votes short in 1995.

■ Texas Dragging death trial moved out of Texas town

JASPER (AP) — The judge in the second trial over the dragging death of a black man agreed Wednesday to move the case out of Jasper after the defense argued the town may be inclined to convict the white defendant to salvage its image.

Where Lawrence Russell Brewer will be tried won't be made public until May 14. Judge Monte Lawlis said jury selection may not begin until July.

Brewer, 32, is one of three white men accused of chaining James Byrd Jr. to a pickup truck last June and dragging him to death.

■ Illinois Man kills bicyclist in attack of road rage

CHICAGO (AP) — A man was charged with killing a bicyclist by running him over in a sport utility vehicle in a fit of road rage.

Carnell Fitzpatrick, 28, surrendered to police and was being held Wednesday on \$200,000 bond. He is charged with murder for the incident.

Witnesses told police that Fitzpatrick cut off the cyclist, Thomas McBride, 28, and then McBride pounded on the side of Fitzpatrick's vehicle with his fist.

■ Cambodia Khmer Rouge official resurfaces regretful

PHNOM PENH (AP) — Long presumed dead, the secret police chief who directed a notorious torture center for the Khmer Rouge has resurfaced, a convert from communism to Christianity who was living freely in western Cambodia.

The man known as Duch (pronounced dookh), told reporters he was deeply sorry for his actions and willing to face justice, the Far Eastern Economic Review reported. Freelance photographer Nic Dunlop discovered Duch by chance in western Cambodia.

Three teens cleared in shooting

GOLDEN, Colo. (AP) — Three teenagers detained outside Columbine High School during last week's massacre have been cleared as suspects in the investigation, a sheriff's spokesman said Wednesday.

Investigators also said that the 18-year-old girlfriend of one of the gunmen bought three of the weapons used in the April 20 attack that left 15 dead. Sheriff's spokesman Steve Davis said the young woman bought two shotguns and a semi-automatic rifle.

On Tuesday, Sheriff John Stone told The Associated Press that the three young men who were taken into custody in combat fatigues were "subjects of our investigation." Davis said Wednesday, however, that they have been questioned at least twice and are not considered suspects.

"These three people ... have now been cleared," Davis said. He added that Stone had outdated information when he made his comments to the AP.

Meanwhile, a Marine Corps spokesman said Wednesday that 18-year-old gunman Eric Harris had tried to enlist but was told by a recruiter visiting his home on April 15 that he had been rejected for a medical reason.

The Marines refused to discuss the medical reason, but a Harris family friend, Victor Good, told The New York Times that the teen had been taking psychiatric medication — a potentially dis-

qualifying factor — and seeing a psychiatrist.

The sheriff for the first time laid out a timeline for the attack at the Littleton school. He also said a school surveillance camera filmed the bloody scene in the cafeteria, where no one died but wounded students were found strewn about the floor.

Harris and Dylan Klebold, 17, killed 12 classmates and a teacher before turning their guns on themselves. In a field outside, three young men in dark jackets and combat-style boots were stopped by sheriff's deputies as TV cameras broadcast the scene nationwide. They were frisked and taken off for interrogation. They carried no weapons.

Stone said he has questioned for days whether the gunmen acted alone.

"There's too much stuff in there," he said. "You can't walk in there blazing with more stuff than you can carry."

The three young men, who Stone said knew the gunmen and had previously been associated with their "Trenchcoat Mafia," have maintained their innocence. Investigators tested them for gun residue after the shootings and found no evidence that they had fired guns.

All three claimed to have heard of the slayings on the radio — and were able to name the gunmen — before the names had been released, Stone said. He said one had been expelled from Columbine High.

One killed in Alberta, Canada school shooting

TABER, Alberta (AP) — One student was killed and another wounded Wednesday when a gunman opened fire at a high school in the Canadian province of Alberta.

Other students said the shooter carried a .22-caliber rifle and identified him as a former student at the school.

A police spokeswoman confirmed two boys were shot at W.R. Myers High School in Taber but gave no details.

Mark Gregory, a spokesman with the Lethbridge Regional Hospital, said one of the victims was dead and the other was in surgery.

A secretary at the school said one person was in custody after the shooting, which occurred around the lunch hour.

Taber is a farming community about 185 miles southeast of Calgary, 50 miles north of the U.S. border.

Daily Nebraskan

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