

NEWS DIGEST

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No indictment in Ramsey case

BOULDER, Colo. (AP) — A grand jury decided there was insufficient evidence to indict anyone in the JonBenet Ramsey slaying, ending a 13-month investigation into the case, District Attorney Alex Hunter announced Wednesday.

"The Boulder County grand jury has completed its work and will not return," Hunter said. "No charges have been filed."

"I must report to you that I and my prosecutorial team believe we do not have sufficient evidence to warrant the filing of charges against anyone who has been investigated at this time."

Twelve jurors, who have met for more than 13 months, left the Boulder County Justice Center without comment about two hours before Hunter issued a statement.

Hunter declined to answer questions and said he would meet with the news media today.

The brutal crime set off a drawn-out, controversial search for her killer.

The prominence of the family — the father, the millionaire president of Access Graphics, the mother, a former Miss West Virginia — and the beauty of the little blond victim guaranteed worldwide attention for nearly three years.

It was before dawn on the day after Christmas in 1996 when Patsy Ramsey says she found a 2½-page ransom note on the back staircase in the family's upscale home that demanded \$118,000 for the safe return of JonBenet.

"Listen Carefully!" the note begins. "We are a group of individuals that represent a small foreign faction. We respect your business but not the country that it serves. At this time we have your daughter in our possession."

Eight hours later, Ramsey says he found his daughter's body in a basement room, wrapped in a white blanket. A rope was wrapped around her neck and a wrist and tied to a stick.

A red-ink heart was drawn on her left palm, and Ramsey told police he removed duct tape from the child's mouth before carrying her body upstairs.

An autopsy concluded JonBenet suffered a skull fracture, was strangled and beaten and may have been sexually assaulted.

Critics claimed the investigation was compromised early when detectives, believing they were dealing with a kidnapping, allowed friends and family to roam through the Ramsey mansion. They also asked Ramsey to conduct a search, which led to the discov-

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ALEX HUNTER
district attorney

ery of the body.

The investigation also was fractured by infighting between police and prosecutors over the best way to proceed.

Two investigators resigned; one accused prosecutors of protecting the Ramseys and blocking police efforts to solve the case, while the other contended his fellow officers were improperly targeting innocent people, including the Ramseys.

The two investigators embody the two theories about JonBenet's killer: one focused on the parents; the other on an intruder. The Ramseys, who now live in suburban Atlanta, have repeatedly denied any involvement in the crime. They offered a \$100,000 reward and mounted a newspaper campaign seeking JonBenet's killer.

Authorities amassed evidence that supported both theories.

Lab tests concluded the ransom note was written with a pen and pad that belonged to the Ramseys.

Handwriting experts ruled Ramsey out as the author, but said Patsy Ramsey's writing samples were inconclusive.

Colorado Bureau of Investigation agents concluded four fibers on the duct tape allegedly taken from JonBenet's mouth were consistent with a jacket her mother wore Christmas night, according to published reports.

The Boulder County grand jury of eight women and four men began hearing evidence in the case in September 1998, listening to testimony from family, friends and police detectives. Its term was set to expire Oct. 20.

Senate approves aid for farming assistance

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Senate gave final approval Wednesday to a record \$8.7 billion package of emergency farm assistance.

It was the second big bailout in many years for producers clobbered by low commodity prices, drought and flooding.

Sen. Thad Cochran, R-Miss., said it was "a generous response to the needs in agriculture."

The Senate's 74-26 vote sends the package to President Clinton for his expected signature.

The size of this year's bailout, nearly \$3 billion more than what Congress approved a year ago, is raising questions about the future of the government's market-oriented farm policy. Lawmakers may not be through doling out money to farmers this year.

Congressional leaders are considering additional assistance for producers whose farms were washed out last

month by Hurricane Floyd. Senate Minority Leader Tom Daschle, D-S.D., estimated \$1 billion would be needed.

What opposition there was to the package Wednesday came primarily from Eastern senators who said it didn't provide enough disaster assistance or who wanted authority for New England to continue controlling its milk prices.

While not threatening a veto, the Clinton administration has criticized the way the money would be distributed and also wants more disaster aid.

Most of the money in the package, about \$6 billion, is intended to help farmers cope with a second year of depressed commodity prices, with the bulk of the aid going to the Midwestern Corn Belt.

Farmers in Iowa would share \$610 million, the most of any state, followed by Illinois with \$535 million, according to the Agriculture Department.

Pakistan army rids country of officials

Indian troops on alert after Gen. Musharraf rids Pakistan of its elected government.

ISLAMABAD, Pakistan (AP) — Pakistan's new military leader came under pressure to restore democracy Wednesday after his troops swept away the elected government, raising fears around the world at the prospect of army rule in a nuclear-armed nation.

Pakistan's nuclear rival, India, put its troops on alert and watched warily for the next step by Gen. Pervaiz Musharraf, a man Indians blame for months of bloody fighting this summer in disputed Kashmir.

Musharraf, head of Pakistan's army, gave no hint about his plans Wednesday, maintaining silence after announcing before dawn that his troops had ousted Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif.

Tuesday's lightning coup — sparked by Sharif's attempt to fire Musharraf — capped months of growing army resentment against the premier for backing away from the fight over Kashmir. President Clinton pressured Sharif into convincing Islamic fighters to pull back, reportedly outraging and humiliating army leaders.

In Washington, Secretary of State Madeleine Albright warned the coup created a "level of uncertainty" in South Asia. She said U.S. officials had been in contact with Pakistan's military leaders, trying to persuade them to restore democratic government.

India and Pakistan, which conducted nuclear tests last year, have fought three wars in 52 years, two of them over Kashmir.

Pentagon spokesman Kenneth Bacon played down worries over Pakistan's nuclear weapons program, saying the coup had not changed the situation since control of the weapons

program had always been in the hands of the military.

Officials from both countries dismissed fears of a Pakistani attack on India. But India said efforts to revive the peace process would be delayed until the situation in Pakistan stabilized.

While Sharif remained under house arrest Wednesday, Musharraf met with President K.R. Narayanan and a range of politicians.

That raised speculation that he may try to cobble together an administration of former politicians and technocrats to rule the country.

Aside from setting up a provisional government, Musharraf could call elections — a move required within three months under the constitution — or try to rule himself.

From around the world came demands he hand power back to a democratic government.

U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan urged the army to restore civilian rule quickly, and the International Monetary Fund said it was cutting off aid to Pakistan until democracy returned.

In another sign of growing isolation, the Commonwealth — a grouping of former British colonies — said it might suspend Pakistan's membership, a move last taken in 1995 against Nigeria. European Union also said it would postpone a new trade deal with Pakistan for the time being.

In India, Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee expressed concern about the coup and said India was willing to talk to any Pakistani regime. But his foreign minister, Jaswant Singh, said negotiations would have to wait until the situation normalizes.

Pakistan's army spokesman reacted angrily to India's military alert along the border.

"I think that India's actions are totally absurd putting its forces on alert ... as if Pakistan is going to try to precipitate a war," Brig. Rashid Quereshi told The Associated Press.



■ Texas

Ambush leads to deaths of three officers, police say

PLEASANTON (AP) — Three law officers were lured to a trailer park by a bogus 911 call and shot to death by a gunman who wounded two others before killing himself, authorities said.

Jeremiah Engleton, 21, kept firing from his hiding place in a thicket as up to 75 officers surrounded the rural area Tuesday night. After a three-hour standoff, he shot himself in the head, investigators said.

One of the slain officers had arrested Engleton early that morning on charges of beating his wife, and a counselor with the sheriff's department had persuaded her to take their 15-month-old daughter and leave him.

Sheriff's Deputies Mark Stephenson, 32, and Thomas Monse, 31, were shot to death as they approached the trailer. Neither had time to call for help. After ambushing them, Engleton took each man's gun and shot him in the head.

■ Washington

Clinton repeats appeal to expand civil rights laws

WASHINGTON (AP) — A year after the beating death of a gay college freshman, President Clinton on Wednesday repeated his appeal to expand federal civil rights laws to cover homosexuals.

Senate Democrats succeeded in July in adding a gay rights measure to a spending bill for the Commerce, Justice and State departments.

Republican leaders now want the issue removed from the spending bill. Democrats said they would fight to keep the measure alive.

The measure would add acts of hatred motivated by sexual orientation, gender and disability to the list of hate crimes already covered by federal law. It would boost penalties for the crimes and allow federal prosecutors to step in if local authorities decide against prosecuting.

■ Pennsylvania

Date slated for execution of former Black Panther

HARRISBURG (AP) — Gov. Tom Ridge signed an execution warrant Wednesday for former radio journalist Mumia Abu-Jamal, less than two weeks after the U.S. Supreme Court rejected his request for a new trial.

Ridge ordered that Abu-Jamal be executed by lethal injection on Dec. 2. Abu-Jamal's lawyers responded by announcing they would file an appeal Friday in federal court in Philadelphia.

Abu-Jamal, 45, a former Black Panther and radio journalist, was convicted of murder in the 1981 shooting of Philadelphia police officer Daniel Faulkner.

Police who arrived at the scene of the shooting said they found the dying officer and a wounded Abu-Jamal lying near his own gun. Several witnesses identified him as the shooter and two people testified that Abu-Jamal confessed at the hospital. Abu-Jamal has denied confessing.

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