

NEWS DIGEST

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Negotiators begin peace talks

RAMALLAH, West Bank (AP) — Setting a 100-day deadline to craft the broad outlines of a peace that has eluded them for a half century, Israeli and Palestinian negotiators launched landmark talks Monday with handshakes, smiles — and frank acknowledgments that great gaps divide them.

The convening of so-called final-status negotiations in the West Bank town of Ramallah marked the first real attempt by Israel's new government and the Palestinian leadership to grapple with the most contentious issues bedeviling the peace process.

Those issues include the borders of a future Palestinian state, the fate of Jewish settlements in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, what will happen to millions of Palestinian refugees and above all, the status of Jerusalem.

The two delegations spent 75 minutes behind closed doors, then emerged saying their goal of a framework agreement by mid-February was difficult, but achievable.

The very length and intractability of their dispute, both sides suggested, had led to an intimate grasp of the issues, and that could help speed talks meant to lead to a final peace accord just nine months into the new millen-

nium.

"After several decades of conflict ... and negotiations for almost six years, all the problems between us are known," Oded Eran, the Israeli delegation chief, said at a joint news conference. Echoed Yasser Abed Rabbo, his Palestinian counterpart: "We are not here to invent a new basis for the process."

The talks were shadowed by a bomb attack Sunday that injured 33 Israelis.

While no group has claimed responsibility for the pipe-bomb blasts, both sides at the Ramallah talks calmly acknowledged that progress on the peace front raises the specter of violence by those who seek to block an accord.

This threat "should motivate us to work hard to achieve peace," said Abed Rabbo, the Palestinian information minister. "We will not give them the chance (to disrupt the peace process), and we will not yield to their plans and schemes."

Despite expressions of good faith and goodwill — even from Abed Rabbo, who is known for sometimes fiery anti-Israeli rhetoric — both sides hewed to opening positions that have remained basically unchanged since

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ODED ERAN

Israeli delegation chief

1993.

The Palestinians insist on an Israeli withdrawal from lands captured in the 1967 Mideast war — the West Bank, Gaza and east Jerusalem. Abed Rabbo said the Palestinians have the right to self-determination and that millions of Palestinian refugees must be allowed to return or be given compensation.

Abed Rabbo also demanded a halt to Jewish settlement-building, denouncing it as the principal obstacle to peace.

Eran, for his part, said Israel would never agree to giving up part of Jerusalem — which both sides claim as their capital — or to withdrawing to the 1967 borders. He insisted that a majority of the 200,000 Jewish settlers in the West Bank and Gaza must

remain under Israeli sovereignty.

About a mile from the hotel, Jewish settlers staged a small demonstration urging Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak not to dismantle settlements as part of any accord. Palestinians, meanwhile, rallied in the West Bank town of Hebron to mark Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat's still-unrealized 1988 declaration of Palestinian statehood.

Both sides repeated a commitment to U.N. Security Council resolutions 242 and 338, which call for an Israeli withdrawal from land occupied in the 1967 and 1973 Mideast wars. But they interpret the measures very differently. Israel maintains the resolutions do not require a pullback from all of the territory.

Chechnya bombings continue, killing nine

GROZNY, Russia (AP) — Russia boosted its military offensive in Chechnya on Monday, sending more soldiers, artillery and tanks to the southern republic and striking its capital with missiles, Russian and Chechen officials said.

At least nine civilians were killed and up to 50 wounded in the missile attacks, which also hit a village just south of Grozny, Chechen officials said.

Chechen fighters sent a barrage of rockets to try to halt a Russian ground advance in the Alkhan-Kala region near Grozny and launched ground attacks in other areas, Chechen military headquarters said.

They said they had attacked Russian units overnight near Gudermes, the republic's second-largest city, which Russian forces have been shelling for weeks.

The Chechens destroyed a Russian tank and killed up to 17 Russian soldiers in the attack, they said. Two of their own fighters were killed, and five were wounded.

The reinforcements were to be

sent to Gudermes, which lies along a strategic highway linking Grozny to the Russian republic of Dagestan.

Although Russia said its assaults were aimed only at rebel positions, its bombardment of populated areas has caused many civilian casualties.

The civilian deaths are a focus of growing international criticism of Russia's two-month campaign to wipe out Islamic militants, who twice invaded neighboring Dagestan this summer and who are blamed for apartment bombings that killed about 300 people in Russia in September.

U.S. State Department spokesman James P. Rubin said Monday that Russia was "not in keeping" with the Geneva Conventions by inflicting casualties on civilians.

Russian politicians have rejected the criticism, as well as calls for negotiations to end the fighting. A parliament member on Monday said negotiations could begin only after Russia liquidated the militants, the ITAR-Tass news agency reported.

Anti-U.S. protest staged in Athens

■ Clinton and other NATO leaders charged with genocide in a mock trial run by Greek protesters.

ATHENS, Greece (AP) — Demanding that President Clinton cancel a coming visit to Athens, thousands of demonstrators gathered in the Greek capital on Monday to attend a mock trial condemning American foreign policy.

Standing beneath umbrellas to ward off a light drizzle, the protesters chanted "Clinton, butcher of the Balkans, you are unwanted here," and "Americans: Murderers of the people."

They huddled around a stage set up to look like a Greek court and watched as Clinton and the other NATO heads of state were "charged" with genocide and war crimes for their part in the bombing of Yugoslavia earlier this year.

Actors and activists played the parts of the judge, prosecutor, Clinton's lawyer and witnesses to the NATO airstrikes against Yugoslavia. A video wall on the edge of the stage showed footage from the war.

The demonstration tapped into a

widespread mistrust of the United States, which many Greeks blame for instigating turmoil in the Balkans and accuse of favoring rival Turkey.

Anti-U.S. sentiment reached a pinnacle during NATO attacks on Yugoslavia, seen by many Greeks as a regional ally because of a shared Christian Orthodox faith. NATO member Greece signed the attack plan, but the public steadfastly remained supporters of the Serbs.

Protesters later marched to the nearby U.S. Embassy, which was surrounded by hundreds of riot police. After throwing a note containing their symbolic conviction of Clinton and other NATO leaders through the embassy gates, they dispersed peacefully.

Clinton is scheduled to arrive Saturday to open an 11-day, four-nation trip highlighted by a summit of the Organization of Security and Cooperation in Europe in Istanbul, Turkey.

Monday's rally was the first of many planned protests but was much smaller than organizers expected, with about 2,500 people turning out, mostly from communist parties or organizations.

Clinton's 48-hour trip to Greece comes just before the Nov. 17 anniversary of a 1973 crackdown of a student uprising against the then-military dictatorship. Many Greeks criticize the United States for its perceived role in supporting the junta, and Nov. 17 is traditionally a day of anti-American rallies.

The terrorist group November 17, which takes its name from the student revolt, has killed 21 people, including three American officials, since it first appeared in 1975.

In Washington, State Department spokesman James P. Rubin said U.S. officials were working closely with Greek authorities to ensure the president's safety during his visit.

"Obviously, security is a major issue," Rubin said.

World and Nation

Datelines

■ Rhode Island

Robot begins search

for Flight 990 black boxes

NEWPORT, R.I. (AP) — A tougher, nimbler underwater robot with a seven-jointed titanium arm was lowered into the sea Monday to find the black boxes that may answer what doomed EgyptAir Flight 990.

Searchers hoped the Magnum would succeed where another robot, the Deep Drone, failed, after exploring the murky, sunless depths over two days.

More than a week after the plane plunged from 33,000 feet and killed all 217 people aboard, the cockpit voice and flight data recorders that could hold the most complete picture of what went wrong remained 270 feet beneath the Atlantic.

Investigators are looking into all possibilities, including mechanical failure, human error and sabotage.

■ New York

Dow Jones, Nasdaq rise

despite Microsoft woes

NEW YORK (AP) — The Dow Jones industrial average rose Monday, and Nasdaq stocks climbed to another record as Microsoft's shares fell only slightly after a stinging antitrust ruling that branded the software maker a monopoly.

The Dow Jones industrial average closed up 14.37 at 10,718.85.

The technology-dominated Nasdaq composite index was up 41.68 at 3,143.97, according to preliminary figures, for its seventh straight record close.

Microsoft, added to the elite Dow average just a week ago, fell as low as \$83.50 a share in early Nasdaq trading before recovering to \$89.93 3/4, down \$1.62 1/2 or 1.8 percent from Friday's close.

More than 120 million shares changed hands, or about five times the average daily volume for Microsoft.

■ New York

Beatles songs translated into Latin by student

NEW YORK (AP) — All together now: "Erhat abhine viginti annis hodie, Centurio Piper catervam canere docebat."

What's that? Don't know the words?

There's hardly a baby boomer alive who wouldn't recognize the first line of the 1967 Beatles song "Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band" — ("It was 20 years ago today, Sgt. Pepper taught the band to play") — if only it weren't in Latin.

Benjamin Joffe, 23, a Cleveland native and senior at Yeshiva University in New York, managed to combine his two loves — Latin and the Beatles — by translating the 12 "Sgt. Pepper" songs into Latin.

Why? To get into the National Classics Fraternity.

The annual initiation rite, which dates to the 1950s, requires fraternity pledges to translate something from contemporary culture into Latin.

Daily Nebraskan

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