

## Kohl quits after finance scandal

BERLIN (AP) — Helmut Kohl resigned Tuesday as honorary chairman of the Christian Democratic Union, brought down by a campaign financing scandal that now marks the stunning unraveling of one of Europe's most respected statesmen and the man who reunited Germany.

Defiant to the end, Kohl gave up the influential post rather than capitulate to demands that he identify donors who made illegal campaign contributions and help clear up a scandal that threatens to ruin the party.

Kohl's single-handed leadership facilitated Germany's swift reunification in 1990. But he also tolerated no dissent and finally ceded influence in the party he tightly controlled during 25 years as chairman after its executive committee effectively isolated him during an emergency session.

In an extraordinary step that clearly pained Kohl's successor and protege, Wolfgang Schaeuble, party leaders earlier Tuesday threatened to suspend Kohl as honorary chairman until he agreed to cooperate. The post was a rare honor bestowed when Kohl gave up the party leadership in

1998 after the loss of national elections to the Social Democrats.

"We are convinced that Helmut Kohl breaches his duty as honorary chairman if he refuses to contribute to overcoming the crisis," a pale and dejected Schaeuble told reporters after the emergency session.

The leaders also demanded Kohl name names to save the party — something Kohl flatly refused to do even when fellow conservatives insisted it would end speculation that anonymous donations were tied to political favors.

"I cannot bring myself to break the promise I made to several personalities who financially supported my work in the CDU," Kohl said in the statement.

"The decision to resign the honorary chairmanship was not easy for me," he said. "I have been a Christian Democratic Union member for 50 years. It was and is my political home."

Kohl, however, retains his seat in parliament, which will make prosecuting him for irregularities more complicated by requiring a parliamentary vote to lift his immunity.

The resignation ended the power

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Gerhard Schroeder  
German chancellor

struggle in the party, with Kohl the loser. Schaeuble said the party had asked him to stay on and clear up the scandal, despite grumbling by some party members that he, too, was tainted and should step down.

The governing Social Democrats and Greens charged that the opposition had forfeited the chance to deal with the crisis head on.

"The decisions of the Christian Democrats have neither cleared up anything nor led to a self-cleansing," said Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder.

Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer said the party was still "hurtling downward in an avalanche."

Kohl's defiance — even after admitting in an interview last month that he violated the constitution — has been increasingly viewed as a liability to the party as it tries to clear itself

of accusations that it broke party financing laws by keeping donations off the books.

Kohl admitted accepting up to \$1 million in unreported campaign funds in the 1990s, when the Christian Democrats led Germany's government.

Prosecutors in Bonn are investigating whether Kohl should be charged with breach of trust for financial irregularities. He also is the subject of a parliamentary inquiry, which officially gets under way Thursday parallel to a parliamentary debate on the scandal.

Schaeuble was also under growing pressure in the tangled plot of apparently illegal cash payments and suspicions of influence peddling after disclosing he accepted \$52,000 from a businessman.

## Russian forces start final attack on Grozny

■ **Russia tries to crush Chechen rebellion and punish militants for alleged apartment bombings.**

URUS-MARTAN, Russia (AP) — After weeks of ferocious fighting, Russian forces penetrated the center of Grozny on Tuesday.

The troops started a final assault to take control of the capital of separatist Chechnya, Russian officers said.

Russian troops were pushing into the center from east and west and had established control over part of central Grozny, said Lt. Col. Konstantin Kukharenko, a Defense Ministry spokesman. "The decisive phase of the liberation of Grozny has started," he said, adding that the city would soon fall.

The military's claims could not be confirmed. There was no immediate indication that the estimated 2,000 well-entrenched rebels in Grozny had fled the city.

The city has been the center of

Chechen rebel resistance, and its capture would give Russian forces a huge victory after humiliating military setbacks.

Russia has boasted several times that it was close to capturing Grozny, only to be driven back by the rebels, who have launched counterattacks in recent weeks in and around the capital.

After facing little resistance in their steady march across Chechnya's northern lowlands, Russian troops have been stalled at Grozny for months and only recently began pressing into rebel strongholds in the southern mountains.

Chechen and Russian troops fought heavily in central Grozny, Chechen commanders said Tuesday.

The Russians were trying to reach "the most strategically important" site in Grozny, a bridge crossing the Sunzha River that is a major transit route for rebels, Aslanbek Ismailov, the Chechens' deputy chief of staff, told the Interfax news agency.

A Russian spokesman, Valentin Astafyev, told NTV television that federal troops have reached the bridge.

Russia sent troops into Chechnya in

late September to crush militants who were blamed for armed incursions into the neighboring Russian region of Dagestan.

The militants were also blamed for a series of apartment house bombings that killed about 300 people.

The rebels had captured Grozny and declared independence following two years of fighting that ended in 1996.

Russian aircraft and artillery bombarded rebel positions without pause on Tuesday.

The air force said its planes and helicopter gunships flew 80 combat sorties over Grozny and southern mountain regions Tuesday morning. The raids would be stepped up throughout the day, the ITAR-Tass news agency reported.

Russian jets struck the Vedeno and Argun gorges, which lead through rebel-held mountains to the republic of Georgia.

Artillery systematically shelled the rebel town of Vedeno. Russian forces control the heights around Vedeno, but they have been cautious about entering

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Defense Ministry spokesman

the town, believed to shelter many well-armed militants.

Instead, they laced footpaths and fields around Vedeno with mines.

"But we can't lay mines everywhere," said an exhausted Capt. Andrei Kulov.

He said a helicopter was flying regularly from Georgia to the Chechen mountains to deliver rebels supplies.

Federal troops have been unable to intercept the helicopter because it changes routes, he said.

## Clinton wants money to increase gun control

BOSTON (AP) — President Clinton appealed to Congress on Tuesday to begin the new century with a fresh slate on gun control, saying "commonsense gun safety" should be the first item on this year's congressional agenda.

Clinton requested the lawmakers' support for a \$280 million package of gun safety and enforcement programs he will propose in his budget package.

And he asked that they start this new century by abandoning another stale debate about whether the government should enforce existing gun laws stronger or fight crime and prevent firearms accidents through new gun-control laws.

"The real answer is we should do both," Clinton said.

His budget package, he said, was designed to send an unambiguous message to criminals: "If you commit crimes with guns or violate gun laws, you will pay a heavy price."

Clinton's usual nemesis on gun issues, the National Rifle Association, offered cautious support for the enforcement tools Clinton requested.

Clinton wants 500 new Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms agents and inspectors, plus 1,000 more prosecutors focusing on gun crime at all levels and a program to track guns through ballistics testing.

Calling an emphasis on increased enforcement and prosecution "long overdue," NRA spokesman Jim Manown said the organization is ready to renew its fight against two new gun-control measures that collapsed in Congress last year.

"We certainly don't expect the Clinton-Gore administration to abandon their push for new restrictions on law-abiding gun owners," he said.

Clinton announced his gun proposal during a visit to a spotless new gymnasium and community meeting hall in the Boston neighborhood of Roxbury, where reported crime was down more than 65 percent last year.

Boston's homicide rate dropped to a 38-year low in 1999, thanks in part to a program that allied law enforcement, the clergy, community leaders and gang members against crime.

**WEATHER**

TODAY	TOMORROW
Scattered showers, high 38, low 16	Partly cloudy, high 31, low 17

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### World and Nation

#### Datelines

##### ■ Pakistan

###### Pakistani, Indian leaders spar

ISLAMABAD, Pakistan (AP) — Three U.S. delegations are whirling through Pakistan this week, all carrying the same message for their host and neighboring India: "Turn down the heat."

Last month's hijacking of an Indian Airlines plane unleashed a war of words between the two rival countries — who also happen to be the world's newest nuclear powers.

Pakistan's military leader, Gen. Pervez Musharraf, has warned India he's not a man to turn the other cheek to the relentless "flak from across the border."

S.K. Singh, a former top official in India's Foreign Ministry, responded that Musharraf's comment was regarded as "a threat, which we take very seriously."

Analysts fear the verbal sparring could take both countries, which have fought three wars, back to the battlefield.

##### ■ London

###### Britain allows Chile plane

###### to land, stand by for Pinochet

LONDON (AP) — As Gen. Augusto Pinochet waited under house arrest for a ruling that could set him free, Britain on Tuesday allowed Chile to send a plane to stand by to take the former dictator home.

Human rights groups, battling to the finish line for the 84-year-old general's extradition, lodged formal objections to the secrecy of the medical report that might allow him to avoid trial in Spain on torture charges.

Pinochet was arrested 15 months ago after back surgery in London. He wears a pacemaker, has diabetes, has difficulty walking and has suffered three minor strokes.

British Home Secretary Jack Straw said last week that he was inclined to send Pinochet home after seeing the medical report. Straw has the final decision on extradition.

Straw didn't say when he would announce his final decision, but he told British Broadcasting Corp. radio Tuesday that "it is certainly not going to be a matter of hours."

##### ■ Australia

###### Australian planes grounded from fuel mishap

SYDNEY, Australia (AP) — From Wagga Wagga to Wee Waa, Rockhampton to Lightning Ridge, towns in the vast Australian Outback depend on small planes to deliver the mail, dust crops, round up cattle, shuttle schoolchildren, bring in doctors and evacuate medical emergencies.

For more than a week, half the nation's light aircraft have been grounded because of contaminated aviation fuel that thickens when it contacts copper and brass engine parts.

The contamination raises the risk of clogged fuel lines and motors stalling in flight.

Nobody knows how many planes actually carry the bad fuel. The source of the contamination is Mobil Oil Australia Ltd., a subsidiary of U.S.-based Exxon Mobil Corp. Mobil has no test to find out, and there is no known method to clean contaminated systems.

"This is a contamination crisis of a magnitude that has never been seen before anywhere in the world," said Mick Toller, safety director for the Civil Aviation Safety Authority, which ordered the planes grounded.

Scientists are working on a three-stage field diagnosis they hope will identify which aircraft have tainted fuel. But pending further tests, grounded planes would not be in the air before Thursday, Toller said Sunday.