

## Israel, Palestinian talks improve

■ Clinton calls for compromise; Arafat and Barak meet to plan next move.

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Clinton tried Thursday to pick up the pace of slow-moving talks between Israel and the Palestinians, telling the two sides "no one can get everything" in an accord.

Calling for compromise as he sat down with Yasser Arafat in the Oval Office, Clinton said he would be disappointed if a settlement were not reached. "We have the leaders who can do it," he said, offering again to do whatever he could to resolve their differences.

Arafat agreed there would be difficulties along the way, but he said negotiations would deal with them. He declined to say whether he was willing to accept less than all his demands.

With evident satisfaction, Arafat said he had reached agreement with Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak for Israel to transfer another 6.1 percent of the West Bank to the Palestinian Authority.

"Within two weeks, we will receive the 6 percent," Arafat said.

"This is something Prime Minister Barak and I agreed to 24 or 48 hours before arriving."

Arafat and Barak met outside Tel Aviv on Monday to implement Israel's commitment to turn over the territory under a U.S.-brokered agreement between the two leaders in September.

It was not clear from Arafat's remark whether the two sides had resolved exactly what land Israel would surrender.

After the meeting with Clinton, the Palestinian leader said he had asked for Clinton's help to assure successful negotiations. "It was a very fruitful and productive and important meeting," Arafat said.

With Clinton's support, Barak and Arafat last year set Feb. 13 as the deadline for resolving their disputes over Palestinian statehood aspirations and the future of Jerusalem, at least to the extent that Israel and the Palestinian Authority could complete a framework accord.

A final settlement, which also would deal with refugees and other

issues, is due in the fall.

Clinton is trying to juggle slow-moving negotiations on the Israeli-Palestinian front with sidetracked peace talks between Israel and Syria.

State Department spokesman James P. Rubin said Syrian officials would come to Washington next week, to be followed by Israeli experts, in an effort to deal with some of the nagging issues on that track.

Direct Israel-Syria talks were set to resume Wednesday at Shepherdstown, W.Va., but they were suspended indefinitely. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright and other U.S. officials have said each side wanted its demands given immediate priority.

Clinton said Wednesday he would take on the task of nudging Syria and Israel along, and that neither side was giving up despite the suspension of talks.

In Damascus, Syria's state-run newspapers urged Washington to push Israel harder to spell out its intentions on returning the Golan Heights.

Arafat had lunch Thursday with Albright in her home before heading

*"It was a very fruitful and productive and important meeting."*

Yasser Arafat  
Palestinian leader

to the White House.

The Palestinian leader told reporters the discussion with Albright was "warm, positive and beautiful," a description echoed by the secretary. Neither gave any clue to the substance of their meeting.

Arafat is seeking the 60 percent of the West Bank that Israel still controls, wants to establish a state and be given part of Jerusalem as its capital.

Barak and his ruling Labor Party seem to agree with having a Palestinian state on their country's border but have dealt ambiguously with its scope and Jerusalem.

## German party accountant commits suicide

■ Parliament member's death unrelated to scandal, party officials say.

BERLIN (AP) — The senior accountant in parliament for the scandal-plagued Christian Democrats committed suicide Thursday, stunning lawmakers as new questions arose about the financial dealings of the party that has dominated postwar German politics.

Party officials sought to quell speculation that the death was linked to the scandal, saying a suicide note had been found citing "personal motives."

Berlin prosecutors, however, said they were conducting a preliminary investigation into possible breach of trust based on the note. The Berlin B.Z. tabloid reported the note refers to Wolfgang Huellen's concerns that an upcoming audit would reveal he had diverted money from official accounts.

Huellen's suicide — disclosed hours after lawmakers sparred in par-

liament over the affair — compounded the sense of despair consuming the conservatives since their former leader, ex-chancellor Helmut Kohl, admitted last month that he managed secret accounts in the 1990s.

A parliamentary committee issued a summons Thursday for Kohl to testify in its investigation into whether the \$1 million he acknowledges having taken — or millions more in other allegedly illicit funds uncovered since — were tied to political favors.

Kohl has repeatedly denied such charges, but his refusal to reveal the source of the cash has kept alive suspicions of bribery.

The tiny Alpine tax haven of Liechtenstein said Thursday it has frozen bank accounts in connection with a Swiss investigation into alleged payoffs in the 1992 sale of the Leuna oil refinery in former East Germany to France's Elf-Aquitaine.

Norbert Marxer, head of Liechtenstein's legal service, declined to give details.

But a Berlin daily, the Berliner

Zeitung, reported the accounts were linked to Dieter Holzer, a businessman living in Monaco, who is suspected of having funneled the alleged payoffs to Kohl's Christian Democrats.

Holzer denied in Die Welt newspaper donating money to any German party.

Social Democratic Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder, who ended Kohl's 16 years in office in 1998, sat quietly during Thursday's parliament debate while other lawmakers from his center-left coalition accused the Christian Democrats of money laundering.

Peter Struck, floor leader of the governing Social Democrats, accused Kohl — who did not attend — of hindering efforts to clear up the scandal with his stubborn refusal to identify the donors.

"Do your country one last service and cleanse it of the suspicion that shady figures influenced German policy for years," Struck said, declaring the Christian Democrats "morally discredited."

Kohl, who was humiliated into resigning this week as honorary party chairman, said on national television last month that the money he accepted came from "patriotic" donors wanting to help build up the party in the former communist eastern states.

But some critics, noting that no one has come forward to back his version, have suggested that there are no donors, and the money came from shady sources.

Just a few hours after the debate ended, parliament suspended a regular session while Christian Democrats were informed of the death of Huellen, who was the senior accountant for the party's parliamentary group since 1984. He was found hanged in his Berlin apartment.

Huellen, 49, had not been publicly implicated in the scandal. However, government legislators have raised questions about the legality of a \$570,000 cash transfer from the parliamentary group to the party headquarters in 1997.

The Christian Democrats have denied wrongdoing.

## Investigators: EgyptAir crash a deliberate act

NORTH KINGSTOWN, R.I. (AP) — Weeks after the last pile of debris from EgyptAir 990 was pulled from the sea, investigators say they are more convinced than ever of their original theory: The jet was crashed deliberately.

The examination of the shattered Boeing 767, some 70 percent of which was recovered from the ocean floor, has revealed no signs of a mechanical failure that would have caused the plane to plummet 40 minutes into its 11-hour flight, according to three officials close to the investigation who spoke on condition of anonymity.

"Everything leads everyone to believe that the plane was mechanically sound, and it was doing what it was supposed to," one government official told The Associated Press.

The National Transportation Safety Board has said there are no plans to reconstruct the aircraft.

"I think they're fairly convinced they know what happened based on the radar data, flight data and voice data," said Barry Schiff, a TWA pilot for 34 years who instructed trainees on the Boeing 767.

Investigators have said the cockpit voice recorder contained some utterance, perhaps a prayer, before the plane went into its fatal plunge. But Schiff said the flight and radar data alone make it clear someone forced the aircraft down Oct. 31 off the Massachusetts island of Nantucket, killing all 217 aboard.

The NTSB's working theory remains that the plane was sent into a nose dive by relief co-pilot Gamil El-Batouty, who took control of the aircraft shortly after takeoff from New York's Kennedy Airport, according to two officials close to the investigation.

The FBI has been involved from the start and has uncovered no evidence of terrorism or conspiracy, according to one of the federal officials.

EgyptAir and El-Batouty's family have angrily rejected the theory of an intentional crash.

"If the pilots were American, would they dare to say the same things?" El Batouty's nephew, Walid El-Batouty, told The Associated Press in an interview last week in Egypt. "We've been shattered, humiliated and accused."

### World and Nation Datelines

#### ■ Iowa

Bradley admits number of heart-related episodes

MOUNT PLEASANT, Iowa (AP) — Democratic presidential candidate Bill Bradley said Thursday he has suffered four irregular heartbeat episodes since he first disclosed his non-life threatening condition more than a month ago.

Bradley, who did not say when the episodes occurred, said he would make them public only if they required him to seek a doctor's opinion.

"It has no affect on the race," Bradley said at an impromptu news conference where aides permitted only a few questions. He said the episodes are regular and predictable.

The disclosure came just days before the first voting of the presidential year with Bradley competing in the Iowa caucuses against Vice President Al Gore, who is the front-runner there.

#### ■ Massachusetts

Package bomb explodes

in woman's house

EVERETT, Mass. (AP) — A package bomb exploded in a house in this Boston suburb Thursday, killing a woman.

The package was left at the house around 12:30 p.m., and it exploded after the victim brought it upstairs, said Middlesex District Attorney Martha Coakley. She wouldn't say whether it was delivered by a mail carrier.

"We are pursuing leads in the case," Coakley said. "We have no reason to believe it is a random event."

Nearby residents were evacuated while agents from the FBI and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms investigated the scene. State police detonated the trunk of the woman's car to make sure there wasn't a bomb in it.

#### ■ Washington

Cuban boy's grandmothers

to travel to United States

WASHINGTON (AP) — The custody fight over Elian Gonzalez took a new turn Thursday as the grandmothers of the 6-year-old obtained visas to travel to the United States to make their case that the boy should be returned to his father in Cuba.

The U.S. diplomatic mission in Cuba issued visas to the two women Thursday afternoon as a group from the National Council of Churches was flying to Havana from New York to meet with them and with Cuban government officials.

They were expected to fly to New York today, apparently escorted by the church group and Democratic Rep. Charles Rangel of New York.

#### ■ Washington

National Archives

to distribute Nixon tapes

WASHINGTON (AP) — Hear Richard Nixon like you've never heard him before.

The National Archives begins distributing cassettes of the president's once-secret tapes today — at \$18 a pop. Warning: The government has determined that these tapes contain language some people might find offensive.

For years, Americans have read transcripts of the Nixon tapes — salty language and all.

Besides a few bootleg tapes illegally broadcast years ago and snippets of recordings played in court, the Nixon tapes have not been publicly aired.

### WEATHER

#### TODAY

Partly cloudy,  
high 36, low 29

#### TOMORROW

Scattered showers,  
high 38, low 22

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