

## Fetal tissue research guidelines praised by Clinton

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — President Clinton on Wednesday touted new federal guidelines allowing scientists to conduct federally funded research on human embryos, saying they offer "potentially staggering benefits."

The guidelines for the research are vehemently opposed by anti-abortion groups. They set out the criteria the National Institutes of Health will use to consider applications for federal grants to study embryonic stem cells, according to an advocate who was briefed on the standards and the schedule for issuing them.

Experts believe the cells could be invaluable in treating many serious diseases, such as diabetes and Alzheimer's. But some oppose the research on grounds that to get the cells, scientists must destroy human embryos.

At an impromptu news conference, Clinton acknowledged the controversy surrounding this new scientific initiative.

But he said: "I think that if the public will look at first of all the potentially staggering benefits of

this research, everything from birth defects to Parkinson's, certain kinds of cancer, diabetes, spinal cord injuries ... it's a potential change for the future."

He said the prospect for helping Americans and people around the world "is breathtaking. These guidelines are not put out without a rigorous scientific research."

Clinton also said it would deal only "with those embryos that are collected in in-vitro fertilization."

"I think we cannot walk away from the potential to save lives and improve lives," he said, "to help people get up and walk ... as long as we meet rigorous ethical standards, and I am convinced and (Health and Human Services) Secretary (Donna) Shalala is convinced that has been done."

The research involves what are called pluripotent stem cells, the foundation cells that give rise to all of the other cells, tissues and organs in the body.

Scientists believe it may be possible to use these cells to grow new organs to replace ailing hearts, treat brain disorders, to restore severed nerves in spinal

injuries and cure diabetes by growing new insulin-producing cells.

Under the guidelines, federal research may be conducted only on cells taken from frozen embryos from fertility clinics — already destined to be discarded. Also, federal funds could not be used to destroy the embryos to obtain the cells — privately funded researchers will have to pass them on to federally supported scientists. Opponents criticize this separation as meaningless.

They outlaw payments to embryo donors and keep donors from specifying who should receive their embryo's stem cells. These provisions aim to discourage a market for stem cells and block a woman from creating embryos just to provide treatment for a sick relative.

The advocate, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said Tuesday evening that the rules would more strenuously ensure that donors understand that their embryos will not survive the extraction process and that the stem cells could be transplanted into patients.

Patient support groups applauded the new rules, which

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Bill Clinton  
president

were first reported in Wednesday editions of The Washington Post.

Daniel Perry, chairman of the Patients' Coalition for Urgent Research, told The Associated Press that the federal rules are the safest way to have to conduct research, "rather than being driven solely by commercial interests outside of public purview."

Opponents threatened to stop the effort.

"I don't think that they by law should be allowed to do this," Rep. Jay Dickey, R-Ark., told the newspaper.

"We're talking about dismembering a living being, according to our interpretation," said Dickey, who has introduced legislation banning the destruc-

tion of human embryos.

Scientists dispute his interpretation, saying the retrieval is conducted when an embryo is only a week old, and is still a microscopic ball of identical cells.

Under the new rules, applications for research would have to pass a committee of scientists and ethicists before being forwarded to an NIH scientific review committee, said the advocate.

That review committee is scheduled to have its next meeting in January, so the first awards would not be awarded until late in 2001, at the earliest — assuming that Congress or the next administration does not interfere.

### World/Nation Briefs

The Associated Press

#### ■ Dominican Republic Hurricane Debby down graded to tropical storm

PLATA, Dominican Republic — Emergency workers evacuated dozens of people from river-side shacks in Dominican Republic and gusty rain tore roofs off homes in Haiti as Tropical Storm Debby skirted the island of Hispaniola.

Debby was downgraded from a hurricane when it lost some force Wednesday morning and was further disrupted by the mountains of Hispaniola.

"It's good news for the people of southeast Florida and the Bahamas," said forecaster Michelle Huber of the National Hurricane Center.

She said there was less chance now of Debby becoming a dangerous hurricane with over 100 mph winds than was earlier feared.

Still, officials in the Florida Keys on Wednesday ordered visitors to evacuate and also shut down all schools.

Outer rainbands dumped heavy rain on northern Haiti overnight, tearing away tin roofs from shanties and flooding some homes in the north-west town of Port-de-Paix, police reported.

#### ■ Washington Rise in beef costs may cause schools to change menus

WASHINGTON — Hamburgers and meatballs may be missing from some school menus this fall because the government can't find affordable ground beef after imposing new testing requirements on meat processors this summer.

The Agriculture Department has purchased less than 40 percent of the school-bound beef that it bought at this time last year and is paying as much as 50 cents more per pound.

The new testing requirements for disease-causing microbes were issued in June just before USDA started taking bids on its meat purchases for the 2000-2001 school year.

Patterned after standards set by fast-food chains, the requirements are significantly tougher than those for meat sold in grocery stores. Processors say the rules are unworkable.

Some schools "are doing menu changes; some are going to the commercial market to buy product," said Barry Sackin, director of government affairs for the American School Food Service Association.

"We do not object to the food safety efforts that the department is making," he said. "... The precipitous nature of this is where the problem lies, not the intent."

#### ■ Burundi Grenade explosion kills four, injures more than 50 others

BUJUMBURA, Burundi — A grenade exploded in a crowded market in central Bujumbura on Wednesday, killing at least four people and injuring 50 others as tensions in Burundi rose ahead of a deadline for a peace agreement.

Soldiers and police sealed off the Buyenzi market, where witnesses said an unknown assailant tossed the grenade from a nearby bus station at the mainly Hutu traders who were busy organizing vegetables and goods to be sold at the open market.

"I heard an explosion and everybody ducked. I saw one person die, other people had their legs cut off," said Patrick Nduwimana, a 16-year-old Hutu who wanted to be treated for a leg injury at the King Khaled hospital.

Three people were killed instantly and another person died later from wounds caused by the blast, doctors said.

It was not clear who was responsible, but the attack bore the trademark of Tutsi militiamen.

Many of the militiamen have links to hard-line Tutsi political parties and groups that have been demonstrating against a proposed power-sharing agreement with Hutu rebels.

## Plane crashes in Gulf waters

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

MANAMA, Bahrain — A Gulf Air Airbus A320 on a flight from Cairo with 143 people on board crashed Wednesday in the waters of the Persian Gulf after circling and trying to land in Bahrain.

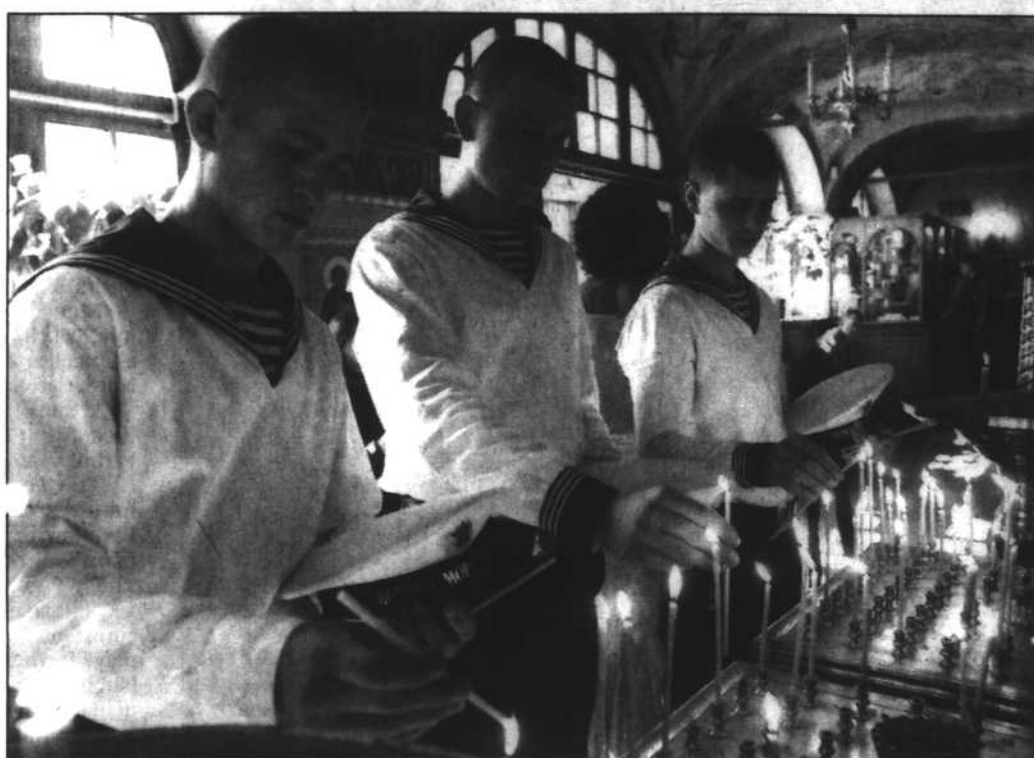
U.S. Navy helicopters, destroyers and an ocean-going tug with a 10-ton crane joined the nighttime search and rescue effort, three or four miles off the northern coast of Bahrain, which is headquarters of the U.S. 5th Fleet.

Seventy bodies were recovered within the first hours after the crash and no survivors were found, said Bahraini Civil Defense Commander Brigadier Abdul-Rahman Bin Rashed Al Khalifa. He told state-run television that divers will begin a search for the flight's voice cockpit and data recorders at first light.

An air traffic controller at the Bahrain airport, reached by phone, described watching the plane circle the runway twice attempting to land, then on the third attempt plunge into the sea and explode.

Two Bahraini men from the nearby neighborhood of Al-Fodha told The Associated Press that the plane flew over their heads at an unusually low altitude heading to the runway, but took a sharp turn toward the sea.

Two helicopters hovered low over the site of the crash with their floodlights switched on. Bodies retrieved from the scene were being ferried in ambulances to the Salmaniya hospital, the country's largest, according to doctors.



Navy sailors, left to right, Denis Kopylov, Maxim Yegorov and Alexander Avronyonok, light candles for sailors of the sunken Kursk nuclear submarine in a Moscow church on Wednesday. Russians lowered flags to half-staff in memory of the 118 sailors killed in a nuclear submarine as the nation marked an official day of mourning.

Andrew Chugunov/Newsweek

## Putin admits guilt in interview

■ The Russian president defended his initial silence and slow response, but admits his responsibility in the deaths of the 118 sailors.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

MOSCOW — As Russians mourned in churches, on Web sites and at home, a humble President Vladimir Putin said Wednesday he felt responsible and guilty for a submarine disaster that killed 118 sailors and outraged the nation.

Russia's Defense Minister Igor Sergeev and navy chief Adm. Vladimir Kuroyedov submitted their resignations over the loss of the Kursk, one of Russia's most advanced submarines before an explosion crumpled it Aug. 12, but Putin said he would not accept them. Seeking scapegoats, he said, would be "the most mistaken response."

"I take a full sense of responsibility and sense of blame for this tragedy," he said in an interview with Russia's RTR television.

In a country where a history of authoritarianism runs deep, Putin's comments demonstrated a sensitivity to public opinion and eagerness to regain the nation's confidence unpre-

cedented for a Russian leader.

Russians assailed Putin and the government for their slow, contradictory reaction to the disaster and the botched rescue operation, and many observers expected Putin to respond by firing top brass — as his predecessor Boris Yeltsin had often done.

Putin's interview came as Russia held a day of mourning for the victims, and after he sat through a harrowing three-hour meeting with the sailors' families late Tuesday night at the submarine's home base of Vidyayevo.

"The conversation was very heartfelt. He admitted his guilt and inactivity, and he said the main thing is a lack of funds," said Oksana Dudko, whose husband Sergei was the ship's deputy commander.

Speaking firmly and somberly in the television interview, Putin defended his initial silence and the slow response to foreign rescue help, saying the navy acted as quickly as they could given how little they knew about the submarine's condition.

He also promised to restore the honor of the beleaguered military and the nation.

"It grieves me, the theory lately that together with the Kursk the honor of the navy also drowned, the honor of Russia," Putin said. "Our country has

survived a lot.

"We will overcome it all and restore it all, the military and the navy and the state," he said.

The nation lowered flags to half staff and prayed in Orthodox churches Wednesday. Television interrupted some programming, and Russia's most popular web site, anekdot.ru, displayed an empty black screen throughout the day.

Stunned, heartbroken relatives refused to join in the mourning, demanding that their sons and husbands be retrieved from the sea floor first.

Putin promised that the bodies would be recovered, and said the divers might cut a hole in the ship or lift it to shallower waters. He said talks were under way with Norwegian and Dutch divers.

But Mikhail Kuznetsov, commander of the Vidyayevo submarine garrison, said the work couldn't begin until after next spring's thaw.

The Kremlin promised compensation to the families, who had relied on the sailors' meager salaries for subsistence. The federal government promised a one-time payment averaging \$7,000 per family — equal to 10 years of pay for a submarine officer, said Deputy Prime Minister Valentina Matviyenko.

## Reno decides to not hire outside investigator Attorney general finds no reason to continue Gore campaign inquiry

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — Attorney General Janet Reno announced Wednesday she has decided not to appoint a special counsel to investigate Vice President Al Gore's 1996 campaign fund-raising activities.

Reno told a news conference that after reviewing a transcript of an April interview that Gore had with federal investigators, she concluded that "further investigation is not likely to result in a prosecutable case."

The decision is good news for Gore's presidential campaign. It comes less than a week after it was disclosed, on the day of Gore's acceptance speech to the Democratic National Convention, that Independent Counsel Robert Ray has

impaneled a new grand jury to decide whether President Clinton should be indicted after he leaves for office in connection with his relationship with former White House intern Monica Lewinsky.

Gore's spokesman, Chris Lehane, said: "We are pleased with today's Justice Department announcement. But our focus is going to remain where it has always been — which is on using our prosperity to help America's families."

The attorney general's decision, first reported in Wednesday's editions of The New York Times, also was likely to renew criticism of her by Republicans in Congress. They bitterly criticized Reno's two early decisions not to seek an outside investigator to look into fund-raising telephone calls

that Gore made from his office and into whether he lied to investigators when he said he thought the money he raised was to be used for general party-building rather than for the Clinton-Gore re-election effort.

This time, Robert J. Conrad Jr. head of Reno's campaign task force, urged her, after he interviewed Gore in April, to name an outside counsel to determine whether Gore lied about whether he knew that a campaign event at a Buddhist temple in California was a fund-raiser.

That event has led to convictions of others on charges that the true donors were concealed.

But Reno went to lengths to praise Conrad, saying "he is one person who deserves a great deal of credit for the success" of the investigation.

### Weather

#### TODAY

Sunny  
high 93, low 69

#### TOMORROW

Sunny  
high 96, low 70

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