

News Digest

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Judges, doctors argue over twins' fate

■ The fate of Siamese twins has been set in the hands of God by their parents. While the judge in London asks how important one twin's life is, a lawyer says the cause is futile.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

LONDON — Jodie may live, but only if Mary dies. Doctors want to operate, but the parents prefer to trust the will of God.

Thus, the fate of Siamese twins from Eastern Europe is in the hands of doctors and appeals court judges, who are struggling with the ethical issues.

Speaking of Mary, the twin whose less-developed body depends on her sister for oxygenated blood, Lord Justice Henry Brooke asked Tuesday: "What is this creature in the eyes of the law?"

A lawyer appointed to represent Jodie argued that "there are no best interests in preserving what is unfortunately a futile life."

Jodie and Mary — false names used by the court to preserve the girls' privacy —

were born Aug. 8 at St. Mary's Hospital in Manchester and are joined at their lower abdomens. Mary's brain and body are less developed than Jodie's, and the Manchester medical team says it is highly probable that if left unseparated, both twins will die within six months as Jodie's heart fails.

The parents, who have not been identified, are appealing the Aug. 25 decision by a High Court judge to allow surgeons to separate the twins.

The girls' fate is in the hands of English law because the parents came here for the birth to give their daughters "the very best chance in the very best place," said their attorney, Simon Taylor.

Despite the compelling ethical issues, it has been a subdued case — one with no faces. The parents have not been photographed or interviewed, their home country has not been disclosed and the public has not seen pictures of the twins.

The appeals court, which has asked two specialists from London to travel to Manchester to review the case, granted permission Tuesday for additional scans if needed. The specialists are to report back

at the end of the week.

The court, however, already is deep into the ethical conundrums of the case.

Judith Parker, a barrister appointed to represent Jodie's interests, said Jodie would have a good quality of life and the possibility of a normal life expectancy if she were severed from Mary.

"Jodie is expected to have a normal brain and is of normal intelligence," Parker said. "She might be able to go home two to three months after separation."

The doctor in charge of the twins was identified in court only as Dr. B. He said in court Monday that Mary, who once had been completely passive, now opens her right eye occasionally and had begun to suck, although she could not feed. Her brain was "extremely primitive," he said.

The hospital said it has been bombarded with protests from the public because of the doctors' determination to operate.

Taylor said the parents, who are Roman Catholics, had decided that they could not kill one daughter to allow the other to live.

"We came to England to give our babies the very best chance for life in the

very best place," the parents said in a statement read in court Monday.

"Now things have gone very badly wrong and we find ourselves in this very difficult situation. ... We believe that nature should take its course. If it's God's will that both our children should not survive, then so be it."

The parents fear Jodie would suffer and require continuing special care that is not readily available to them, and they are concerned about local attitudes toward disability, their lawyer said.

The judges asked whether Jodie and Mary should be regarded as "one life" in the legal sense — a concept that could clear the way for surgery to save Jodie. Taylor argued that the staff at St. Mary's considered the twins as separate individuals.

Lord Justice Alan Ward asked whether the child could be described as "a person in being," since she could not live independently.

He suggested the parents could arguably be guilty of the manslaughter of Jodie if they did nothing — or guilty of the manslaughter of Mary if they consented to surgery.

World/Nation

The Associated Press

New Mexico

Pipeline explosion survivor dies in Texas hospital

CARLSBAD — The only survivor of a pipeline explosion that killed 11 members of her extended family died Tuesday.

Amanda Smith, 25, lost her husband and two children in the fiery blast that engulfed the family's campsite near Carlsbad on Aug. 19.

She never regained consciousness and died at a Lubbock, Texas, hospital.

The victims were camping along the Pecos River in New Mexico when the pipeline erupted in a fireball and generated heat so intense it melted sleeping bags and tents. It left a crater 86 feet long and 20 feet deep.

A family member filed a federal lawsuit Aug. 30 in Albuquerque, alleging El Paso Natural Gas failed to comply with state and federal rules and did not properly inspect and maintain the line.

Washington, D.C.

AOL, Time Warner merger

causes doubts among FTC

Antitrust regulators are seeking assurances that the proposed merger between titans America Online and Time Warner won't hinder how consumers get the next generation of Internet and entertainment services.

The Federal Trade Commission, one of the agencies reviewing the \$129 billion deal, has raised red flags about the combined company's distribution of fast online services over Time Warner's expansive cable systems — the second largest in the country. The merger would allow AOL to provide its services over Time Warner's high-speed cable lines.

But federal officials are concerned that AOL rivals would be unable to get access to Time Warner's cable systems to offer consumers other choices for Internet service. FTC attorneys are prepared to block the proposed merger unless the companies agree to let competing services use their high-speed cable lines, according to sources.

Ohio

Two killed in murder-suicide at elementary school

BIDWELL — A man shot his estranged wife to death in the parking lot of the elementary school where she worked and then went home and killed himself, authorities said.

Classes were canceled for the day after the shooting at Bidwell Porter Elementary School.

Linda Shoemaker, 52, a cook at the school, was shot several times by her husband, Frank, at about 6:30 a.m. while she was still in her car, Gallia County Coroner Dr. Daniel Whiteley said. A coworker summoned authorities.

Frank Shoemaker's body was found about 30 minutes later in a lawn chair in his front yard about eight miles from the school, Whiteley said. He was 66.

Ivory Coast

Soldiers questioned about alleged plot against leader

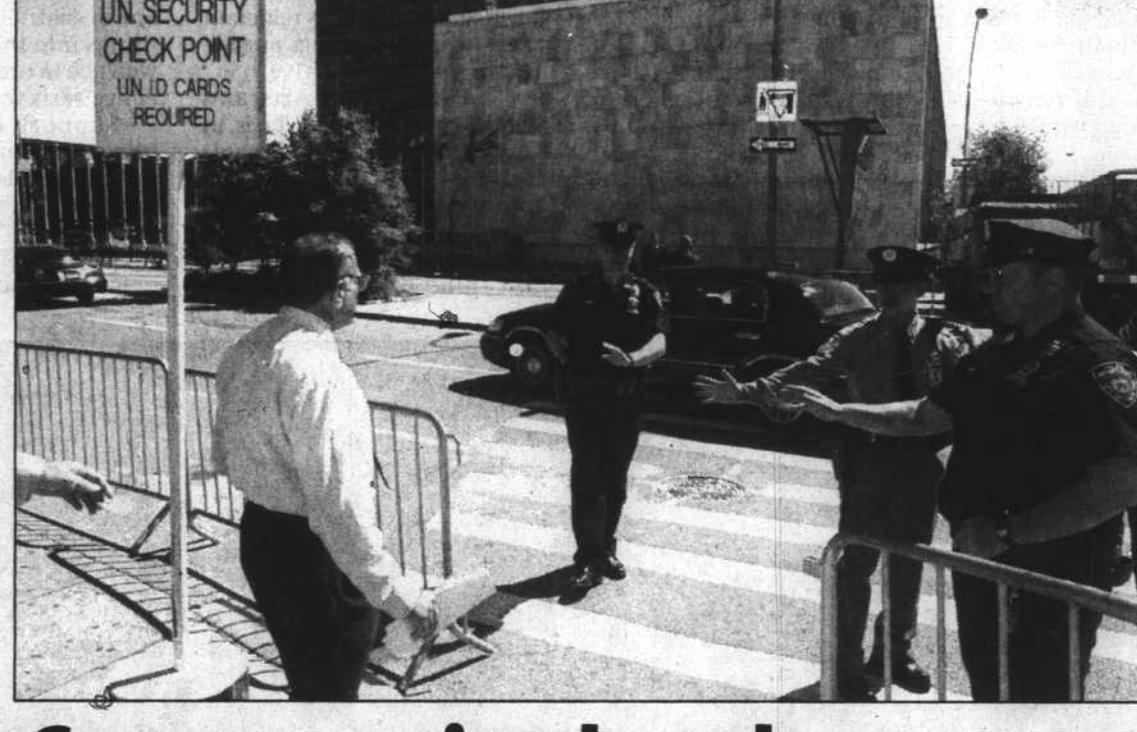
ABIDJAN — Ivorian security officials are holding seven soldiers in connection with an alleged plot to overthrow the nation's junta leader, a security official said Monday.

The seven were arrested Friday and are being held at a camp for the country's paramilitary police, said the official, who spoke on condition of anonymity. He gave no further details.

A spokesman at the Abidjan camp where the men were taken declined to comment.

Reports in Ivorian newspapers Monday said the soldiers are being held for questioning about their possible involvement in an attempt to overthrow Gen. Robert Guei, who came to power in a December coup.

Tension has risen in the army since Guei's takeover — the first in the former French colony's history.



Spencer Platt/
Newsmakers
Police security is tight outside the United Nations building Tuesday in New York City. The summit is the largest gathering of world leaders ever in one city, according to New York City Police Commissioner Bernard Kerik, and goes through Friday.

Communist leaders to use summit as anti-U.S. forum

■ Leaders from Cuba, Russia and North Korea, as well as more U.S.-friendly countries, may use the time to give the states an earful.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

UNITED NATIONS — Secretary General Kofi Annan on Tuesday urged the kings, generals and presidents descending on New York for the U.N. Millennium Summit to use the unprecedented meeting to forge peace and end poverty in the 21st century.

But some heads of state are expected to use the three days of speeches, discussions and meetings beginning today to push their own agendas — including those that are critical of the United States.

In a taste of what may come, North Korea denounced the United States as a "rogue state" Tuesday, saying the government was responsible for allegedly ordering the strip search of members of the delegation as they switched planes in Germany.

The incident prompted Pyongyang to call off the summit trip by its No. 2 leader, who had been scheduled to meet South Korean President Kim Dae-jung.

North Korea's U.N. Ambassador Li Hyong Chol warned that the humiliating security check could prove "quite expensive" for U.S.-North Korean relations, even though the State

Department quickly said it deeply regretted the incident.

Washington is also expected to come under fire from Cuban President Fidel Castro, who came to New York on Tuesday for the first time in five years. He is expected to speak out against American domination of the United Nations in his five minutes on the podium today.

Foreign Minister Felipe Perez Roque told a press conference in Havana last week that Cuba would lambast "the growing tendency of a small and powerful group of countries" to violate the U.N. Charter and intervene militarily in member countries without Security Council approval — a reference to the U.S.-led NATO bombing of Yugoslavia.

The United States also can expect to get an earful from more friendly countries.

Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin and Chinese President Jiang Zemin are likely to use the gathering to continue rallying international support against U.S. national missile defense plans.

President Clinton's announcement last week that he would leave it to the next administration to decide whether and when to deploy such a system will certainly be welcomed by many leaders who have criticized the U.S. plans as a threat to 30 years of arms control treaties.

But analysts have predicted that Jiang will use the summit — and a one-on-one meeting with Clinton — to press

sure the United States to cancel the missile defense proposal altogether. Beijing fears that the anti-missile shields will render useless its growing arsenal of missiles and force China into a costly arms race.

Jiang, however, will have his own controversies to deal with as members of the Falun Gong spiritual movement stage continuous demonstrations against the Chinese leader for Beijing's crackdown on the sect — part of the 9/11 demonstrations planned this week.

About 400 Falun Gong members, some of them wearing T-shirts that read "Stop persecuting Falun Gong" held their meditation exercises Tuesday morning outside the Waldorf-Astoria hotel, where Jiang was hosting a breakfast meeting with American media executives.

"We're trying to rally Americans to try to do something to help us," protester Gail Rachlin said.

Other protests have been leveled against Iranian President Mohammad Khatami, including a demonstration Tuesday outside Iran's U.N. mission by a coalition of Jewish groups protesting the prison sentences handed down to 10 Iranian Jews convicted of espionage.

Khatami, who has tried to reach out to the Iranian-Jewish community here, presided Tuesday over a pre-summit roundtable discussion attended by Secretary of State Madeleine Albright and other heads of state on forging a "dialogue among civilizations" to promote world peace.

Weather

TODAY

Partly sunny
high 86, low 67

TOMORROW

Partly sunny
high 83, low 63

Daily Nebraskan

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DAILY NEBRASKAN

Teachers authorize strike after pay negotiations fail

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

PHILADELPHIA — Thousands of teachers in the nation's sixth-largest school district voted Tuesday to authorize their first strike since 1981, following a Labor Day breakdown in contract negotiations.

Members of the Philadelphia Federation of Teachers voted unanimously in favor of the walkout during a morning executive meeting, union officials said.

However, classes were still scheduled to begin Thursday for the district's 200,000 students and 256 schools because union president Ted Kirsch did not immediately call a strike. State law requires the union to give the district 48 hours' notice of a walkout.

Union spokeswoman Barbara

Goodman would not say when Kirsch might call a walkout.

Mayor John F. Street, who hand-picked the school board, on Monday tried to reassure the teachers of the city's intentions.

The 21,000-member union has rejected the district's proposals to extend the school day and school year, increase co-payments for health insurance, institute a pay scale based on teacher performance rather than years of experience and level of education, and give principals more say in teacher job assignments.

The union wants smaller classes, stronger early childhood education, a new reading program and enhanced school security. Its teachers in 1997-1998 earned between \$28,600 and \$57,200, according to the union.

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