

Legal battles surround recount in Florida

■ Republicans request blocking four county hand-recounts the Democrats requested.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

The legal skirmishing quickened Sunday in the overtime race for the White House as Republicans warned that painstaking recounts in Democratic-dominated counties expose Florida to political mischief and human error.

Democrats said they expect America's next president will be determined "in a matter of days—not weeks, not months."

Updated voting figures in Florida gave Republican George W. Bush a 288-vote margin out of some 6 million votes cast with recounts under way in four jurisdictions.

Democrat Al Gore leads in the nationwide popular vote, but the Electoral College tally is so close that whoever wins in Florida almost certainly wins the White House.

Both parties previewed their legal strategies for a federal court hearing today on Bush's request to block manual recounts. Top Bush adviser James A. Baker III described the five-day Florida standoff as "a black mark on our democracy and on our process."

His rival, Gore adviser Warren Christopher, portrayed vote recounts as a routine necessity of democracy.

"If at the end of the day, George Bush has more votes in Florida than we do, certainly the vice president will concede," Christopher said, while leaving open the prospect of court action if recounting ends with Bush

ahead.

A climax could come at the end of this week when overseas mail-in ballots will be counted and the trailing candidate would be forced to concede or push deeper into uncharted waters.

"By next Friday," said Sen. Robert Torricelli, D-N.J., "the pressure on someone is going to be enormous to accept whatever results Florida has reached."

Their public financing drying up, both camps are raising money to pay for lawyers and political operatives sent to every precinct in Florida to examine county voting records and wage a campaign-style public relations battle.

The Bush team dispatched an e-mail message Sunday asking supporters for up to \$5,000 to help finance the recount campaign. Democrats are hoping to

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Robert Torricelli
D-New Jersey senator

raise \$3 million, with top Gore aides moving from his headquarters in Tennessee to Democratic offices in Washington.

Bush had a 17-vote lead in New Mexico, where state police have begun impounding ballots from Tuesday's election. Republican lawyers asked the courts to order protection for early voting and absentee ballots cast statewide.

A Gore-requested manual recount in Broward County, Fla., another Democratic bastion with Fort Lauderdale as its hub,

was to begin today. A hearing is scheduled Tuesday in Miami-Dade County, site of what Gore hopes will be a fourth manual recount.

Bush and Gore were in seclusion with top aides Sunday — Bush at his Texas ranch, Gore at his Washington, D.C., residence. Bush has made several public appearances since Tuesday, casting himself as a man preparing for the transition to power. Gore has laid low, wary that voters might interpret his legal challenge as a grab for power.

World/Nation

The Associated Press

■ Austria

OPEC rejects oil production price-easing increase

VIENNA — The Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries snubbed consumers Sunday by rejecting a price-easing increase in oil production and raising the specter of slashing output early next year to keep prices from falling too fast.

The 11 nation oil-producing cartel, which produces 40 percent of the world's crude, argues it's just a matter of time before prices tail off and it could be battling a market awash in oil fewer people want to buy.

Until then, consumers are left with some of the highest oil prices in 10 years.

Winter demand for heating oil is expected to evaporate with warm spring weather a scenario OPEC remembers getting burned in after boosting output in December 1997. One year later, prices dropped to about \$10 a barrel, battering OPEC members.

■ Austria

Day spent mourning for victims of cable car fire

KAPRUN — Relatives and friends who had waited through the night in this Alpine village began to get word Sunday whether their loved ones were among the dead in a cable car fire that killed about 170 people in a mountain tunnel.

With the village hall draped in black and candles burning on shop steps, shattered residents gathered in a Kaprun church for Sunday Mass. As they mourned, emergency crews tried to reach the spot where scores of people, many children and teen-agers, were killed Saturday by smoke and flames.

The car, pulled on rails underground for most of the 3,200 yards up the Kitzsteinhorn mountain to a glacier region, stopped after catching on fire about 600 yards inside the tunnel Saturday morning. The cause of the fire has not been determined.

Rescuers could not reach the victims as the fire raged. Passengers tried to flee through the deep tunnel, but most were felled by the thick smoke and flames.

The 18 survivors fled downwards in the tunnel where the smoke was thinner, authorities said.

■ South Carolina

Woman charged with killing two children with ax

CAINHOY — A woman was charged with murder for allegedly killing her 6-year-old daughter and 1-year-old son with an ax.

The two children were found lying in tall grass near an abandoned home on Saturday. Berkeley County coroner Wade Arnette said the children were likely killed inside the family's mobile home, then taken outside.

Police searching the home on Saturday found an ax. Perstephanie Simmons, 30, was arrested and charged with two counts of murder after a neighbor reported the children had been harmed.

Deputies questioned Simmons, but still don't know what prompted the killings, said Berkeley County Sheriff's Capt. Ricky Driggers.

■ Illinois

Gathering gives Jews chance to show allegiance to Israel

CHICAGO — A gathering of Jewish leaders from around the world — once intended to celebrate the Middle East peace process — has become a forum for U.S. Jews to show their allegiance to Israel, organizers said Sunday.

The General Assembly of United Jewish Communities, which runs through Wednesday, is "ground zero for North American Jews at a time when we stand to show solidarity with Israel," said Michael Kotzin, a local Jewish Federation official.

Clinton urges sides to establish peace

■ Violence and disputes mar the President's separate meetings with Israel's Barak and Palestinian leader Arafat.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — President Clinton was making another appeal Sunday to end the violence in the Middle East, meeting at the White House with Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak three days after a visit with Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat.

Barak, whose trip was delayed after twice reversing his plane's course due to a hijacking crisis at home, has offered little hope the meeting could help end the bloodshed that has killed nearly 200 people in the past six weeks.

The Israeli leader was looking for Clinton to pressure Arafat into making a declaration that the Palestinians should not attack Israeli soldiers and civilians. But Arafat was defiant at an Islamic summit conference in Qatar.

Barak left Israel on Saturday night before the hijacking and reversed course for a second time before heading back to Washington.

The delay led to the cancellation of a planned meeting with

Secretary of State Madeleine Albright and National Security Advisor Sandy Berger.

Clinton was scheduled to depart today for an economic meeting in Brunei followed by the first presidential visit to communist Vietnam since the war's end in 1975.

Nearly 200 people, most of them Palestinians but also Israeli soldiers and civilians, have died in six weeks of violence on the West Bank, in Gaza and Israel.

Arafat blamed Barak directly, saying Thursday night after meeting with Clinton that the prime minister had reneged on a promise to withdraw Israeli forces from Palestinian areas.

In clashes Saturday, six Palestinians and one Israeli soldier were killed on the West Bank and in Gaza.

Clinton has devoted much time and effort trying to prod Israel and the Palestinians into an accord. In July, he mediated a meeting between Arafat and Barak at Camp David, the presidential retreat outside Washington, but could not overcome disputes over Jerusalem's future, refugees, and a handful of other issues.

Still eager to attain his goal, Clinton said last week he would not apply pressure and any settlement must spring from the parties themselves.

Cancer claims activist Rabin

■ The peace advocate and wife of slain Israeli Prime Minister, Yitzhak Rabin, dies at age 72.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

JERUSALEM — Leah Rabin, who became an outspoken campaigner for peace after her husband, the late Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, who was struck down by an assassin's bullet, died Sunday of cancer. She was 72.

Mrs. Rabin had never hesitated to criticize friend or foe in the five years since her husband was shot by an ultranationalist Jew. Though she was viewed by some of her countrymen as a divisive figure, she was feted abroad as a promoter of Israeli-Arab coexistence.

She counted political leaders, including President Clinton and Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat, among her close friends. After her husband was killed, she crisscrossed the globe carrying the torch for his peace policies.

"We have lost a dear friend, and the Middle East has lost a friend of peace," Clinton said.

Former Prime Minister Shimon Peres, a Labor party ally of Mrs. Rabin's husband, said she was "like a lioness."

"When she learned of her illness she did not surrender," Peres said, "and went out to the great battle for her life, as she had fought, with the same

"When she learned of her illness she did not surrender, and went out to the great battle for her life, as she had fought, with the same courage, to eternalize the memory of her husband."

Shimon Peres
former Israel prime minister

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Rabin had been suffering from cancer at least since the spring. The gravity of her illness became clear when she was unable to appear at a rally last Saturday marking the fifth anniversary of her husband's killing.

She is to be buried Wednesday in a plot next to her husband's in Jerusalem's Mount Herzl cemetery. Her coffin will lie in state at Rabin Square in Tel Aviv, where Yitzhak Rabin was assassinated on Nov. 4, 1995, Israel television' second channel reported.

Rabin spared no one her sometimes acid-tongued opinions, even denouncing some peace moves of the man who emulated her husband, Prime Minister Ehud Barak.

"Yitzhak is spinning in his grave," she said when Barak offered Palestinians some control over parts of east Jerusalem.

Barak, in a statement released while he flew to

Washington for talks with Clinton, called Rabin "a courageous and devoted woman who worked together with her husband for two generations to bring Israel into a secure situation and, in recent years, to bring peace."

In Israel, Rabin's detractors saw her as an arrogant standard-bearer of Israel's European-born elite. They blamed her for her husband's resignation from his first term as prime minister in 1977 over an illegal U.S. bank account she held.

Her harshest critics were supporters of hard-line leader Benjamin Netanyahu, whom she accused of fanning the hatred that led to her husband's killing at a Tel Aviv peace rally. Netanyahu opposed land-for-security agreements that Yitzhak Rabin signed with the Palestinians.

In 1997, Rabin was booed by vendors and shoppers as she walked through Jerusalem's outdoor Mahane Yehuda market, a stronghold of hawkish Israelis.

Election muddles Congress' actions

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — Lame-duck sessions of Congress are always unpredictable, but the one starting this week could prove even more muddled because of the unsettled presidential election.

Neither party's congressional leaders know whether it makes sense to resolve budget fights quickly or try delaying a deal until the next administration — with either Republican George W. Bush or Democrat Al Gore in the White House on Jan. 20, inauguration day.

Top Democrats seem ready to settle and leave town quickly. With their ally, President Clinton, still in office, they appear eager to shake hands on a huge education, health and labor bill that was nearly completed before Congress left town on Nov. 3 for the elections.

"There's an array of issues that have to be addressed. I don't think we can leave without having addressed them," Senate

Minority Leader Tom Daschle, D-S.D., said Sunday on CBS' "Face the Nation." Earlier, he said, "It will take give on both sides, but I think we can do that."

Five of the 13 annual spending bills for fiscal 2001, which began Oct. 1, are hanging. They cover seven Cabinet departments, dozens of smaller agencies, congressional operations and the District of Columbia's budget.

Also unresolved are a \$240 billion, 10-year tax bill, an increase in the minimum wage, higher Medicare reimbursements for health care providers, disputes over immigration and workplace injuries and an intelligence agencies' bill that Clinton vetoed because it would have criminalized the leaking of some government secrets.

The Senate's top Republican, Trent Lott of Mississippi, raised the possibility on "Fox News Sunday" that lawmakers would "set aside those issues where we're not going to come to agreement and pass what we can."

Hijacking ends peacefully in Israeli desert, officials say

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

UVDA, Israel — Two planes took off from this air force base late Sunday, ending a bizarre hijacking that started when an apparently deranged man commandeered a plane in Dagestan, taking 57 passengers and crew to Israel's barren southern desert.

The hijacker, identified by Israeli officials as a Chechen but by Dagestani officials as a Dagestan resident, had commandeered the Vnukovo Airlines plane on a domestic flight from Dagestan to Moscow late Saturday night.

Carrying a fake bomb that turned out to be a blood-pressure gauge, he forced the plane to refuel in Baku, Azerbaijan, and diverted it toward Israel.

The hijacker brought two letters from his father and demanded to hold a news conference, the Israelis said. They refused the demand.

He gave Israeli military officers the letters and a cassette tape. Israeli army Maj. Gen. Yomtov Samia said the hijacker told officers he was sent by his father to send a message to "the emperor of Japan and the world" about "the yellow race taking over the white race."

After Israeli authorities refused to let the plane land at Ben-Gurion Airport near Tel Aviv, it headed toward the Uvda airfield in the southern desert.

The Russian airliner landed at this desert airfield just after sunrise. First off the plane was the captain, who turned

over some weapons to Israeli officials. Soon the hijacker walked down the aircraft stairs and handed himself over to Israeli authorities.

The passengers filed off the plane shortly after the hijacker surrendered, and spent the day in barracks at the base.

Many of those on board were soccer fans flying to Moscow to root for a Dagestani team in a game there, Russia's ITAR-Tass news agency said.

Apki Bakayev, 11, from Chechnya, who suffers from leukemia, was flying to Moscow for chemotherapy. His mother, Tamara, wrote a thank-you note to the Israelis, saying "we will never forget Israel."

Israeli officials identified the hijacker as Amarchenov Avmerchan, in his late 20s and a resident of Chechnya. Suppressing a smile, Samia said the man was "not all there."

A Dagestani official, Imam Yariyev, gave a different name, identifying the man as Ahmed Amirkhanov, who lives in Makhachkala, the capital of Dagestan.

Chechnya and Dagestan are neighboring Russian republics. It was unclear which official gave the correct identification.

The hijacker was returning to Russia late Sunday on the plane he diverted, the Israeli military said. Another plane, which carried a crack Russian anti-terror team that landed after the drama was over, was taking passengers to Moscow, their original destination.

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TODAY
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high 36, low 25

TOMORROW
Partly cloudy
high 40, low 23