

News Digest

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Clinton waives his executive privilege

The former president's staff will be allowed to testify freely before a House committee investigating his pardons.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON - Financier Marc Rich refused Tuesday to appear before a House committee investigating his pardon while former President Clinton waived executive privilege, allowing his top aides to testify freely before the panel.

Rich, whose pardon from Clinton on his last day in office has triggered congressional and criminal investigations, also refused to free his lawyers from attorney-client privilege that would allow them to share details

on the pursuit of clemency.

Clinton's personal attorney, David Kendall, said in a letter to the House Government Reform Committee that the former president "will interpose no executive privilege objections to the testimony of his former staff concerning these pardons or to other pardons and commutations he granted."

A legal source close to the former president, speaking on condition of anonymity, said Clinton agreed to waive the privilege for the witnesses because he believes he did nothing wrong and is "anxious to get the facts out as quickly as he can."

The committee is scheduled to hear from former Clinton Chief of Staff John Podesta, ex-White House Counsel Beth

Nolan and Bruce Lindsey, a longtime White House aide and confidant to the former president, on Thursday.

The House committee's chairman, Rep. Dan Burton, R-Ind., asked Clinton two weeks ago to waive executive privilege, the right to keep secret the advice of aides and deliberations leading up to presidential decisions.

The panel also asked Rich then to release his lawyers from attorney-client privileges so they could testify in detail about the campaign to secure his pardon.

"Mr. Rich has asked me to inform the committee that he must continue to rely on the advice of his lawyers and, therefore, is unable to comply with the committee's requests at this time," his attorney, Laurence

Urgenson, said in a letter to the committee Tuesday.

Along with federal prosecutors in New York, the committee is investigating whether Clinton's decision on Rich's pardon was influenced by contributions to his presidential library and various political campaigns from Rich's ex-wife, Denise.

Rich has lived in Switzerland since just before he was indicted in New York on federal charges in 1983. When pardoned by Clinton, he was wanted as a fugitive by the Justice Department on charges of tax evasion, fraud and participation in illegal oil deals with Iran.

Denise Rich visited the White House more than a dozen times during Clinton's presidency.

Bush pushes tax-cut plan

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON - President George W. Bush sought to rally the nation Tuesday behind massive tax cuts and a budget blueprint he says will shrink government debt while protecting education, Social Security and other popular programs.

"We will fund important programs and have money left over for tax relief," the president said.

Bush was addressing an evenly divided Congress on the 38th day of his presidency, previewing a \$1.9 trillion annual budget that barely keeps pace with inflation. In the first test of his leadership, Bush promised a road map to "fiscal sanity," while Democrats warned that his tax cuts were too large.

The first Republican president to address a GOP-led Congress in nearly 50 years, Bush emphasized spending proposals that could have been made by a moderate Democrat. With the government awash in budget surpluses, the nation's 43rd president offered something for everybody over the next decade: \$1.6 trillion in tax cuts, including reductions in every income bracket; \$2 trillion in debt reduction; increased spending for education, conservation and other programs and protections for Social Security and Medicare.

"If it sounds too good to be true, maybe it is," House Minority Leader Dick Gephardt, D-Mo., said. "We think we should be more skeptical, more cautious, in approaching this tax cut."

Democrats are proposing targeted tax cuts of up to \$1 trillion over 10 years, nearly twice as much as they supported a year ago.

Bush delivered his speech, the first prime-time address of his presidency, in 36 minutes during a Tuesday afternoon practice session before heading to the Capitol with his wife, Laura.

The address was Bush's first chance to showcase his agenda on a broad stage. After a brief, thematic inaugural address Jan. 20, the president has struggled to make his arguments heard above the din generated by former President Clinton's pardons, a spy scandal, a shooting at the White House and an air strike against Iraq.

The speech was set in the House's ornate chamber, where history and recent controversies mingled in memories. Dwight D. Eisenhower delivered his State of the Union speeches to a Republican Congress in the mid-1950s, the last GOP president to do so until Bush.

Two years ago, Bush's predecessor was impeached in the same chamber and sent to trial in the Senate, where he was acquitted.

A Washington-area teacher was one of the first lady's campaign to recruit teachers into the nation's schools.

Bracing for the budget fight ahead, Bush summoned GOP legislative leaders to the White House for a strategy session hours before the address.



LET'S JUST GET ALONG: Russian President Vladimir Putin, right, walks with South Korean officials at South Korea's national cemetery Tuesday. Putin, who arrived late Monday night for a three-day official visit, said Russia's cooperation with South and North Korea can help stabilize relations.

Chung Sung-Jun/NewsMakers

Madurese refugees massacred in Indonesia

Native Dayaks attacked migrants trying to flee Borneo island, bringing the death toll in the fighting to 428.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

SAMPIT, Indonesia - A mob of native Dayak fighters attacked and massacred at least 118 migrants traveling under police escort, Indonesia confirmed Tuesday.

This occurred as security forces called in to quell the ethnic violence instead turned their guns on each other.

Thousands of desperate refugees on Borneo Island are scrambling to board ships taking them to safety. The death toll after 10 days of violence stood Tuesday at 428 people, mostly Madurese migrants - some beheaded and with their hearts cut out in keeping with ancient Dayak traditions of warfare.

"We were assisting the evacuation of a Madurese group when a Dayak mob attacked," said Col. Timbul Sianturi, a police spokesman in Jakarta.

"We were outnumbered," he said, adding officers now had orders to shoot rioters on sight.

Earlier reports said the massacred bodies were found overnight dumped near a government office in the town of Parenggean.

Over the past 40 years, more than

100,000 Madurese have resettled in Kalimantan on Borneo island from their island of Madura. They were moved in as part of a government program designed to relieve overcrowding in other areas.

Relations soured when Dayaks complained of discrimination in education and job opportunities. The first major clash occurred in 1997 in West Kalimantan province, when about 3,000 people were killed.

Indonesia's outnumbered security forces have been condemned in the past week for doing little to stop the recent bloodshed.

Hospital officials in the provincial capital of Palangkaraya said the corpses of seven Madurese migrants, five of which had been decapitated, were brought to the morgue following fighting in the city late Monday.

In Sampit, there were sporadic exchanges of gunfire between army soldiers and police officers throughout Tuesday morning in the crowded port area, said Wahwudi Anwar, mayor of this town in Central Kalimantan province.

One refugee was killed in the cross fire, and at least 10 policemen and soldiers were injured, hospital officials said.

The reason for the skirmishes was not immediately clear.

However, in the chaos of the evacuation, many refugees have complained

that both troops and police officers were demanding payment for allowing people to board the vessels.

Despite the gunfire, a passenger ferry capable of carrying 5,000 people left for the port of Surabaya on Java island, located only a few miles from Madura. However, plans for a second sailing were abandoned because of the shooting, government officials said.

National Police Chief Suroyo Bimantoro - who confirmed the new shoot-to-kill policy - said officers raided a Palangkaraya hotel Monday used by Dayak warriors as a base for their campaign, arresting 84 people and confiscating hundreds of spears, daggers and machetes.

Dayaks have declared victory after a 10-day campaign to drive ethnic Madurese migrants from the region, and that appeared to be correct in Sampit.

Tens of thousands of terrified Madurese have abandoned their possessions in the town and fled. In several other towns and villages nearby, the only Madurese remaining have taken shelter near police stations, waiting to be evacuated.

As police and soldiers guarded an overcrowded refugee camp in Sampit, Dayaks armed with spears stood by but did not interfere with the evacuation.

No ethnic violence was reported Tuesday.

Gorbachev celebrates 70th birthday with supporters

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

MOSCOW - Mikhail Gorbachev is the toast of Moscow this week as gala events marking his 70th birthday, a remarkable turnaround for a man feted abroad for freeing Eastern Europe but long spurned at home for his role in the demise of the Communist empire.

A huge banner wishing "Mikhail Sergeyevich" a happy birthday hangs across Frunze Street, leading toward the Kremlin gate. On Monday, the former Soviet leader was honored at a star-studded party at the Rossiya Hotel just off Red Square.

More events are planned later in the week, including an elite banquet at a downtown hotel on Friday, his actual birthday. Gorbachev has invited his closest associates and friends to a small gathering at his Moscow apartment this weekend.

Gorbachev's political foundation has published a 462-page book of tributes, with laudatory remarks from former Presidents Reagan and Bush, Henry Kissinger, former German Chancellor Helmut Kohl and ex-British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher - testimony to the tremendous respect the Nobel Peace laureate

"Now I think the pendulum is swinging in his direction."

Dmitry Muratov

Novaya Gazeta newspaper editor

still enjoys.

In the 10 years that followed the Soviet collapse, however, Gorbachev was a political pariah in Russia. Boris Yeltsin never invited him to the Kremlin. Gorbachev won a mere 1 percent of the vote in the 1996 presidential elections.

"Now I think the pendulum is swinging in his direction," Dmitry Muratov, editor of the Novaya Gazeta newspaper, wrote this week.

Gorbachev's birthday and the fanfare surrounding it come just one month after Yeltsin celebrated his 70th birthday with the flu in a hospital bed, ailing and virtually alone.

World/Nation

The Associated Press

Louisiana

Mardi Gras lives up to extreme expectations

NEW ORLEANS - An estimated million or more people jammed the city's streets on Mardi Gras for the Big Easy's raucous, libidinous, alcohol-fueled celebration.

Tourists stood agape in the French Quarter as three women strolled the crowded, narrow streets wearing nothing but sandals, bikini thongs and elaborate swirls of brightly colored body paint.

Olivier Zissler, a visitor from Nice, France, was amused by the Fat Tuesday excess.

"We have Carnival in Nice, but it's nothing like this. This makes me think Americans are crazy. In America, it seems like you have everything or nothing; it's all done to extremes."

Families, many of them with picnic spreads and barbecue grills, lined parade routes in residential neighborhoods and suburbs, but the Quarter revelry was for adults only.

"This is amazing," Marilyn Campbell of Fairborn, Ohio, said as she watched the costumed and sometimes barely clad show go by. "You just stand there and laugh."

Costumes included one man's see-through jockey shorts and one woman's revealing skirt and top made only of tied-together bead necklaces. The presidential election was a common theme: One man dressed as a Florida ballot with a pot belly and a sign declaring himself a pregnant chad.

England

Eminem, Elton John embrace again at Brit Awards show

LONDON - Madonna dusted the queen's picture and Eminem got another on-stage hug from Elton John as they took top honors in the British music industry's response to last week's Grammy awards.

John presented the award Monday for best international male artist to Eminem and embraced him at the Brit Awards show - apparently undaunted by criticism of his appearance with the rapper at the Grammys.

Madonna, meanwhile, won best international female artist.

Robbie Williams dominated the British categories, winning best British male solo artist plus best British single and best British video for his "Rock DJ."

Canada

13-month-old recovering after being found frozen

TORONTO - A 13-month-old girl whose body was frozen and heart stopped during a winter's night outside during the weekend was playing and talking to her mother Tuesday, her doctor said.

The toddler was ready to leave the intensive pediatric unit and move to a regular hospital room, Dr. Alf Conradi, the unit's director at the Stollery Children's Health Center, told reporters in Edmonton, Alberta.

He said the baby, who has not been identified, was interacting with her mother and being playful. She uttered a few words like "mom" and "down."

The toddler, wearing only a diaper, wandered from the home where she had been sleeping Friday night with her mother and 2-year-old sister, and was found outside at 3 a.m. Saturday.

The child's 26-year-old mother, whose name was not released, found the girl lying face-down in the snow, her hands curled underneath her body.

Arizona

Tunnel leads federal agents to 840 pounds of cocaine

TUCSON - Federal agents discovered a 25-foot dirt tunnel that was apparently being used to smuggle drugs across the Mexican border, and seized 840 pounds of cocaine from the Arizona house at one end of the passage.

The crude, hand-dug tunnel - fitted with a string of bare electric bulbs - runs from the Nogales house to the sewer system, which leads in turn to a dry streambed along the Mexican border called the Nogales Wash.

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Weather

TODAY	TOMORROW
Sunny	Partly cloudy
high 33, low 19	high 49, low 22