

BRIEFLY

Blast leaves 7 hurt in Colombia: A powerful car bomb exploded near a Colombian shopping centre on Tuesday, injuring seven people and wrecking vehicles, just two weeks after feared drug lord Pablo Escobar escaped from jail. Reuter reports from Medellin.

The explosion brought back indiscriminate violence to the city of Medellin after 18 months of relative peace and revived fears of a bloody drug war which hit the city between 1989 and 1991.

The bomb, planted in a white Renault car, blew up just before midday near a busy shopping centre and bank in the exclusive Medellin suburb of El Poblado.

The blast damaged six shops, broke windows and wrecked 10 cars, the police said. Seven people were taken to hospital for treatment of minor injuries, they said.

VOA relay station in Kuwait soon: The United States Information Agency on Tuesday announced a deal with the government of Kuwait to build a Voice of America radio relay station there, Reuter reports from Washington.

The agreement will allow the VOA, the US government's international radio broadcasting service, to expand broadcasting to the Middle East.

"We have long needed better broadcasting in the region," said USIA plans to build 11 medium wave and short wave transmitters. Medium wave transmitters, which broadcast over shorter distances than short wave ones, will provide service in Kuwait. Short waves will be used for service throughout the Middle East and central Asia as far as India.

Kuwait has agreed to provide a construction site and services, such as electricity, the USIA said, in exchange. Kuwait will be allowed use of the station for its own broadcasts.

US Senators urge Li to free Bao: Forty-four US Senators on Tuesday sent a letter to Chinese Premier Li Peng calling for the immediate release of Bao Tong, a ranking Chinese official sentenced to prison for his role in the 1989 pro-democracy movement. Reuter reports from Washington.

The sentence handed down against Bao after a mere six-hour show trial is a flagrant demonstration of the Chinese government's persistent denial of international principles of human rights," said the letter, which was initiated by Democratic Senator Edward Kennedy.

"We strongly urge you to release Bao immediately and unconditionally," it said.

Bao, a former top aide expelled Communist Party Secretary General Zhao Ziyang, was accused in his trial of "counter-revolutionary incitement." He was sentenced to seven years in prison on July 21.

Walker new US envoy to UN: President George Bush on Tuesday named Edward Walker as assistant US Ambassador to the United Nations to replace Alexander Watson, who was recently appointed Ambassador to Brazil, AFP reports from Washington.

The 52-year-old Walker had been Ambassador to the United Arab Emirates for the past two years.

Walker served from 1988 to 1989 as Assistant Secretary of State for near Eastern and South Asian affairs and held several other foreign service posts starting in the late 1970s.

The nomination must be confirmed by the Senate. Thomas Pickering is the current US Ambassador to the United Nations.

US stealth fighter crashes: An F-117A stealth fighter crashed and exploded in a remote area Tuesday night, but the pilot ejected without serious injury, authorities said, reports AP from La Luz.

The \$15 million radar-evading plane from Holloman Air Force Base near Alamogordo plowed into a vacant trailer in the foothills about eight miles (13 kilometers) from the desert base shortly before 9:30 pm (0330 GMT), state police Capt Bill Relyea said.

"It's our understanding the plane caught fire before it crashed," Relyea said.

The pilot apparently walked to a house nearby for help and was taken to the base hospital, Relyea said.

In a statement, the Air Force said the jet was on a routine training mission. Holloman is home to 56 stealth fighters.

Security Council demands access to Bosnian camps

UNITED NATIONS, Aug 5: The Security Council demanded Tuesday that warring parties in Bosnia open their detention centres to inspection, amid reports that Serbs were torturing and killing Croats and Slavic Muslims in concentration camps, Reports AP.

The council statement, which came at the urging of the United States, is not binding under international law. Warring factions in former Yugoslav republics previously have ignored UN cease-fire resolutions, which are supposed to be legally binding.

A group of Muslim nations, led by Turkey, called the UN statement inadequate and urged the Security Council to use force if necessary to get relief supplies to Bosnians. Britain and the United States have opposed the use of troops in the former Yugoslav republics.

Maj-Gen Lewis MacKenzie, who led UN peacekeepers at Sarajevo airport, said he had received complaints from all factions of concentration camp atrocities.

He said the parties began reporting the complaints about five months ago, and the pace of the allegations increased about two months ago as the Serbs "ethnic cleansing" campaign accelerated.

"The situation is getting worse, not better," MacKenzie told reporters at the UN. He called a military solution imposed by outside powers "monumentally difficult."

Bosnian Muslims and Croats claim Serbs run 45 concentration camps holding at least 70,000 people. Serbs claim about 40,000 of their people are currently jailed in Muslim and Croat camps.

The United States has backed unsuccessful attempts by the International Committee of the Red Cross to gain access to the Serb-run camps. On Monday, the State Department condemned torture and killings in the camps.

State Department Spokesman Richard Boucher said, "we're opposed to the detention of innocent people, we're opposed to the forcible expulsion of people from their homes."

But the Bush administration officials appeared Tuesday to play down the degree of knowledge US officials have about the camps.

Thomas Niles, assistant secretary of state for Europe, said the State Department "cannot confirm that these detention facilities are being used for systematic torture and murder of the people detained."

Niles also told the House Foreign Affairs subcommittee on Europe and the Middle East that the United States is prepared to use naval and air power to help deliver humanitarian supplies, but is not prepared to endorse broader intervention.



NEW YORK: Mother Teresa (R) looks up at John Cardinal O'Connor of the Archdiocese of New York August 4. Mother Teresa received the Knights of Columbus "Gaudium Et Spes (Joy and Hope) Award". — AFP/UNB photo

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A report by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees last week cited accounts of guards at the Serb-run camp in Omarska saying they would "not waste bullets on their detainees, who have no food water or shelter and who are beaten twice a day." It cited one guard as saying that prisoners would "starve like animals."

Boucher said the United States has no reports of atrocities in Muslim and Croat camps.

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While the violence question should not hold the negotiations process hostage it must be addressed.

UN envoy Cyrus Vance last week ended a fact-finding visit to South Africa and UN observers are currently in the country monitoring a two-day general strike.

Cohen said the United States supported international efforts but did not want to take a more active role itself or support the ANC's call for a peacekeeping force.

That is why I feel a rapid return to negotiations is necessary," he told a news conference at the end of a two-day visit which included talks with President FW De Klerk and African National Congress (ANC) leader Nelson Mandela.

Mandela in June quit talks on multi-racial constitution, accusing the white minority government of clinging to power and condoning township violence which has killed 12,000 people since 1984.

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US urges S African parties to resume democracy talks

JOHANNESBURG, Aug 5: The United States on Tuesday urged South African parties to quickly resume democracy talks to save the country from crisis, reports Reuter.

US Assistant Secretary of State for Africa, Herman Cohen, said Washington was alarmed by South Africa's worsening economic situation which could only recover after a political settlement was reached.

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Off the Record

Oversized Olympic-style gold medal for Bush

WASHINGTON: Republican senators Tuesday sent President George Bush an oversized Olympic-style gold medal declaring him the "heavy-weight champion" of the world, reports AP.

The senators also presented the president with a pair of boxing gloves labeled "Democratic Congress" as a symbol of his battles with the democratic-controlled legislature.

Bush went to the Senate Tuesday to try to raise the morale of Republican lawmakers who are worried about the president's plunging approval ratings in the polls. He said the talks were "very, very positive".

The president added that he did not believe reports that as many as a third of the party's senators may pass up the Republican convention in Houston this month which will nominate Bush as the party's candidate in the November presidential election.

"I don't know that that's true at all," said Bush.

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She sues channel 13 for invading her privacy

SANTIAGO: The daughter of former East German leader Erich Honecker is suing two Chilean television stations for invading her privacy, a radio station said on Tuesday, reports Reuter.

A lawyer for Sonya Honecker told radio cooperative she would ask a court today to take steps against channel 13 and megavisión and to ensure the privacy and safety of Sonya's family.

The lawyer told Chile's largest radio news network that the two television stations has besieged Sonya's house after her mother, Margot Honecker, arrived there and had overstepped all limits.

Margot Honecker, who spent more than seven months holed up in Chile's Moscow embassy with her husband to avoid him facing trial in Berlin for manslaughter of people fleeing the Communist state, flew into Chile as an ordinary tourist on Friday.

A government minister said Chile would be willing to grant her permanent residency if she asked for it.

Margot Honecker's decision to leave her husband and fly to Chile sent local and international television channels scrambling for pictures of the woman known in East Germany as "the witch".

Her car dodged journalists in a high-speed chase from the airport. Sonya's house in a leafy residential suburb has been under siege by photographers and reporters.

Industry sources said the two channels were singled out for legal action after one forced her driver to swerve violently on the road from the airport and another used a hydraulic arm to film inside the garden of Sonya's house.

Honecker's daughter married a Chilean who was in exile in East Berlin.

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Free sex show makes them crazy

SYDNEY: Traffic stopped and hundreds of people gathered in central Sydney late on Tuesday when a huge rooftop advertising screen started showing pornographic movies, reports Reuter.

Police arrived quickly on the scene but it took them 90 minutes to shut down the free sex show because the door to a roof elevator was locked a police spokesman said today.

"Well I think I've seen everything now," said a shocked Tessa Kompara who had come into town for dinner with her daughter.

Also revealed on the eight metre (yard) high by seven metre (yard) wide screen were the culprits. A repeated message disclosed that it was a university student prank.

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Russia wants better ties with Asia

MOSCOW, Aug 5: Russian Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev on Tuesday called for improved diplomatic relations with Asia and especially Japan, the Moscow daily Trud reported, reports AP.

Supporting stable relations with Japan and South Korea in particular, Kozyrev said, "it is time to give new momentum to our foreign affairs policy."

The minister warned that "certain forces (in Russia) do not accept the new foreign affairs policy and want to take the country back to the level of a besieged fortress."

"They are afraid of the outside world, do not believe in their own strength and want to persuade the people of their inferiority," he added.

Russian conservatives have criticised Kozyrev for his willingness to negotiate with Japan over the disputed Kuril Islands in the Pacific.

The islands were seized by the Soviet Union at the end of World War II.

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Israel rockets refugee camp in Lebanon: 3 hurt

TYRE, Lebanon, Aug 5: Two Israeli helicopter gunships attacked a Palestinian refugee camp near this south Lebanon port city Wednesday, injuring three people, security sources said, reports AP.

The helicopters fired 12 rockets at 11:20 AM (0820 GMT) at a base belonging to the Syrian-backed Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine in the Rashidieh camp, five kilometers (two miles) south of Tyre, one source said.

The source, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the identity of the injured had not been determined.

In Jerusalem, the Israeli army command said all the attacking aircraft returned safely to base.

The air strike was the seventh in two weeks on suspected Palestinian and Shiite Muslim guerilla bases in South Lebanon and Israel's 29th this year.

By Lebanese police count, 37 people have been killed and 94 injured in Israeli air raids so far this year.

The raid followed an overnight clash between militiamen of the Israeli-allied South Lebanon Army and unidentified infiltrators in Israel's self-styled "security zone."

One guerilla was killed and an SLA militiaman was injured in the 45-minute fight about 18 kilometers (11 miles) north of the Israeli border, security sources said.

They said a guerilla squad tried to slip into the mostly Christian Marjayoun area from the predominantly Shiite Muslim Rihan region at 10 PM (1900 GMT) Tuesday.

SLA militiamen opened up with machine gunfire, the sources said, speaking on condition of anonymity.

They said the numbers and affiliations of the infiltrators had not been determined.

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Former NZ PM dead

WELLINGTON, Aug 5: Former New Zealand Prime Minister Sir Robert Muldoon died this morning, Radio New Zealand reported, said Reuter.

"That is the end of an era," Prime Minister Jim Bolger said on Radio New Zealand. "He'll be remembered as a very strong, very vigorous politician."

Lanka departs 4 Thai women

COLOMBO, Aug 5: Sri Lanka is deporting four Thai women, one with the AIDS virus, who were arrested in a Colombo Hotel last week for suspected prostitution, police sources said today, reports Reuter.

They will leave for Thailand on Thursday. The magistrate who ordered the deportations asked the women for their clients' names or telephone numbers, but they said they had kept no records.

4 fundamentalists arrested in Algeria

ALGIERS, Aug 5: Four members of Abdel Kader Chakendi's armed group were arrested at Ain Delfia, 160 kilometers (99 miles) to the west of Algiers, Algerian military police said Sunday, reports AP.

Chakendi, the leader of the Armed Islamic Organisation El-Kitab Wa El-Sunna Wa El-Djamaa (The book, the prophet's tradition and the consensus) was arrested July 25 during a clash with military police, together with Azzedine Fudad, (19), who later died of injuries.

Three other members of the group were arrested on July 26 and a further 10 on July 27.

Another six Islamic fundamentalists were arrested at Uled Yaich, in the Blida region 50 kilometers (31 miles) south of Algiers, three in Oran, west of Algiers, two in Blakra.

UN to launch new search for Iraqi weapons material

UNITED NATIONS, Aug 5: A new, 26-member UN inspection team is due in Iraq on Saturday to continue work on uncovering Baghdad's clandestine weapons programmes, the United Nations said on Tuesday, reports Reuter.

It will be the first UN team to enter the country since another group conducted a fruitless search of Baghdad's Agriculture Ministry last week. Iraqi authorities had barred inspectors from the building for more than three weeks.

Ambassador Rolf Ekeus, the Swedish head of the UN special commission charged with scrapping Iraq's weapons of mass destruction, declined to say what installations would be inspected or to identify the UN experts, except to say they could be led by a Russian, Nikita Smidovich.

"I cannot at this stage give more indication about what is aimed at... it will be hopefully a surprise for the Iraqi side," he told a news conference.

"I can, however, say that we intend to go to substantively motivated sites that is we will not carry out inspections for the sake of inspection."

The US officials would examine installations "where we have reason to suspect that prohibited material of significance is stored or hidden."

In April 1991 Gulf War UN ceasefire resolution requires the destruction of Iraq's nuclear, chemical, biological and ballistic missile stocks and facilities.

The recent standoff with Iraq ended after members of the United States-led alliance threatened to use force, and UN officials agreed that none of the team sent into the agriculture ministry building would be nationals of countries which fought against Iraq.

No weapons-related material was found and UN officials said they thought any contraband had been removed during the stand-off.

Ekeus, who appeared at the news conference with the head of the team which carried out that delayed inspection, Achim Biermann of Germany, said the Security Council was "somewhat slow" in reacting to Iraq's rebuff, which included attacks on the inspectors.

He said he told Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz last week that "there will be very swift reaction if there is any tendency to block us this time."

Aziz gave an undertaking that "from now on... Iraq would like to see a new chapter in relations between Iraq and the (UN) special commission."

Iraq had "learned a very serious lesson, that this was a very close call, last time," Ekeus said.

It was still refusing to provide information about foreign suppliers who aided its weapons programmes.

"We do not accept this as a valid argument. We will indeed continue the search for such information," he added.

US officials against N-moratorium

WASHINGTON, Aug 5: Senior Bush administration officials will mount a major fight against steps by Congress to halt US nuclear tests for up to a year and to ban testing after September 1996, the defence department said on Tuesday, reports Reuter.

The Secretary of Defence and the Secretary of Energy and the National Security Adviser would recommend a veto of this legislation by President George Bush if it passes Congress, defence department spokesman Pete Williams told reporters.

The senate on Monday night approved a nine-month moratorium on testing through next June and a ban on all further US tests by the end of September 1996.

The house of representatives last month passed a nine-year moratorium but no final ban on testing. The two chambers must now reach agreement on a compromise.

But Williams said Defence Secretary Dick Cheney is determined to fight any temporary moratorium or final ban on US testing and would be joined by Energy Secretary James Watkins and White House National Security Adviser Brent Scowcroft.

The energy department oversees the US nuclear testing programme under the Nevada desert and is responsible for the testing budget.

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UK expert dies at Thai airbus crash site

KATHMANDU, Aug 5: A British test pilot of Airbus Industrie died of altitude sickness while investigating a Thai Airways crash in the Himalayas that killed 113 people, a government official said Wednesday, reports AP.

The pilot led an eight-member team to the crash site Tuesday to begin an international probe into Friday's crash of the Airbus a 310-300, the official said. The report also was carried by the official state radio.

In Toulouse, France, Airbus Industrie identified the pilot as Gordon Corps, 63. He had worked for the European consortium since 1982, said Sean Lee, a company spokesman.

The Nepalese official said Corps collapsed from high-altitude sickness at 11,500 feet (3,500 metres) on the Takuassir mountain. Corps died while being brought down to the camp where the salvage operation was based, said the official, who spoke on condition of anonymity. The hotel in Kathmandu where Corps was staying said the British Embassy took away his belongings Tuesday evening.

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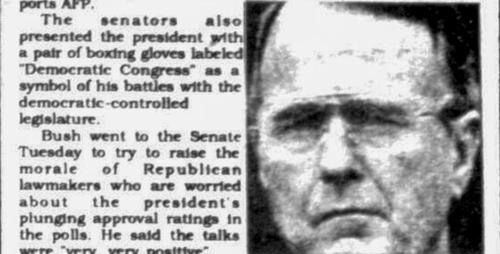
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The ANC has since launched a campaign of mass strikes and protests to press for majority rule.

Cohen said Mandela's concern about violence should be taken seriously but it should not hold up democracy negotiations.

While the violence question should not hold the negotiations process hostage it must be addressed.

UN envoy Cyrus Vance last week ended a fact-finding visit to South Africa and UN observers are currently in the country monitoring a