

## Clinton begins repairing image



10th anniversary of the 1988 bombing of a Pan American World Airways jumbo jet over Lockerbie, Scotland.

Later in the week, the embattled president will gather children around him in the White House's East Room and read holiday stories to them before settling in for a quiet Christmas at home.

White House spokesman Barry Tolz said Sunday that Clinton's activities were in keeping with his commitment to community service. "And of course, it's for the holiday season," Tolz added.

But between the events lies a strategy to pull Clinton's presidency out of the ashes by the time the Senate opens an impeachment trial early next year. In the next two weeks, White House aides plan to seize on the lull in Congress and provide Clinton with forums to talk about his pet legislative topics — health care, education and Social Security.

Aides hoped the images of Clinton being compassionate while advocating popular social programme would help boost public support.

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Clinton began trying to repair his image Sunday by attending church with his daughter, Chelsea, his stepfather, Richard Kelley, and an entourage of friends. Hillary Clinton skipped the service at Foundry United Methodist Church.

The Rev Walter Shropshire noted it had been "an incredible week, with all sorts of things happening." Before a moment of silence, he asked the congregation to pray "for our nation, for our leaders, for the people of Iraq, for our troops in uniform and for anyone else in our hearts."

But even as he was leaving the usually supportive church, the president was confronted on the steps by an angry parishioner.

"Damn you, for what you've done to the nation!" the man barked. "Please resign for the good of the world!"

Clinton and Chelsea ignored the man, waving instead to about 100 supporters who cheered him and clutched signs reading "Complete your Term" and "God Bless Our Prez."

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According to Source C, those who carried out the attack were Libyans but the ones who ordered and masterminded it were the 'mullahs' (Priests) in Iran, Tillmann said in a documentary broadcast by Pro 7 private channel.

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International investigators have accused Libya of being behind the attack. Tripoli has denied involvement.

Turkish PM-elect fails to form govt

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## International

### Impeachment case

## Senators for swift resolution

WASHINGTON, Dec 21: The House impeachment votes barely over, Senators are pondering how to handle what would be the first trial of a sitting president in 130 years — or even whether to conduct one, reports AP.

Whatever the course, members of both parties said Sunday they want a swift Senate resolution of the charges that President Bill Clinton lied and obstructed justice in trying to cover up his affair with Monica Lewinsky.

Clinton's chief of staff, John Podesta, said the White House legal team would consider whether to challenge the constitutionality of a situation in which the charges against Clinton were brought in the outgoing 105th Congress but the president tried in the 106th Congress convening on January 6.

"I think that our legal team will take a look at that in the days to come," Podesta said on CNN's "Late Edition." "Some of the constitutional experts who have reviewed that matter believe that it is not consistent with the Constitution to have done this in a lame-duck Congress, especially in the partisan way that they did that. So, I think we'll have to take a look at that."

If there are only 55 votes — the number of Republicans in the Senate — "then there has to be some consideration to what do you do that is the best under the circumstances to resolve this matter and in the best interests of the country," Hatch said.

In many ways, the Senate's on trial here in a way, too," Dodd said on NBC. "We're the court of last resort, of trying to restore some civility here."

Senate Republicans, however, continued to insist on a trial or, in Hatch's case, at least the start of one.

"The Constitution says if you receive these articles you'll have a trial," Senate Majority Whip Don Nickles, an Oklahoma republican, said on "Fox

News Sunday." "I think it can be done very quickly." Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott has said originally maybe three days to three weeks. "I think he has it about right. I think it could be done in three weeks if the White House wanted to."

The White House, meanwhile, began preparing a defense to be led by White House Counsel Charles Ruff, with political guidance from people such as former Senate Majority Leader George Mitchell, a Maine Democrat, who retired in 1994.

"We have been talking to a number of different Senators, including Senator Mitchell, to get advice and counsel on how to deal with the Senate," Greg Craig, coordinator of the White House impeachment legal defense.

Podesta noted that another former majority leader, Republican Bob Dole, recently wrote a guest column in The New York Times proposing a joint resolution of Congress to censure Clinton.

## Indo-Pak border clashes spark forest fires

SRINAGAR, India, Dec 21: Border clashes between India and Pakistani troops have sparked more than two dozen forest fires along their winding frontier in Kashmir, forest officials said today, reports AFP.

Gunfire and artillery shelling have fuelled as many as 25 separate fires in areas bordering Pakistan during the past one month, the officials said in this summer capital of Kashmir state.

"We have extinguished the fires in four or five places. Elsewhere, the fires are still burning in varying intensity," an official told AFP.

Indian and Pakistani troops regularly clash along their disputed border in Kashmir, a picturesque Himalayan state that has fuelled two wars between the two countries.

Much of the border is covered by forest, which is used as cover by Muslim guerrillas whose separatist campaign in Indian-controlled Kashmir has claimed more than 20,000 lives since 1989.

## BRIEFLY



The family of a killed Kosovo Liberation Army soldier cries over his coffin at a place called the "Heroes' Graves" in the Drenica region, some 30 km west of Pristina, Sunday. Thirty-six KLA soldiers were killed at the Yugoslav-Albanian border in a clash with the Yugoslav army one week ago. — AP/UNB photo

Ogata arrives in Kosovo: The UN High Commissioner for Refugees Sadako Ogata arrived in Pristina Sunday in an attempt to boost cooperation between aid groups and peace monitors in the troubled Yugoslav province of Kosovo, AFP reports from Pristina.

She said "the main task now is to get people back to their homes, help them rebuild and see that they survive winter." Ogata was due to meet the provisional head of the Serb government in Kosovo Zoran Andjelovic.

China to launch weather balloon: China plans to launch a 30,000-cubic-metre weather balloon on January 1 to monitor ozone in the atmosphere above the country, the state-run Xinhua News Agency reported a Monday, AP says from Beijing.

The balloon will be stationed at 30,000 metres above the earth as part of a programme by the Institute of Atmospheric Physics and an unnamed foreign refrigerant producer.

Ghali arrives in Laos today: Former United Nations Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali will arrive in Laos today for a four-day visit as part of a government effort to promote the use of the French language, the Vientiane Times reported on Monday, AP says from Bangkok.

Boutros-Ghali was elected secretary general of La Francophonie, the 49-member organisation of countries with linguistic or cultural ties to France, at its seventh summit in Hanoi in November 1997.

Mexican envoy returns to Cuba: Mexico has returned its ambassador to Cuba, declaring an end to a controversy over Cuban President Fidel Castro's seeming criticism of Mexican policies, AP reports from Mexico City.

The spat "is totally overcome for the government of Mexico," Ambassador Pedro Joaquin Coldwell said on return to Havana on Saturday, according to the Mexican government's Notimex news agency. Mexico withdrew Joaquin Coldwell on December 4, two days after Castro seemed to criticise Mexico's free trade pact with the United States.

Floods threaten French Polynesia: Authorities in French Polynesia have evacuated 550 residents from a valley threatened by floods after fallen trees dammed a nearby river, creating a rising lake of water and mud, AFP reports from Papeete, Tahiti.

The evacuation was ordered on Sunday when civil defence officials became aware of the danger posed by the natural dam.

The residents have been sheltered in two churches.

Bulgarian mafia godfather killed: Ivo Karamanski, 39, known as "the godfather of the Bulgarian mafia," and his 28-year-old bodyguard were shot dead early Sunday morning in a drunken brawl, said the Interior Ministry press office, Xinhua reports from Sofia.

Karamanski and his bodyguards were attending a party in Sofia's Simeonovo suburb when the incident happened. A quarrel broke out at around 2:20 am local time on Sunday between drunken Karamanski and one of the young men who organised the party, and ended in shooting.

The suspected assailant escaped from the scene but was later arrested.

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Knesset votes on no-confidence motion

## Netanyahu's reign at stake

JERUSALEM, Dec 21: After two and a half years of balancing the peace process against the wishes of his hawkish coalition, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's reign of power may be coming to an end, reports AP.

Israel's parliament will approve either a no-confidence motion or a bill for early elections today. Either way, Netanyahu will be one step closer to facing the polls over his hard-line peace policies with the Palestinians.

Netanyahu holds a one-seat majority in the Knesset amid crumbling support from his coalition partners.

A successful no-confidence motion would mean new elections within 60 days. Approval of the first of three readings of the early elections bill would mean a vote could take place within six months. A preliminary reading of the bill passed in July.

Netanyahu will decide before the Knesset convenes whether the 120-member house will vote for a no-confidence motion or for the early elections bill. Politicians from both sides have suggested April 27 as a possible election date, more than a year ahead of the scheduled 2000 vote.

The big question is not whether or not the early elections law will pass, the question is how long it will be. Netanyahu froze implementation of the deal, which calls for Israel to cede from war-captured West Bank territory, because he said the Palestinians failed to live up to their commitments.

Both opponents of further concessions to the Palestinians and doves in the Knesset opposition who want to accelerate the accords have announced that they will vote against Netanyahu's policies.

New elections would likely put the peace negotiations on hold, and Palestinian officials have accused Netanyahu of using his latest political crisis to end the peace process.

Since taking office in May 1996, Netanyahu's administration has been plagued with scandal and political infighting. Four Cabinet ministers have resigned and his eight-party coalition has struggled to stay intact despite differences on how to manage the peace process, which has hit one crisis after another.

Several politicians have said they would challenge Netanyahu for the premiership in the next elections. Opposition Labour Party leader Ehud Barak is considered the frontrunner. Amnon Lipkin-Shahak, a charismatic former armed forces chief-of-staff is also expected to enter politics before the next race, either as Barak's deputy or as part of a new centrist party.

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