

NEWS ROUNDUP

Bosnian Serb official cuts war-crimes deal

THE HAGUE, Netherlands — Abruptly reversing course at the Yugoslav tribunal yesterday, a top Bosnian Serb wartime politician pleaded guilty to persecuting non-Serbs in the 1992-95 Bosnian war.

In exchange, prosecutors dropped genocide and all other war crimes charges against Biljana Plavsic, the only woman suspect at the court and the first Serb leader to admit responsibility for atrocities.

Plavsic, one of the highest-ranking officials to come before the U.N. tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, pleaded guilty to one count of crimes against humanity, an offense punishable by up to life imprisonment.

Homeland security bill is still mired in Senate

WASHINGTON — Senate moderates tried in vain yesterday to resolve the labor rights dispute that has stalled legislation creating a Homeland Security Department.

Democrats John Breaux of Louisiana and Ben Nelson of Nebraska, joined by Republican Lincoln Chafee of Rhode Island, could not win agreement on their latest attempt at compromise, which moved closer to the White House position. As a result, the largely partisan Senate logjam continues after almost five weeks.

A spokeswoman for Senate Majority Leader Tom Daschle (D-S.D.) repeated his pledge that the Senate would keep trying for a deal even as it moves on to other issues such as the Iraq use-of-force resolution.

President Bush has threatened to veto the homeland security legislation unless it permits him greater power to hire, fire and move around the proposed agency's 170,000 workers.

Arafat asks Bush to bar relocating U.S. embassy

JERUSALEM — Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat appealed yesterday to one of his toughest critics — President Bush — to block a U.S. law that calls for moving the American embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to disputed Jerusalem.

Bush signed the bill into law, but views it as advisory rather than mandatory, and says he has no plans to move the embassy to Jerusalem, where Palestinians seek to establish a capital in the eastern part of the city.

In another development, Arafat's Fatah movement has dropped the idea of prodding the Palestinian leader to relinquish some power by appointing a prime minister.

The Fatah campaign had been the most serious political challenge to Arafat in years, but the effort was sidetracked during Israel's 10-day siege of Arafat's compound, which ended earlier this week.

Retiring Sen. Helms hailed by colleagues

WASHINGTON — The Senate paid tribute yesterday to retiring Sen. Jesse Helms of North Carolina, an icon of conservatism and uncompromising foe of communism who, colleagues said, abided by the Southern courtliness of a bygone era.

Democratic Sen. Robert Byrd of West Virginia, the 84-year-old Senate president pro tempore, called the 80-year-old Helms "a true gentleman of the Old South" who stuck to his beliefs and demonstrated the power a single senator can wield.

Helms, who is serving the last of his five terms, was the second retiring senator from the Carolinas in as many weeks to be recognized for his long service. Senators last week turned their attention to 99-year-old Strom Thurmond (R-S.C.), who was first elected in 1954.

Bomb kills U.S. soldier, 2 more at Philippine bar

MANILA, Philippines — A nail-packed bomb killed an American soldier and two Filipinos yesterday outside a restaurant near a base in the troubled southern Philippines, where the U.S. military helped in the fight against al Qaeda-linked rebels this year.

The blast, from a bomb hidden on a motorcycle, wounded 25 people outside the restaurant, which is frequented by U.S. and Filipino soldiers, in the city of Zamboanga, officials said. Television footage showed a pool of blood and unconscious victims — some with their shirts bloodied — being loaded into ambulances.

No one claimed responsibility for the blast. Suspicion fell on Muslim extremists like the al Qaeda-linked Abu Sayyaf group and Communist rebels who had threatened earlier in the day to attack police and military installations.

FORUM

Collateral damage and the Iraq war

By RON WALTERS

As planning for the war against Iraq proceeds, one wonders whether the planners are considering what we know wars produce as "collateral damage" on a number of fronts.

First, they should consider the magnitude of the sacrifice by Americans who need such things as prescription drugs, a Social Security safety net, college loans, Medicaid and Medicare, election reform funded, sufficient affordable housing and strategic support for the budget of those states whose economies have gone into the tank. Funds needed for these priorities will be spent on a questionable war with a so-called "enemy" who does not even threaten the basic security of the United States. Meanwhile, the direct-not indirect-interests of Americans will be threatened by the funds that are squandered on this misadventure.

Then, they should consider the cost of war and at the same time consider the recent report from the U.S. Census Bureau, which said that 1.3 million more Americans have slipped into officially defined poverty, taking the poverty rate to 11.7 percent.

This is an indication that the state of the U.S. economy—not just the stock market—is in dire need of attention.

And what does George Bush want to do? He wants to slow down spending to save money for the war, instead of speeding up spending to bail out the economy.

Congressional Democrats estimate that the cost of an Iraq invasion and occupation will be at least \$200 billion, taken out of an economy that the Congressional Budget Office says is already running a river of debt. It estimates that the debt will amount to \$1.7 trillion in 10 years, partially as a result of the Republican tax cut, and this debt will be added to that which already exists and is growing by leaps and bounds. Where are all those folks on the Right who were calling for a balanced budget? When Bob Dole was the Majority leader in the Senate, in 1996 he also was the leader of the band trying to secure a balanced budget. But you haven't heard from him lately on this issue. So, the war economy is now embargoing funds that will be needed for domestic human needs far into the future.

"Collateral damage" will be done by killing thousands, perhaps

hundreds of thousands of the people of Iraq—a cost of war that no one talks about. Who will take responsibility for the human carnage that might take place, the bitter memories that this will generate against the United States, and how will we explain to the succeeding generations of Americans that Iraqis will grow up attempting to use violence to insure that they will be able to live in peace and security? Our planners act as if America is such a power in the world that there will be no cost for the aggressive actions against others.

The true cost of "regime change" is not simply in replacing Saddam Hussein, but insuring that another Saddam or someone worse does not rise to replace him. Therefore, it means destroying his infrastructure and the people who support it. This step turns the United States into an occupier in the region, joining Israel on the ground acting out the role of imperial agent of the West.

The real name for the action against Iraq would be "aggression," a term used to indicate that one nation, for its own reasons, initiates actions against another, just as Saddam Hussein did against Kuwait or

Yemen. Aggression, especially by a global power, is a violation of international law and even if done by wresting political sanction from the United Nation, it violates the spirit of international law and global civility. It strikes a dagger at the heart of creating an international system where nations respect law and civil procedures more than naked power. So, the "collateral damage" in this case will be the principles of conflict resolution for an evolving global system.

Finally, no one talks about the "collateral damage" of sending American soldiers to fight a war that has the stink of politics all over it, for oil or for the re-election of a president. For just as Vietnam soured a generation of Americans on such adventures, the potential of loosing thousands of lives for nothing also may contribute to the adoption of an isolationist mood in the aftermath. With American interests exploding globally, none of us can afford that. But as we ignore the realities of this and other collateral damage this policy could cause, we all become complicit in the result.

— Ron Walters is Distinguished Leadership Scholar, director of the African American Leadership Institute and professor of government and politics at the University of Maryland College Park.

Black Caucus cautions against U.S. rush into use of military force

By ARIZONA LEWIS

WASHINGTON — The 38 members of the Congressional Black Caucus issued a joint statement Thursday cautioning against a rush into George Bush's use of military force.

Rep. John Lewis, D-Ga., accused Bush of ignoring the nation's imminent needs for health care, education and environmental protection to focus instead on a unilateral military campaign against Iraq.

"We cannot look to our president to address these problems," Lewis said in a speech at Howard University, reported USA Today. "He is too busy pounding the drums of war."

"Bombing Baghdad may make us

forget about our nation's poor schools, but it will not educate our children," said Lewis, a proponent of non-violence who was a civil rights leader during the 1960s.

"There is concern that there are steps missing" in the White House's move toward war, said caucus Chairwoman Eddie Bernice Johnson, D-Texas.

One caucus member, Rep. Sheila Jackson Lee, D-Texas, said she could not vote for a resolution that would grant Bush authority to use "all means he determines to be appropriate" against Saddam. "The case has simply not been made to justify an unprecedented pre-emptive military strike," she told USA Today.

In a related matter, two white U.S. congressmen visiting Iraq urged the

United States Sunday to take Iraq at its word on allowing unfettered international weapons inspections and stop "provoking" a new Gulf war.

The congressmen — David Bonier, D-Mich., and Jim McDermott, D-Wash. — said Iraqi officials they have met in Baghdad had all promised that inspectors searching for weapons of mass destruction could enter any site they wanted at any time, but that Iraq also wanted to be treated with dignity at the same time.

"They say to the person they will allow unrestricted, unfettered inspections, any time you want, anywhere you want," Bonier said in a live television interview with ABC's "This Week with George

Stephanopoulos."

"They want their sovereignty respected ... they want to be treated with some dignity and respect, but basically they are suggesting that everything will be open for the inspections."

McDermott, who like Bonier voted against war with Iraq in 1991, added:

"They said they would allow us to go anywhere we wanted, and until they don't do that, no one needs to do this coercive stuff where you bring in helicopter and armed people and storm buildings."

"I think you have to take the Iraqis on their face value ... They should be given a chance, otherwise were trying to provoke them into war."

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DON CARSON ★ NC SENATE

- ★ **LOW TAXES** The only way to create jobs and strengthen our local economy is by keeping more money in the pockets of our hard-working citizens. Our local economy grows when dollars are spent locally by our citizens, not in Raleigh by our legislators.
- ★ **STRONG FAMILIES** I'm a conservative and a Christian. I worry that the core values instilled by our parents and grandparents aren't as prevalent today. In the state Senate, I will work to strengthen families, and to make our area the best place to raise a family in North Carolina.
- ★ **QUALITY EDUCATION** I stand with equity in education. Our district needs more funding to catch up with the larger school districts. By cutting wasteful spending in Raleigh, this money can be allocated for teachers and computers in our classrooms.
- ★ **PROTECTING FARMERS** I'm a farmer and a businessman myself, and know first hand how we must nurture our rural economy. It was wrong when liberals in the State Senate voted to raid tens of millions belonging to farm families. As a farmer myself, you can bet I'll stand up for agriculture.

Card photo by Don Carson for NC Senate, 2002, 2001, 2000

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