

news roundup

from the associated press wire

World

UN Security Council to allow oil sale by Iraq

The UN Security Council has overwhelmingly approved a plan allowing Iraq to make its first big oil sale since the invasion of Kuwait. Council members endorsed the sale of \$1.6 billion of Iraqi oil, effective immediately. Most of the proceeds will provide humanitarian aid to Iraqis, and some could be used to compensate victims of the Persian Gulf war. Iraq would have no control over the sale or the use of the money.

The diplomats said that the sale is unrelated to the dispute over Iraq's interference with the UN weapons inspectors. Iraq says the United States is using the issue to justify new military attacks. But its latest statement, printed in the government-run newspaper, stops short of refusing to comply with the terms of the war truce.

Soviets in need of food aid

European Community leaders said a top Soviet official requested \$14.7 billion in food aid from the EC and others, such as the United States and Canada. One EC official said the Soviet leader reported his nation's food production was down between 10 and 30 percent this year.

Treasury Secretary Nicolas Brady said the United States will help the Soviets feed themselves this winter — and he said Soviet officials assured him the aid will go through agencies such as the Red Cross. Much Western aid has previously ended up on the black market. Brady, who is in Moscow, also said that Soviet President Gorbachev is making headway toward economic reforms.

Hostages may not be released

Recent speculation about a pending hostage release is being dampened by a new statement from Lebanese hostage holders. A pro-Iranian kidnap faction in Lebanon has released a communique saying it would not free any Western hostages until Israel releases 20 more Lebanese prisoners.

The communique reads, "The Revolutionary Justice Organization is sorry to freeze the hope of an imminent release of a few hostages until the picture becomes clearer about the Israeli position and the United Nations movement."

The handwritten, Arabic-language message was accompanied by a picture of 61-year-old American hostage Joseph Cicippio of Valley Forge, PA. Cicippio and British hostage Jack Mann are both believed to be held by the group. The 32-line statement dashed hopes raised over the last three days that 77-year-old Mann, a former World War II pilot, was about to go free.

Earlier this month, Israel released 51 prisoners and the bodies of nine Arab guerrillas after getting evidence that one of Israel's missing servicemen was dead. Israel has also received the body of another serviceman. However, yesterday's statement by the Revolutionary Justice Organization said Israel agreed to release 80 Arab prisoners. The statement said, "We waited for some time for the number to be completed. But unfortunately agreements and pledges do not mean anything" to the Israelis.

The communique also urged the United Nations to take a more active role in the hostage negotiations.

Italian airliner hijacked

An Italian Alitalia airliner was hijacked yesterday during a flight from Rome. The lone hijacker attempted to force the plane to land in Algeria, but Algerian authorities refused it landing permission, so the plane landed in Tunisia. Police overpowered the hijacker after he released all but one of his hostages. None of the more than 135 on board were reported as hurt. An Alitalia representative said the plane will soon return to Rome.

Nation

Gates not informed about Iran-Contra

A former official of the CIA said President George Bush's nominee for the agency's director was shielded from knowledge about aspects of the Iran-Contra case. Alan Friers said he gave Robert Gates no specifics, but just a hint, that Iran-Contra figure Oliver North was deeply involved in getting supplies to the Nicaraguan contra rebels. Friers told the Senate Intelligence Agency that he can't dispute Gates' account that he didn't know North was running a secret resupply operation.

Gonzalez sentenced to 25 years

Julio Gonzalez was convicted yesterday of setting the fire that killed 87 people at a New York social club. He has received the maximum sentence, 25 years to life in prison. Friends and relatives of the victims cheered as the judge issued the sentence.

Demonstrators arrested

About 20 demonstrators were arrested outside the convention center in Portland, OR, where President George Bush spoke at a GOP fund-raiser this morning. They were protesting a variety of administration policies and some were carrying signs that read "Quayle for President Now."

EPA unveils ozone plan

The Environmental Protection Agency has unveiled a plan for phasing out the use of chemicals that damage the Earth's protective ozone layer. Production and importation of CFC's, halogen and carbon tetrachloride would have to end by the year 2000. Methyl chloroform would be banned two years later.

Environmental activists are accusing the United States of blocking an agreement to reduce pollution that contributes to global warming. The United States is the only industrialized nation that has refused to commit to specific targets for cutting carbon dioxide emissions. The latest round of negotiations on an international clean-air pact ends today in Kenya.

Number of unemployed in US fell

The Labor Department said 17,000 fewer Americans filed for unemployment benefits in the first week of September compared to the previous week. But instead of a rebound in jobs, the decrease is attributed to the holiday-shortened work week.

The Bush administration is getting behind an alternative to a Democratic-backed plan to help the long-term unemployed. Labor Secretary Lynn Martin said the Republican proposal to extend benefits for 10 weeks would not bust the budget like the Democratic plan. The House already has overwhelmingly approved a plan to extend benefits for 20 weeks.

Pro-choice activists opposed to Clarence Thomas nomination

Abortion rights activists are calling on the Senate Judiciary Committee to reject the Supreme Court nomination of Clarence Thomas. The director of the National Abortion Rights Action League said Thomas would vote to take away the right to abortion. However, committee chairman Joseph L. Biden (D-DE) said the activists are basing their claims on bad logic and inferences from a speech Thomas gave in 1987.

Local

Weld files pro-choice legislation

Governor William F. Weld yesterday filed legislation to protect a woman's right to an abortion and to provide better access to reproductive health care. Weld said the legislation repeals several antiquated state laws that would jeopardize abortion rights in Massachusetts if *Roe v. Wade* were overturned. The bill lowers the age of consent for abortion services from 18 to 16 and requires the consent of only one parent or guardian for a minor under 16. Weld said that in light of the number of single parent families, the consent of one parent or guardian should be sufficient. He says that 16 is the age of medical consent for every procedure except abortion.

Weld's bill would also repeal the so-called Doyle-Flynn Amendment that prohibits the use of Medicaid funds to pay for abortions. It would allow the use of victims assistance funding to pay for abortion counseling and services for rape victims and allow public employees' health insurance to cover abortion services. The bill would also prohibit the blocking of access to medical facilities. It would provide penalties of up to six months imprisonment for the first such offense. In addition, it would repeal designation of October as pro-life month, and stiffen criminal penalties for abortions performed by non-physicians.

The governor says he believes freedom of choice goes to the heart of the principles embodied in the Constitution such as freedom from government interference in the private lives of citizens.

Layoffs at WHDH-TV

Television station WHDH laid off nearly 20 percent of its staff yesterday. Station officials said the recession and shifts in the broadcast industry have hurt the station's advertising revenue. Bruce Mason, vice president and general manager of the station, said WHDH cut 40 jobs across all departments, including the news, programming and business offices. That leaves the station with about 175 employees. Nine months ago, WHDH cut about 20 jobs.

Mason said the station depends entirely on advertising revenue for its income. But the weak economy has caused a slump in advertising spending. He said increased competition from cable television also eats into revenue. Mason would not say specifically how much advertising revenue has fallen. As a result of the cuts, WHDH is halting its 90 minute evening news format, switching instead to one hour. The station is also cancelling a one-hour public affairs program, *Our Times*, that has aired on Saturday nights.

Jury reconvenes on Stuart case

The Suffolk County grand jury investigating the 1989 murder of Carol Stuart reconvened today. The two-year probe into the sensational case was reportedly winding down. The secretive proceedings began in Nov. 1989, about a month after Stuart was shot dead on her way home from a birthing class. Her prematurely-born son died later. Her husband, Charles, was wounded. He told police the shootings occurred after an assailant entered his car. But Charles Stuart apparently leaped to his death off the Tobin bridge in Jan. 1990.

Police now believe Stuart plotted the entire crime. Since then the grand jury has focused on Matthew Stuart, Charles' brother and a friend named John McMahon. Matthew Stuart told authorities he drove to the crime scene in Roxbury and retrieved a bag with some jewelry and a gun. He also told police he thought he was taking a part in an insurance scam. McMahon was with him that night. Nancy Gertner, Matthew Stuart's attorney, said she had no firsthand knowledge of the grand jury's work. At a hearing before the Supreme Judicial Court, prosecutor Thomas Mundy testified there was sufficient evidence to file charges against Matthew Stuart and McMahon. The two could not be reached for comment yesterday. Dave Rodman, a spokesman for District Attorney Newman Flanagan, yesterday refused to confirm or deny that the grand jury was meeting.

Republicans think Democrats are trying to keep them from the polls

An aide to the Massachusetts Senate's top Republican said yesterday that a Democratic move to hold a special election in March is an attempt to keep Republicans away from the polls. Democratic Senator Louis Bertonazzi of Milford introduced an order calling for an election on March 10, the date of the state's presidential primary. The election would be to replace former Republican Senator Mary Padula, who was sworn in last month as Governor William F. Weld's Secretary of Communities and Development.

Action on the proposal was pushed back until at least Monday after a move to postpone by Republican Senator Edward Kirby of Whitman was approved. Louis Howe, an aide to Senate Minority David Locke, said holding the election on the presidential primary could work against the GOP. He said with a contested Democratic presidential primary, and since President Bush is expected to seek re-election, Democratic voters would outnumber Republicans at the polls. One GOP candidate, Holden Selectman Todd Shinkus, wants a date set immediately. Shinkus said March 10 is fine with him, but Locke wants to hold the GOP primary to replace Padula on Dec. 10, with the general election on Jan. 7.

Weather

Clear and Cold...

The 20+ degree temperature drop yesterday afternoon was due to the passage of a cold front. Behind the front is a strong high pressure cell that will give us clear skies and colder temperatures through the weekend. The prevailing northwesterly wind will make it seem especially chilly.

Friday: Clouds early giving way to clear skies. Colder. High 62°F (16°C). North-northwest wind 10-15 mph (16-24 kph).

Friday night: Continued clear and cold. Low 44°F (7°C). Wind north 10 mph (16 kph).

Saturday: Clear and cold. High 54°F (12°C). Low 42°F (6°C).

Sunday: Clear and cold. High 58°F (14°C).
Forecast by Yeh-Kai Tung

Compiled by Alice Gilchrist