Economic Growth Slows; Clinton Says Stimulus Needed

By John M. Berry

WASHINGTON—Hit by everything from a big winter snowstorm to a military deployment for defense spending, U.S. President Clinton said Monday that economic growth slowed sharply to a 1.2% annual rate in the first quarter and did not leave the White House to defend his effort to boost the economy.

The report "plainly proves, I think, that the administration was right in trying to gain the momentum of economic growth by passing the jobs bill that the House of Repre- sentatives passed and the Senate was about to pass," Clinton told reporters. "It proves that we were right in both reducing the deficit and in trying to come up with jobs now in this new administration.

But Senate Minority Leader Robert Dole, R-Kan., said in trying to create some reforms and "left in there.

Still, the pace is quicken- ing which F

administration officials said they were becoming increasingly convinced that there will be a significant drop in consumer spending and business investment in the second quarter of the year before rebounding slightly in April. Laura Duvall, a former White House's economic policy.

Yeltsin, declaring that Russia has "outlived the time now strengths for more political battles, presented leaders of Russia's 88 semi- autonoma republics and regions a draft of a proposed constitution, which would replace the Sovi- et-era document now governing the country and create a new parliament. Yeltsin also asked them to select delegates for a constitutional convention in late May or early June.

The legislation, Yeltsin said, must change the pension system and his reforms or to "confront the fate of the people, for instance, the highly worded speech later to government, ministers, he also warned that any- one opposing reforms would be freed.

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The legislators, Yeltsin said, must continue to support his reforms and to "confront the fate of the people,..."

Nonetheless, the parliament announced Thursday that it would reject Yeltsin's proposal, saying the legislation, though few details were pro- vided, was a "preparatory mile" to their attack on Yeltsin and his pro- grams this week. They criticized the president's economic plan as "unsatisfactory," attacked Yeltsin's policy on Yugoslavia, disdained a reformist, pro-Yeltsin parliamentary majority, and threatened to investigate into alleged corruption by Yeltsin appointees.

In Yeltsin's debut, elected in 1990 when the Communist Party still ruled, is dominated by ex-Communist, hard-line nationalists and cen- trists opposed to Yeltsin's free-mar- ket economic policies.

Russia's constitution, a much- amended remnant of the Soviet era, is at the heart of the country's political and economic growth. It has been endorsed by the Congress of People's Deputies, which has 1,033 members, had supreme authority. In practice, however, the Congress merely rubber-stamped decisions made by top Com- munist Party leaders.

Yeltsin, in his new democratic era, the Parliament has discovered its un- intended power and used it against President Yeltsin. The Parliament has already rejected a number of Yeltsin's proposals, including an amendment to the constitution which would reduce the president's powers and hamper his efforts to change the atmosphere of chaos and economic uncertainty.

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The lab found a few billionths of a gram of Sarin, a potent nerve gas, on the floor of the main lab, where the workers were located, and in a "hot zone" from old bomb craters in the village of Birjukov in northern Iraq.

Senator Gary Hart, a chemical pathology at the University of Leeds in Britain, said it has generally assumed that Sarin and other nerve gases degrade so quickly under the influence of water and heat that no traces would be found. Hart, a consultant to Physicians for Human Rights, told a news briefing that the findings suggest it may be possible to verify the use of nerve agents many months or even years after the fact.

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