Bush's speech ignites congressional fight over how to pay for renewed drug war

WASHINGTON (AP) — In President Bush's renewed war on drugs, there's no political argument about the enemy, the objective or even the weapons — but partisan skirmishes already are flaring over priorities, price and the way to pay for it.

Stripped to essentials, there really is no Republican way to combat the drug menace and no Democratic

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way. The argument between the parties, which means between the White House and Congress, is over who can solve the problem fastest.

And it is over new taxes. Bush says no; the Democrats say the cost of the drug war means that new taxes must at least be considered.

The Bush strategy points to a guns and butter sort of a war, although the president said that there would be hard times and high costs ahead. He said he wants to add $2.2 billion to the war on drugs. In budget terms, all but $716 million already is included in proposals the administration has sent to Congress. The White House would offset that by cutting other programs, one at the Pentagon, the rest on the domestic agenda.

"We can pay for this fight against drugs without raising taxes or adding to the budget deficit," Bush said.

Sen. Joseph Biden of Delaware, who delivered the Democrats' televised response, said the Bush plan would wage a limited war. "We don't oppose the president's plan," said Biden, who as chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee wields legislative power over major portions of it. "All we want to do is strengthen it."

House Speaker Thomas Foley said the drug war eventually will lead to increasing pressure for a tax increase. Even Rep. Robert H. Michel, the Republican leader, said there might have to be another look at financing for the program after a year.

That flowed into the debate over the budget, the deficit and the new taxes Bush ruled out in every speech of his campaign for the presidency. That continuing struggle may embroil facets of the drug program just as it threatened to snarl the legislation bailing out the shaken savings and loan system.

Bush said Congress should offer leadership and bipartisan support to the strategy it asked the new president to prepare in the first place. "And our citizens deserve cooperation, not competition; a national effort, not a partisan bidding war," he said.

In his televised response, Biden proposed sharp spending increases in a half-dozen pieces of the drug war Bush outlined. He didn't give a total price tag, nor did he suggest a way to pay for it. He has suggested higher liquor and cigarette taxes as a source of drug-fighting revenues.

The drug debate this fall will be in Congress.

Bush tries to fight war without new taxes

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Bush said Wednesday that skeptics of his $7.9 billion drug war were just "carping" and should "stop criticizing for partisan reasons."

Democrats, meanwhile, said the government would have to raise more revenue to mount an all-out fight against illegal drugs but conceded it would be impossible to enact a tax increase for that purpose as long as Bush opposes it.

Rep. Dan Rostenkowski, D-Ill., chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee, said, "Unless the president supports the tax increases that will be necessary to fight this war, the drug dealers are going to win."

House Speaker Thomas Foley, D-Wash., said, "Without the administration's support, the idea of raising taxes is futile."

Bush emphatically rejected the notion of higher taxes. "Every time you make a proposal," he said, "you have somebody jump up and say, 'Raise taxes.' I am not in a mode to raise taxes."

Less than 24 hours after declaring a new war on drugs, Bush and his critics sparred from a distance — in speeches, on television shows and meetings with the press.

Putting a human touch on the drug problem, Bush visited a public hospital ward to see babies abandoned by addicted mothers. Wearing a blue smock, Bush quieted one 4-month-old baby boy by cradling him against his shoulder.

"You see these kids and you want to try harder," Bush told reporters later.

Navy says *Iowa* blast probably caused by mate

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Navy has concluded that the explosion aboard the USS Iowa that killed 47 sailors last April was "probably caused by" gunner's mate Clayton Hartwig, who died in the blast, congressional sources said Wednesday.

The sources, who were briefed by Pentagon officials and who spoke on condition of anonymity, said the Navy investigation into the April 19 explosion in the battleship's No. 2 gun turret found foreign material in the immediate area of the blast.

The sources declined to specify the nature of the material.

Navy investigators had been examining the possibility that suicide or murder was involved in the explosion which occurred during exercises off Puerto Rico, according to earlier reports.

The sources said "an unlawful and illegal act" by Hartwig, which they declined to specify, was pinpointed as the probable cause of the blast.

Members of Congress received details on the Navy investigation the day before the scheduled public release of the 1,100-page report.

The explosion occurred as the No. 2 gun, the middle gun of three in the second turret, was being loaded for firing practice.

The guns and turret were designed in the late 1930s and use powder and shells manufactured more than 40 years ago in World War II. There has been some speculation that the powder could have become unstable.

The Navy plans to release its 1,100-page report on the blast on Thursday with three admirals, including the No. 2 officer of the service, briefing reporters.

Judge rules Bakker mentally able to stand trial on charges of fraud

CHARLOTTE, N.C. (AP) — A federal judge ruled Jim Bakker competent to stand trial on fraud charges Wednesday after a government psychiatrist testified the PTL founder was not going crazy when he broke down last week.

Bakker's trial was recessed and he was sent to a federal prison in Butner for psychiatric evaluation last week after he was found in his lawyer's office hallucinating and hiding under a couch.

"For the first time in three years, the whole situation came home to him and he began to cry," Sally Johnson, chief of psychiatric services at the prison, told U.S. District Court Judge Robert Potter on Wednesday.

"He is not going crazy," Johnson testified out of the presence of jurors. "He has no hidden mental illness. The stress that he's feeling is normal. I can't rule it out that it won't happen again, but I can't rule it in either."

Potter asked Bakker, who was brought to court in leg irons and handcuffs, to stand and answer questions.

"Do you understand what you are on trial here for?" the judge asked Bakker, who is accused of fleecing followers of his PTL ministry.

"Yes sir," Bakker responded quietly.

Asked if he was able to assist his lawyers, Bakker said, "I'm very tired, but I believe I can."

Potter ordered Bakker released from federal marshals' custody.

Bakker, 49, showed little emotion, sometimes hanging his head and staring at the floor. He wore a suit his wife, Tammy Faye, had brought him.

Mrs. Bakker, who attended the hearing with other family members, has protested her husband's treatment at the federal prison hospital.

"This should not be allowed in the United States of America," was her only comment as she left the courthouse.

Potter also denied defense lawyers' motions for a continuance and for a dismissal of the indictment against Bakker after meeting in his chambers with attorneys. He did not rule on a motion for a mistrial.

Bakker, who resigned from the PTL ministry in 1987 during a sex-and-money scandal, went on trial Aug. 28 on conspiracy and fraud charges. Prosecutors said he used nearly $4 million in ministry funds to live in high style.

If convicted on all 24 counts against him, he could could receive 120 years in prison and more than $5 million in fines.

Johnson said her preliminary diagnosis was that Bakker had suffered a panic attack last Wednesday after a witness, former PTL Vice President Steve Nelson, collapsed during defense cross-examination. Nelson had testified that he had told Bakker someone could go to prison because of the ministry's financial practices.

Bakker didn't come to court the next day, and lawyers told Potter he was hallucinating and hiding his head under a couch at their office.

Colombia urges U.S. to curve drug appetite

BOGOTA, Colombia (AP) — Communications Minister Carlos Lemos said Wednesday that his embattled nation cannot successfully fight narco-traffickers unless the United States, the world's biggest cocaine consumer, curbs its drug appetite.

The Defense Ministry meanwhile said it has seized 880 properties, some of them castle-like estates, and nearly as many vehicles and aircraft since its war on narcotics dealers began.

Police in Medellin said they are searching for a local couple suspected in the latest bombing in the war, an explosion in a restaurant that injured four people, including two U.S. journalists.

Concert halls and theaters continued Wednesday to cancel planned performances by foreign artists as a safety precaution. They included the Greek-American outdoor sculptor Christo; Avante, a theater group from Miami; U.S. pianist Lazar Bergman; Uruguayan guitarist Ernesto Bitetti; the Scottish Ballet; Finland's Sibelius Quartet; Soviet pianist Shura Chereskaski; and Argentine actress Nacha Guevara.

Guevara said in a statement read on Colombian TV that she canceled "for personal security reasons."

Lemos, who is also acting justice minister, commented on television on President Bush's Tuesday night declaration of his own war on drugs.

"I hope the aid to be offered to Colombia will be substantial,"Lemos said.

"The main thing is consumption," he added. "As long as drug use in the United States isn't suppressed, the world never will succeed in effectively combating narcotics trafficking."

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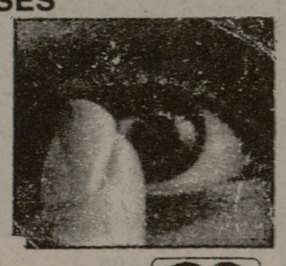
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