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Tuesday, July 17, 1990

Administration orders task force to study NASA's long-term goals

WASHINGTON (AP) — After a spate of recent NASA embarrassments, the Bush administration Monday ordered a review by outside experts of the nation's long-term space goals.

"Space continues to be a top priority for the administration," said a statement released by the office of Vice President Dan Quayle, who heads the National Space Council. "We all want the best ideas on how we can move into the next century maintaining our leadership in space."

The review by an outside task force was not as drastic a measure as the complete restructuring of the space agency, which had been forecast by some news media over the weekend.

"Contrary to some published reports, there is no White House investigation of NASA," the statement said.

Quayle met for an hour Monday with NASA Administrator Richard H. Truly, their third meeting in a week.

"Adm. Truly and the task force will report their recommendations to the vice president," the statement said, but it was not clear whether Truly would head the panel or merely appoint it.

The space agency's most recent embarrassments — the myopic Hubble Space Telescope and a grounded space shuttle fleet — have focused both public and congressional attention on NASA.

Not since the Challenger accident of 1986, which claimed the lives of seven crew members, has the space agency been so under siege. Investigations so far have shown that the mistake in grinding the lenses of the \$1.5 billion telescope would have been caught with proper testing.

After Challenger, NASA appointed an internal investigating board. But President Reagan also appointed a 13-member commission of experts, headed by former Secretary of State William P. Rogers, which held hearings and published its voluminous findings.

The commission called the Challenger explosion "an accident rooted in history," and was highly critical of NASA for lax oversight, poor internal communications and pressures to launch.

Nearly all the officials who ran NASA at the time of Challenger are gone from the agency. There were a number of outside investigations by Congress and by a panel of the National Research Council, which also oversaw the redesign of the shuttles' faulty booster rockets.

Congress has been upset by the Hubble fiasco and by the concurrent hydrogen leaks that caused NASA to halt all shuttle flights.

Sen. Barbara Mikulski, D-Md., chairwoman of the Senate appropriations subcommittee that has oversight responsibility for NASA, summoned Truly and former administrator James Beggs to a hearing Wednesday.

Beggs had charge of the space agency a decade ago when the telescope was built.

The problems came at a particularly bad time for NASA, which has had 10 successful shuttle

missions since the Challenger explosion and a spate of spectacular successes with probes to the planets.

"Their plate is quite full, and it's a very stressful time for NASA," said Rep. Bob Traxler, D-Mich., chairman of the House subcommittee that oversees the space and science budget.

NASA needs congressional support to continue the \$32 billion space station scheduled for critical design review this year, a planned Earth study called "Mission to Planet Earth," and the president's announced goal of a permanent manned base on the moon and an expedition to Mars.

Quayle discussed the problems with Truly twice last week, once aboard Air Force Two as he returned from the economic summit in Houston. White House Chief of Staff John Sununu took part in the airborne talks.

Space News, a weekly industry newspaper, forecast in Monday's edition that a restructuring of NASA was in the works because of "concern that a lack of public support for space and federal budget pressures make it difficult for NASA to carry out its missions" and that the White House was concerned the problems are institutional, not technical.

Italian tax agents track down rich where they play

NAPLES, Italy (AP) — Frustrated by the legions of Italian tax evaders, revenue agents have taken a new tack — boarding luxury boats to see if the owners' income declarations are as high as their lifestyles.

Treasury officers checked out 217 yachts anchored in the Bay of Naples over the weekend, RAI state television reported Monday.

The report didn't say how many tax evaders were discovered by the visits. But among the yacht owners was a man who had described himself in tax forms as a Naples street vendor with a much smaller income than he actually had, RAI said.

The government has declared war on tax evasion in an attempt to cut away at a budget deficit expected to reach \$125 billion by year's end.

Ministry wants Havel Request facsimile treats president as enemy of Czechoslovakia

PRAGUE, Czechoslovakia (AP) — Wanted by the Czech Ministry of Justice: Vaclav Havel.

For at least one bureaucrat within the ministry, Havel remains the shady enemy of the state and former convict instead of Czechoslovak president.

The daily Mlada Fronta on Monday carried the facsimile of a request from the Ministry of Justice to the criminal department of Prague police on the "whereabouts of a Vaclav Havel, born Oct. 5, 1936."

The suspect "moved without notifying the authorities," the daily quoted the request, dated May 2, as saying.

Havel was jailed for 4½ years by Communists during the 20 years he acted as a human rights activist and

dissident under Czechoslovakia's harsh Communist regime.

He was under permanent watch of the secret police until last year's democratic changes resulted in his election as president.

The ministry inquiry appeared not only out of date but based on inaccurate information as well.

Unlike his predecessors, Havel, who starts serving his second term as president on July 5, still formally lives in his private apartment in downtown Prague, although he spends much of his time at the presidential residence in Lany, near Prague, and his country house at Hradeck in northern Bohemia.

White House raises deficit forecast

WASHINGTON (AP) — The White House hiked its forecast of next year's budget deficit to \$168.8 billion on Monday — \$23.4 billion if savings and loan costs are counted — and warned of devastating cuts in programs without a quick budget compromise with Congress.

The new estimate was more than two-thirds higher than the administration's projection just six months ago.

Airport control towers could be closed, student loans canceled, food inspections interrupted and military forces halved by cutting perhaps one million people as the government buckled under what could be over \$100 billion in automatic cuts this October, said Budget Director Richard Darman.

It seemed unlikely that Congress would permit cuts on such a huge scale. And White House officials conceded that easing was needed in the nation's deficit-reduction law, which mandates spending cuts across a broad range of programs if targets for reducing federal red ink are not met.

But administration officials insisted they would support a watering down of the Gramm-Rudman budget-balancing law only if coupled with a \$50 billion package of spending cuts and new taxes.

Two-month-old "budget summit" talks between the administration and congressional leaders on a deficit-reduction package have seemed bogged down despite President Bush's reversal of his "no new taxes"

pledge three weeks ago.

House Budget Committee Chairman Leon Panetta, D-Calif., said the consequences of a \$100 billion Gramm-Rudman cut would be so severe that the budget negotiators must somehow work out a deal.

"The crisis is real," Panetta told reporters. "These numbers should hit the White House, Congress and the summit like a fire alarm in the middle of the night."

In fact, Panetta said congressional leaders had urged Darman to release details of how the automatic cuts would affect individual programs "to convey a sense of crisis ... to show both our colleagues and the country that there is no choice here."

Central Park jogger

Rape victim testifies

NEW YORK (AP) — The woman known as the Central Park jogger climbed unsteadily onto the witness stand Monday and described the lasting effects of a beating she barely survived and does not remember.

Speaking in a firm voice, the woman testified she has trouble walking and seeing, cannot smell — and cannot remember why.

She said she remembers breaking a dinner date with a friend on April 19, 1989, because of work, but does not remember entering the park to run around 9:30 p.m., when she was gang-raped and viciously beaten by marauding youths who left her naked and near death in a puddle of mud and blood.

"What was your very next memory?" asked Assistant District Attorney Elizabeth Lederer.

"I remember waking up in the hospital on a Friday evening, late in May," she said. "A very good friend of mine was in the room and so was a nurse. It was the Memorial Day weekend."

She said she was in the hospital about six weeks before being transferred to a rehabilitation center.

During her 10 minutes on the stand, the woman did not appear to look at the three youths charged with maiming her; the three looked at their hands, fiddled with pens or

stared into space.

There were no obvious reactions by the jurors.

Defense attorneys asked the witness no questions.

"Do you suffer any lasting injuries as a result of what happened to you on April 19, 1989?" asked Lederer.

"I have problems with balance when I'm walking, and coordination," she said. "At times, I'll veer off to the right or the left. I have trouble walking down steps. I also lost my sense of smell completely. That has not come back."

"I have double vision. When I'm reading, I hold papers over to the left to compensate. It takes a fair amount of concentration to make the image one."

In an attempt to blunt assertions by defense attorneys that a rape may not have occurred, the jogger was questioned about her sexual activity and use of a diaphragm for birth control.

Antron McCray, Raymond Santana and Yusef Salaam, all 16, are charged with attempted murder, rape, sexual abuse, assault, robbery and riot in the attack on the woman and two male joggers.

They are being tried in an adult court, but if convicted they will be sentenced as juvenile offenders to up to 10 years in prison.

Fire ravages U.S. landmark in New York

NEW YORK (AP) — A fire halfway up the Empire State Building on Monday evening sent flames billowing from shattered windows and chased tourists from the observation deck and workers from throughout the building. At least 38 people were injured, most from inhaling smoke.

About 150 firefighters battled the blaze, which was largely confined to four unoccupied offices on the 51st floor, Don Malva, a Fire Department spokesman, said. Heavy smoke poured through the middle floors of the 102-story building, and the entire tower was cleared of tourists and late-lingering office workers.

Josephine Danielson of New York, who was visiting the observation deck with five friends from Spain, said they clambered down stairways to the 70th floor, then took an elevator to ground level.

"We started smelling smoke and we saw on the east side of the building dense black smoke coming from below the tower," Danielson, an airline flight attendant, said. "Whoever runs the observation deck is tremendously unorganized. You would think they would have had some kind of recorded announcement."

The fire was reported at 6:30 p.m., and by 8:45 p.m., the blaze was out and the danger passed, Malva said.

The fire did heavy fire damage on the 51st floor, with water damage on lower floors and smoke damage above, John Mulligan, another department spokesman, said. The cause of the blaze wasn't immediately known, he said.

Baptist top committee meets to determine fate of church press editors

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (AP) — The Baptists' right to know will be on the line today when the church's 77-member executive committee meets.

"It (the meeting) will be too short for a broad ranging discussion of the role and function of a new service," Martin said on Monday. "They (fundamentalists) are saying we are based and are not presenting their viewpoint fairly."

"No one has told me what their criticisms are directly. They have criticized us on some stories. Last year, we ran 1,298 stories and there was criticism of less than 10 stories."

"Our goal always has been to have fair, balanced and accurate stories. I've spent almost 35 years in journalism, from little papers to big papers to this news service, and we need to move our stories out fast and have them as trustworthy as possible," Martin said.

The Rev. Fred Wolfe, treasurer of the church's 77-member executive committee, said the issue is one of responsible journalism, not politics.

"It's not the issue of a free press; it's the issue of a fair press," Wolfe said.

Both Shackleford and Martin have asked for time to be heard at Tuesday's hearing of the 77-member executive committee.

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