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NEWS BRIEFS

Baker to remain secretary of state

WASHINGTON (AP) —

James A. Baker III will remain secretary of state "for some time to come" and reports that he will step aside to help with President Bush's campaign are nonsense, the State Department's No. 2 official said Sunday.

"I will wager you that, for some time to come, I will be the deputy secretary of state and Jim Baker will be the secretary," Lawrence Eagleburger said on the ABC-TV program "This Week With David Brinkley."

When a questioner suggested the time period could mean three weeks, approximately the time until the Republican National Convention, Eagleburger shot back, "A lot longer than that." He said it was "at least highly possible" that Baker would not be moving to the campaign as reported.

"I happen to believe that Jim Baker will stay as secretary of state for some long period of time to come, and the Middle East is one obvious reason for that," Eagleburger said.

"All of this speculation, which Jim has himself tried to put to rest on this trip, I think is a bunch of nonsense," he said.

Bush, asked about Eagleburger's remarks after returning to the White House from a Camp David weekend, said, "I have no comments on that subject."

Baker was returning Sunday night from a trip to the Middle East. Eagleburger was acting secretary in his absence.

Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin is scheduled to visit Washington shortly before the GOP convention, and Eagleburger said there are also meetings on the Middle East



scheduled for late August in Washington.

Bush's campaign press secretary, Torie Clarke, could not be reached for comment on Eagleburger's remarks.

The New York Times reported last week that Baker would resign shortly after the Rabin visit to run the president's re-election campaign. The newspaper quoted Bush administration officials and Republican political strategists.

Bush's son offers campaign advice

WASHINGTON (AP) — He has no campaign title. But his name is George W. Bush and when he talks, people at the Bush-Quayle campaign listen.

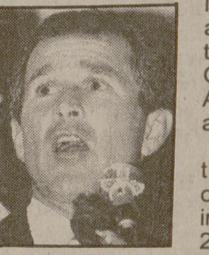
"Nobody blows off anything George Junior says," one Republican official said, speaking on condition of anonymity. But campaign aides are quick to dispel any notion they are merely pandering to the president's eldest son because of who he is.

They say he is a quick study, with astute political instincts that would merit attention anyway.

"He is the No. 1 trouble shooter, the No. 1 political antenna, the No. 1 confidant of his father, the No. 1 problem fixer," said Mary Matalin, a top Bush campaign political strategist who works closely with the younger Bush. "He sits in on whatever he wants to.... He knows everything we're doing."

Bush's 46-year-old son — not officially a "Junior" because his name is George Walker Bush and his father is George Herbert Walker Bush — is considered his father's "eyes and ears" at the campaign.

Indeed, he was among those who helped to organize his father's re-election team, and



many on the top campaign staff owe their positions at least in part to him.

Beyond that, "Junior," as he is known to the political operatives, is viewed as a strong political strategist in his own right.

"He knows people all over the country. He's got a good sense of what's going on out there.... He functions just like the others who are the principal strategists," said Bush campaign adviser Charlie Black.

Loophole delays plant inspections

HOUSTON (AP) — Unions and safety observers say a loophole in federal regulations allows manufacturing plants time to fix hazards before the Occupational Safety and Health Administration can even make an initial investigation of the site.

Federal law generally forbids the OSHA from notifying companies of an upcoming inspection. OSHA can give up to 24 hours' notice in unusual circumstances — to ensure the presence of a company representative or schedule an inspection after regular work hours.

But OSHA's day-to-day operating policies permit the agency to delay inspections up to five days while a company summons key employees or while inspectors prepare to take samples, according to OSHA's operating manual. The agency's policy statement does not consider it advance notice unless the delay extends beyond five days.

"No question that anyone who provides advance notice should be shot at sunrise," said Joseph Kinney, executive director of the National Safe Workplace Institute in Chicago, a non-profit group that studies health and safety programs.

"Can you imagine if the DEA (Drug Enforcement Agency) had to wait five days to raid a crack house? Or the FBI had to wait five days to go after kidnappers?" he asked.

NASA said the 12-mile formation, traveling at nearly 5 miles per second, will be the longest structure ever flown in space.

"This is all one big physics experiment, and we're in the middle of it," said astronaut Jeffrey Hoffman, the payload commander.

"I'm practicing with kites so I learn as much as I can about flying something flying up in space above us kept up by a tether," said crewman Franco Malerba, who will be the first Italian to fly in space.

National Aeronautics and Space Administration flight directors consider the seven-day mission to be the most complex in shuttle history.

Nevertheless, they insist the experiment is safe and that the satellite won't crash into the shuttle like a wrecking ball.

Among the possibilities, if the experiment works: using tether one day to build a space elevator between Earth and a station 22,000 miles up like the one in the science fiction novel "The Fountains of Paradise" by Arthur C. Clarke in 2001" fame.

"I figure with all of his other successes in predictions, if Arthur Clarke wrote it, probably someday it's going to happen," Hoffman said. "It's really exciting that we're making the first flight on the way to doing all this."

The countdown begins Tuesday for a 9:56 a.m. EDT Friday liftoff.

NASA plans to retrieve the satellite, called Eureka, during shuttle mission next spring.