

Mideast summit aims for peace

WASHINGTON (AP) — Against a backdrop of deep distrust and modest U.S. expectations, Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu headed for a White House summit aimed at ending an upsurge of violence in the Mideast and keep flagging peace hopes alive.

Summing up the situation on the eve of the summit for President Clinton was a politically sensitive task, Secretary of State Warren Christopher said Monday. "It's clear to me that the Middle East peace process is in a state of crisis."

Peacekeeping is like riding a bicycle, he told reporters. "You have to keep going forward."

Netanyahu, speaking with reporters on his way to the summit, offered to hold continuous negotiations with the Palestinians in the Washington summit and "until agreed-upon terms are reached."

But a senior U.S. official described Arafat as so distrustful of each other that simply getting them to "re-engage" is the first order of business at the Washington summit.

They are not talking to each other in a way that anything could be resolved," said the official who spoke on condition of anonymity.

The summit agenda must include Jerusalem, the West Bank town where Israel has fulfilled a pledge to pull its troops away from Arab residents, and safe passage for Palestinian workers entering and leaving Israel.

More than 5,000 Jewish settlers demonstrated near Hebron's Tomb of the Patriarchs on Monday, pressing for continued Israeli rule. Palestinians demand that Israel pull its

troops out of the biblical town, but Netanyahu says Hebron's tiny Jewish minority wouldn't be safe if he did.

The official said the United States was not insisting the summit deal with Netanyahu's decision to open a new entrance to a tourist tunnel that borders Muslim and Jewish holy sites in Jerusalem — an action that touched off Arab riots.

However, the two sides could bring up any issue they wished, the official said.

Clinton planned to meet separately Tuesday with Netanyahu and then Arafat before all parties sat down together. A Wednesday meeting also was planned.

In a setback for the White House, Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak rejected Clinton's telephone invitation to join Jordan's King Hussein as a summit participant. Hussein arrived in Washington on Monday night.

Mubarak's absence was unlikely to seriously affect chances of defusing tensions on the West Bank and in Gaza or U.S. efforts to launch Israeli-Palestinian negotiations on a permanent peace agreement. But the administration had looked on him as a steady influence — Egypt was the first Arab country to agree to peace with Israel — and as a potential supporter of whatever agreements might emerge from the talks.

Mubarak was sending his foreign minister, Amr Moussa, to Washington, but State Department

spokesman Nicholas Burns said Moussa would not participate in the talks.

Arafat shook off Egyptian suggestions he seek a delay and advised American mediator Dennis Ross he would arrive Tuesday morning, after meeting with European foreign ministers in Luxembourg. The allies have uniformly stood behind the Palestinians in their latest conflict with Israel.

Summits usually are scripted, with aides working out at least a measure of agreement. There have been exceptions, however.

President Carter risked failure in summoning Egypt's Anwar Sadat and Israel's Menachem Begin to Camp David in 1978 without any assurance they would agree, as they did, on a peace treaty.

Clinton was embarking on a similarly unscripted diplomatic adventure.

"It is rare in this process that we engage at this level, at the highest level, without a preordained outcome," White House spokesman Mike McCurry said.

"I think the fact that President Clinton took the step to ... to invite the leaders here, reflects the seriousness and gravity of this moment," McCurry said. "There was no alternative because the alternative was quite clearly fundamental grave risk to the process itself."

The talks are designed to defuse tensions and revive faltering peace negotiations between Israel and the Palestinian Authority over the future of Jerusalem and Palestinian aspirations for a state with its capital in Jerusalem.

Republican presidential nominee Bob Dole said the United States must demand an "unconditional end to the violence."



Arafat

Gov. Bush assigned to county jury pool

AUSTIN (AP) — Gov. George Bush is on his way to court, not as a defendant or even plaintiff.

The Republican governor, and former president

Bush, claimed the just an ordinary citizen on Monday as he reported for jury duty.

He was assigned to reorganize on Oct. 8 a Travis County criminal court, where he will be selected from a pool of potential jurors for a case.

"I'm glad to serve," Bush said. "I'll see what the process yields."

Travis County calls a mass pool of potential jurors and divides the pool into smaller groups assigned to courts that handle municipal, county and appellate matters.

Bush will go through jury selection before Judge David Cain. A staff of three would likely be discharged because of his job as governor, which includes the power to pardon criminals.

"There could be a conflict," he said. "Generally, someone who is so well known opinions are not broken."

Before getting his assignment, Bush joked with fellow Travis County residents and signed autographs. He was warmly greeted and held up by court officials as an example of a busy and important person serving his civic duty.

"I just answered the summons," he said, adding that it's a "feeble excuse" for people to claim they are too busy or too important for jury duty.

"If you're going to live in a democracy, take advantage of a fantastic system, you need to participate, whether it be showing up for jury duty, whether it be voting, whether it be helping someone who needs help," he said.

Katherine Jaimes, of Austin, agreed.

"I'm happy that he's willing to be able to work with our community and to participate as a juror," said Ms. Jaimes, who was assigned to a different court. "It sends out a very good message. Everybody's busy."

While emphasizing that he was just one of the more than 500 potential jurors, Bush did take advantage of his position. The governor, also known Monday as juror No. 536, lined up for his assignment when the first 200 people were called forward.

"I have to get to work," he said, smiling.



Bush

NASA privatizes Shuttle operations

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. (AP) — In the biggest change in the history of the space shuttle program, NASA is turning over day-to-day operations to private industry beginning Tuesday to save money.

"Today is the first day of a new space program in America," NASA Administrator Daniel Goldin said Monday in announcing the \$7 billion, six-year contract with United Space Alliance, a joint venture of Rockwell International Corp. and Lockheed Martin Corp.

Officials promise the shift will be gradual, with shuttle flight safety the No. 1 priority.

In the short term, not even NASA and its contract employees will see much difference.

NASA still will give the final "go" for launch and make the important decisions during a shuttle flight, as it has for the past 15 years. It will retain ultimate responsibility for shuttle safety and hire the astronauts. And it will still own the four space shuttles.

But it will ease itself out of the routine, day-to-day work, such as preparing the shuttles for flight, training the astronauts and operating Mission Control. Those duties will belong to United

Space Alliance.

Don't expect shuttle ads anytime soon, though, or shuttle seats sold to the highest bidder.

Maybe that will come later, said Kent Black, USA's chief executive. Much, much later.

The contract, which was announced Monday but was actually signed late last week, designates United Space Alliance as the single prime contractor for shuttle operations. It includes two two-year extension options that could bring the contract's total estimated value to \$12 billion over 10 years.

USA was formed in August 1995 and chosen by NASA as the single prime contractor three months later.

By compressing many contracts into one — this first phase consolidates 12 previous contracts — NASA hopes to improve shuttle safety, continue to fly shuttles seven or eight times a year, and reduce costs in the \$3 billion-a-year shuttle program.

Because Rockwell and Lockheed Martin already handled most of the shuttle work, the transition, while historic, won't make much immediate difference.

NASA and USA officials said they could not specify how much money would be saved.

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