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General Class Meeting
Wednesday, September 10, 1997
6:00 P.M.



All students are welcome to attend!!!!

Class of '98
Room 401
Rudder Twr.

Class of '01
Room 402
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Mir's onboard computer breaks down

Russian and American space officials explain space stations latest mishap

MOSCOW (AP) — The Mir's onboard computer, which seems to have a mind of its own, broke down again Monday and forced the crew to shut down most of the space station's equipment.

Russian and American space officials downplayed the seriousness of the computer crash, the third aboard Mir since mid-July. The station was able to maintain its orientation toward the sun, and its power supplies were in much better shape than during the previous breakdowns.

Ground controllers said they hoped to repair and restart the computer Tuesday. In the meantime, they said, the crew was in no danger.

"Why do these malfunctions happen?" asked Vladimir Solovyov, the chief of Russia's Mission Control. "Do you know why your car breaks down? ... It's hard to say what the reasons might be."

Space agency spokesman Valery Lyndin may have put it best: "The computer has become capricious again."

Capricious is as good a word as any to describe the Mir's endless, and endlessly vexing, journey around the Earth for the past eight months or so. The space station, which has been aloft for 11 years, has spun from one mishap to the next — from a fire to oxygen system breakdowns, from a collision with a cargo ship to the repeated computer breakdowns.

Mir's computer became unplugged on July 17 when a crew member accidentally disconnected a cable, then broke down again on Aug.

18 during docking of a cargo ship. In the latest fumble, the computer shut itself off about 11 a.m. Monday (3 a.m. EDT), and the crew responded by turning off most systems to economize on power, Lyndin said.

The crew said Monday afternoon they had enough power for normal operations, but had

al days to fully restore all functions.

There were indications that Mir might bounce back quicker this time. NASA spokesman Rob Navias, speaking from the Johnson Space Center in Houston, said Mir solar batteries were filled with juice Monday, a contrast to the previous two breakdowns.

He said he expected the Mir crew to rebo the computer within a day, and replace a part. Then the crew will spin the gyroscopes back to resume automatic steering of the station.

Solovyov, the Mission Control chief, said the computer would be brought back up on Tuesday. "We have found (the problem)," he said, "will download the necessary information to it to restore it to working order tomorrow."

It has been a trying week for the Mir's crew, which includes two newly arrived Russian cosmonauts and American astronaut Michael J. Smith. On Saturday, Foale and Mir commander Anatoly Solovyov spent six hours on a space walk trying to find holes left in the skin of a punctured module, but came up empty.

The recent accidents have raised questions about safety aboard the Mir, which was launched in 1986 with an expected lifespan of just five years.

Both the Russian and American space agencies insist it remains safe and provides invaluable training for an international space station whose first components are to be launched next year.

"Why do these malfunctions happen? ...It's hard to say what the reasons might be."

VLADIMIR SOLOVYOV
CHIEF OF RUSSIAN MISSION CONTROL

turned off all systems it didn't immediately need, including the Elektron oxygen-generating system. The existing oxygen supply is good for several days, and there are also backup oxygen canisters if needed.

The space station's gyroscopes, which keep the station pointed toward the sun, went down when the computer went off-line. However, cosmonaut Pavel Vinogradov said the Mir was maintaining its proper position, the Interfax news agency reported.

In the previous breakdowns, it took hours to bring the computer system back up and sever-

CompuServe sells out to America Online

NEW YORK (AP) — America Online has struck a deal to acquire CompuServe's 2.6 million users, creating a cyber-behemoth that would be the Internet onramp for 60 percent of Americans logging on from home.

If approved by government regulators, the deal will allow America Online to swallow its closest competitor and add to its base of nearly 9 million subscribers, already the biggest in the industry.

Under the complex, three-way deal announced Monday, WorldCom, the nation's fourth-largest long-distance telephone company, will buy money-losing CompuServe for \$1.2 billion and then sell its online business to AOL.

For its part, WorldCom will become a giant in its corner of the Internet, getting the AOL division that

provides Internet access mainly for large businesses.

AOL will operate CompuServe as a separate business, and online subscribers may notice little difference, at least initially.

AOL, which features more entertainment services, such as games and chat lines, than CompuServe, said it doesn't plan to change CompuServe's online format, which is geared more toward business professionals.

Pricing will also stay separate, with AOL still charging \$19.95 for unlimited access and CompuServe's fees ranging as high as \$27.95 a month.

More immediately, some AOL users may have an easier time getting online. AOL will get access to an additional 100,000 modems from WorldCom, helping it avoid the bot-

lenecks that frustrated subscribers with busy signals earlier this year.

Wall Street embraced the news. AOL stock was up \$6.75 per share at \$76.68 in afternoon trading on the New York Stock Exchange. On the Nasdaq, WorldCom was up \$2.31 1/4 to \$33.91 1/4, while CompuServe was down 37 1/2 cents to \$13.12 1/2.

The agreement enables H&R Block, which owns 80 percent of CompuServe, to get out of a market that has caused frustrations for more than a year.

CompuServe, based in Columbus, Ohio, pioneered the online business in the 1980s but was overtaken by America Online in the 1990s and hammered by cheaper providers of online service.

It has been beset by financial losses, member defections and the

cancellation of its family-oriented WOW! service just seven months after it was started.

WorldCom is giving stockholders about \$1.2 billion to H&R Block based on Friday's closing stock price. It then plans to trade CompuServe's content and its 2.6 million consumer subscribers as well as \$175 million to AOL.

In exchange, WorldCom will sell AOL's ANS Communications division, which provides Internet access mainly for big business customers. WorldCom already owns UUNET Technologies Inc., one of the largest Internet service providers.

A larger AOL would be a better position to compete with the crossnet Network, the nation's largest online service with 2.3 million subscribers.

Albright faces toughest challenge with Arab-Israeli relations

WASHINGTON (AP) — Facing her toughest challenge as secretary of state, Madeleine Albright heads to the Middle East on Tuesday to try to reverse the dangerous skid in Arab-Israeli relations.

The weeklong trip could be the Clinton administration's last chance in a long while to ease the "crisis of confidence" that has stalemated negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians amid a devastating swirl of terrorist attacks.

The odds are long. But a senior State Department official on Monday noted the alternatives to not trying: "More violence, more victims, lost hope and the extremists win."

Albright intends to take a tough line with Yasser Arafat, the Palestinian leader, but also with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

Her message to Arafat: Step up arrests of suspected terrorists, dismantle their groups, fulfill

promises to enhance Israel's security.

Arafat has tried to maintain unity with radical elements, even the Hamas guerrillas who say they were behind several bloody attacks on Israel.

Still, Albright will press him to take tough actions, risky as they may be to Arafat himself. In the U.S. view, the terrorism is aimed at the Palestinian Authority as well as at Israel.

Her message to Netanyahu: Concerns for Israel's safety are no excuse to sidetrack indefinitely the commitments dovish Labor governments made to the Palestinian Authority in the 1993 and 1995 Oslo accords for phased withdrawals on the West Bank.

Asked if this meant Albright was pushing the

old formula of land for peace — that Israel's territory for peace accords — the State Department official replied tersely: "Yes."

Netanyahu has virtually ruled out giving anything else until the violence ends.

Just before Albright met with President Clinton on Monday before her departure, White House spokesman Mike McCurry insisted her trip "not about pressuring the parties."

It is Albright's first trip to the region since assuming control of the State Department in August 1996, and she will touch all the major bases: Israel, the West Bank, Syria, Egypt, Arabia, Jordan and possibly Lebanon.

After four years as the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, Albright is familiar with these issues. But as her spokesman, James P. Rubin, recently said, she's "a realist, not a magician."



Arafat

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Tuesday, September 9, 1997
MSC 206
7:00 PM

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