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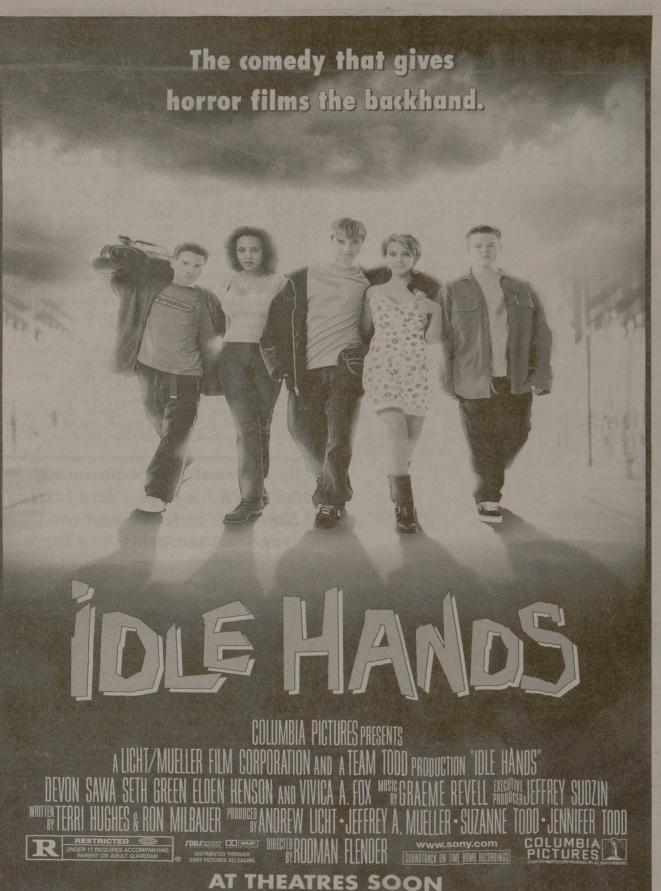
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Russia, Jackson appeal to Yugos

BELGRADE, Yugoslavia (AP) — Russia pitched a new peace plan as a chagrined NATO struggled Thursday to explain how another of its missiles in the Kosovo air campaign went astray, damaging a house near the capital of its ally Bulgaria.

The Rev. Jesse Jackson crossed into Serbia from Croatia by car on a mission to win freedom for three U.S. POWs held by Yugoslavia.

And NATO continued its round-the-clock air assault on Yugoslav targets, striking during daylight to take out bridges leading into Kosovo province. Heavy explosions and intense anti-aircraft fire were reported Thursday afternoon near an oil refinery northwest of Belgrade.

As the bombings persisted for the 37th day, former Russian Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin launched his latest peace initiative, promoting what Moscow said

was a new plan for ending the Kosovo crisis.

While acknowledging "movement" toward a settlement following talks with the Russian envoy, German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder insisted that Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic has to withdraw Serb forces from Kosovo first before the bombing could be suspended.

U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan met in Moscow with Russian President Boris Yeltsin, who stressed the need for the United Nations to play a major role.

"The stakes are now very high, not only for the Balkans and Europe, but for the whole world," Yeltsin said.

Bulgarian officials said a NATO AGM-88 HARM missile, intended to destroy Serb anti-aircraft batteries slammed late Wednesday into a suburb of the capital Sofia, causing no injuries but blowing the roof off a house. Bulgarian President Petar Stoyanov demanded an ex-

In Brussels, NATO spokesperson Jamie Shea said an alliance jet fired the missile "in self-defense" but it "strayed from its target and unintentionally landed in

Bulgaria," about 30 miles from Yugoslavia's southeastern border. NATO officials acknowledge the errors but say only "a

tiny fraction" of its 4,500-plus air attacks on Milosevic's war machine have led to "unintended consequences." NATO was apologetic about the Sofia accident, with Shea promising to "minimize still further the chance of this happening again.'

Russian envoy, dampened expectabreakthrough. "This is the beginned breakthrough."

"The stakes are very high now, not only for the Balkans and Europe, but for the whole world."

PRESIDENT

The Russian plan calls for a U.N.s

tional peacekeeping force in Kosovo. Yugoslavia's ambassador to Russi grade would accept a civilian U.N.

Jackson, arriving in Zagreb, Croat freeing the American soldiers could to peace efforts, although the Whi manded their unconditional release. T

"My experience has been whenever are released, it at least creates a windo Jackson said. He and a delegation of U ers later Thursday entered Serbia by ca grade, where they hoped to meet Milos

Jackson went to Syria in 1984, when ly arranged the release of a U.S. Navy bomber was shot down by Syrian at Lebanon. Several months later, Jackson arrangements with Cuba for the released and Cuban political prisoners.

Congressional delegation to head to Ba

WASHINGTON (AP) — House Majority Leader Dick Armey will lead a congressional delegation to the Balkans over the weekend, eager to see for himself the conditions on the ground for both American troops and Kosovar refugees.

'I want to talk to some of our troops there," Armey said in a conference call Thursday with Texas reporters. "I have a chance to talk to refugees. I'm prepared to have my heart broken in some of those conversations, but I think it's the sort of thing we need to

The Irving Republican's comments came a day after the House sharply repudiated President Clinton's policy in the Balkans — refusing to endorse the fiveweek-old NATO air campaign in Yugoslavia and insisting on congressional approval before any ground offensive is launched.

While House Democratic Leader Dick Gephardt called the votes "a low moment in American foreign policy and in the history of this institution," Armey placed blame at Clinton's feet.

The votes were "just a matter of validating the larger point we were trying to make with the president: Don't make commitments and then come to Congress when our (military) people are on the ground or in the air and ask for our validation or repudiation," Armey

said. "We need to have the consultation prior." Armey is leading a 19-member congressional dele-

Base in Germany, where some of the engaged in the NATO operation are st where they will visit a refugee camp to Aviano Air Base in Italy and then only quarters in Brussels

Sunday, they will meet with NATO returning to the United States.

The trip marks Armey's first time of of a congressional delegation. He has fondness in the past for foreign travel middle of a very difficult circumstan have been fairly involved with it on fronts," he said of his participation in the was requested by House Speaker Denn The delegation will include two other

Thornberry, who serves on the Houvices Committee, said his top priority's ter feel for how the military mission is

He said he plans to talk to air crews over Yugoslavia. "I want to know if the thing they need to do their job," he said in the past if you have a chance to go the folks who are doing the work, they



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