

## Cohen faults Bush's security proposals

WASHINGTON (AP) — Defense Secretary William Cohen offered George W. Bush access to the same Pentagon information Vice President Al Gore is privy to, saying that would keep politics out of national security and produce a more informed debate in the presidential campaign.

Cohen, a Republican like Bush, said Sunday he believes proposals the Texas governor made last week likely would lead to dangerous new arms races. Gore had similar criticisms Saturday in a speech at the U.S. Military Academy.

Cohen said President Clinton appointed a Republican as defense secretary "to take the politics out of national security debates."

"I hope that national security will not become politicized, because it's too important to have a Republican or Democratic label on it," he said on NBC's "Meet the Press."

To that end, Cohen said, "It would be beneficial for (Bush and his advisers) to have this information today, before the election, so that there can be a real serious and solid debate on the issue."

Bush campaign spokesperson Mindy Tucker said Cohen's implication that the GOP candidate might be ill-informed on security ignores the quality of his advisers.

"Surely Secretary Cohen is not suggesting that Defense Secretary Dick Cheney and Gen. Colin Powell, who led our (national) defenses, don't understand them," Tucker said. "We are confident that the Joint Chiefs of Staff would welcome Gov. Bush's proposal, because it allows military planners to be involved in determining the appropriate levels of security based on new guidance in a new security era."

Bush proposed last week that the United States develop a national missile defense system and sharply cut back the number of nuclear weapons in its arsenal even if Russia does not. Bush would renegotiate the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty to allow the national missile defense, which the treaty bans.

The Clinton administration wants a more limited missile defense and would implement smaller, negotiated and bilateral reductions in nuclear stockpiles.

Clinton heads to Moscow this week where he will discuss with Russian President Vladimir Putin a framework agreement al-

ready in place to reduce the missile levels to 2,000 to 2,500, from current levels of 3,000 to 3,500 missiles, Cohen said. Cuts much larger than that could hamstring U.S. policy in "a tyranny of numbers," the secretary said.

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— William Cohen  
U.S. defense secretary

Also, lowering missile numbers forces development of "a much more robust defense system," Cohen said.

"That contradicts entirely the need for the Russians and others to lower the numbers, be-

cause any ... military commander will tell you it's far better to have more numbers against a defense than to have a higher defense," Cohen said. "And so what you do by going up higher in defense, you will force the Russians and others to raise their limits much higher."

Cohen said he believes that would encourage Russia, China, Pakistan, India and other countries to develop more nuclear weapons.

Such "internal inconsistency" in nuclear policy should be considered carefully, Cohen said, "and ... in order to make it fair, I think Governor Bush should have an opportunity to meet with the joint chiefs, meet with Admiral (Richard) Mies, who is commander of the Strategic Command, ... so we can deal with the situation as it is and likely to be."

"And then I think that he and Vice President Gore will be in a better position to debate this in a way that's responsible and, I think, informed."

Presidential candidates normally receive security briefings after they are nominated. The GOP convention is July 31-Aug. 3 in Philadelphia.

In other matters, Cohen said:

- There will be a "national moment of remembrance" at 3 p.m. on Memorial Day for Americans to remember and "commemorate those who have died on our behalf."

- His spokesperson, Kenneth Bass, "made a big mistake" when he released information from Linda Tripp's personnel files to a reporter in 1998. Tripp, who secretly recorded conversations with former White House aide Monica Lewinsky, worked for Bacon in the Pentagon's public affairs office.

"I could have fired him, but I took into account his total service to the public," said Cohen, who sent his aide a letter "to express disappointment" in his judgment.

Cohen also dismissed talk of a conspiracy coordinated with the White House or executive branch. "This was done spontaneously on his part."

- He intends to return to private life after December. Asked what he would do if he were asked to be his running mate, Cohen said, "That is a product of irrational exuberance on the part of some of my friends." He said he tends to return to private life after December.

## Hantavirus compared to the plague

### Deadly virus sweeps across North America, 250 cases reported

DENVER (AP) — As people begin trekking to the outdoors this season, scientists are warning that the mysterious disease hantavirus is a threat throughout North America.

Once thought to mainly haunt the Four Corners area of the Southwest, doctors say it has proved deadly from Canada to Argentina. And late spring is the deadliest season as people begin cleaning barns and stables, and head to the hills to hike, bike and camp.

"We get calls from people in California saying we're going to New Mexico and asking how to avoid hantavirus. We say there are cases in California, too. We need to change some thinking there," said Joni Young, hantavirus surveillance coordinator for the Centers for Disease Control in Atlanta.

CDC studies have found the virus, carried by deer mice, likely is as widespread in the East as in the West.

"Healthy, active people are more likely to become infected because their

activities often put them in contact with the virus," a CDC advisory said.

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for the Centers for Disease Control

The National Park Service over the weekend said it has warned visitors of parks of the disease. "Essen-

tially, we assume all parks have hantavirus," said Joseph Winkelmaier, a public health consultant for the Pacific West region of the park service.

Hantavirus pulmonary syndrome begins much like a flu, with muscle aches and a fever, followed by shortness of breath and coughing.

It typically progresses rapidly, requiring ventilation and hospitalization within 24 hours.

Last month Vermont became the 31st state to confirm a case.

As of May 8, 250 cases had been reported in the United States since it was first identified in 1993. Of those, 101 victims died.

This year California, Kansas and Colorado have each reported one death.

Canadian authorities reported the death Friday of a 68-year-old southwestern Manitoba woman of the disease, bringing their death toll to 13.

Also on Friday, California officials reported the second case this spring in Yolo County in the north. The victim is recovering.

Dr. Harvey Artsob of the Canadian Science Center for Human and Animal Health in Winnipeg, Manitoba, said all confirmed cases of the virus in Canada have been in the western provinces. "But we find the virus coast-to-coast in deer mice and the potential for the disease exists across the country."

Since it is spread through rodent urine, feces or saliva, people typically contract the disease in rural areas by inhaling the virus particles while cleaning out a rodent-infested space, such as a barn, cabin or stable.

Young, Artsob and Colorado state epidemiologist John Pape say there is no doubt many cases go undetected because doctors are not familiar with the disease.

"It becomes a surveillance phenomenon, like the plague. Physicians here think about it because they have cases nearly every year. Doctors back East usually wouldn't think of it," Pape said.

### News in Brief

#### Suharto placed under house arrest

JAKARTA, Indonesia (AP) — Indonesian prosecutors placed former President Suharto under house arrest Monday after promising that the former strongman will stand trial within the next two months for allegedly embezzling millions of dollars.

A spokesperson for the attorney general's office, Yushar Yahya, said the move was needed to ensure questioning of Suharto could proceed smoothly to enable his trial to start before August 10.

Suharto's confinement, first suggested a week ago by Attorney General Marzuki Darusman, was prompted by escalating public pressure, including violent protests by students demanding swift action against the former strongman.

Suharto, 79, has been questioned several times despite his attorneys' assertions that he is mentally unfit after suffering a stroke last year. Several of his children have also been interrogated in connection with the case.

Suharto's lawyer Juan Felix Tampubolon immediately denounced

the move on Monday saying it was unnecessary and illegal.

#### Iraq violates no-fly zone agreement

ANKARA, Turkey (AP) — U.S. jets patrolling a no-fly zone over northern Iraq today bombed military sites after being fired upon by Iraqi anti-aircraft artillery, the U.S. military said.

The sites were near Basijah, 250 miles north of Baghdad, the Germany-based U.S. European Command said.

The jets safely returned to their air force base in southern Turkey after the bombing, the U.S. military said.

The United States has been forcing the northern no-fly zone over Iraq since the end of the Persian Gulf War in 1991.

U.S. warplanes have bombed sites in the northern no-fly zone 36 times since January.

Allied forces also imposed a similar no-fly zone over the south of Iraq.

Iraq considers the zones violations of its territorial sovereignty. It has been challenging U.S. patrols since December 1998.

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