

Powell wants end to India-Pakistan feud over Kashmir

WHISTLER, British Columbia (AP) — The United States is willing to play a role as “facilitator of dialogue” between India and Pakistan but has no desire to mediate their long-running feud over Kashmir, Secretary of State Colin Powell said Wednesday.

Powell flew into Vancouver and motored up winding mountain roads to a resort in Whistler to meet foreign ministers from the world’s top industrialized countries: Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan and Russia. They are laying groundwork for the Group of Eight leaders summit to be held later this month in Kananaskis, Alberta.

The ministers were discussing the Middle East at dinner Wednesday night, Powell said. They also anticipated talks about nuclear proliferation, Afghanistan and the Indian-Pakistani standoff.

The Asian subcontinent has calmed since Pakistan assured India that it would halt deadly incursions across the Line of Control that divides Kashmir between the two countries, Powell said.

The United States is looking to facilitate talks that will ultimately get into the Kashmir issue, he said. “We just don’t want to see the end of the current crisis and then wait until the same problems raise the crisis again at some point in the future.”

U.S. officials promised both sides they would remain engaged as tensions ebb, “but the principal role we’ll be playing is as facilitator of dialogue,” Powell said. “We do not intend to mediate this dispute. The dispute can only be solved by the two parties.”

Powell predicted there would be no immediate Pakistani withdrawal from the Line of Control. “I think it will probably take some months,” he said.

Powell also said the United States would meet with North Korea later this month to talk about areas “where we need progress” namely, food aid, its missile program and compliance with weapons inspectors.

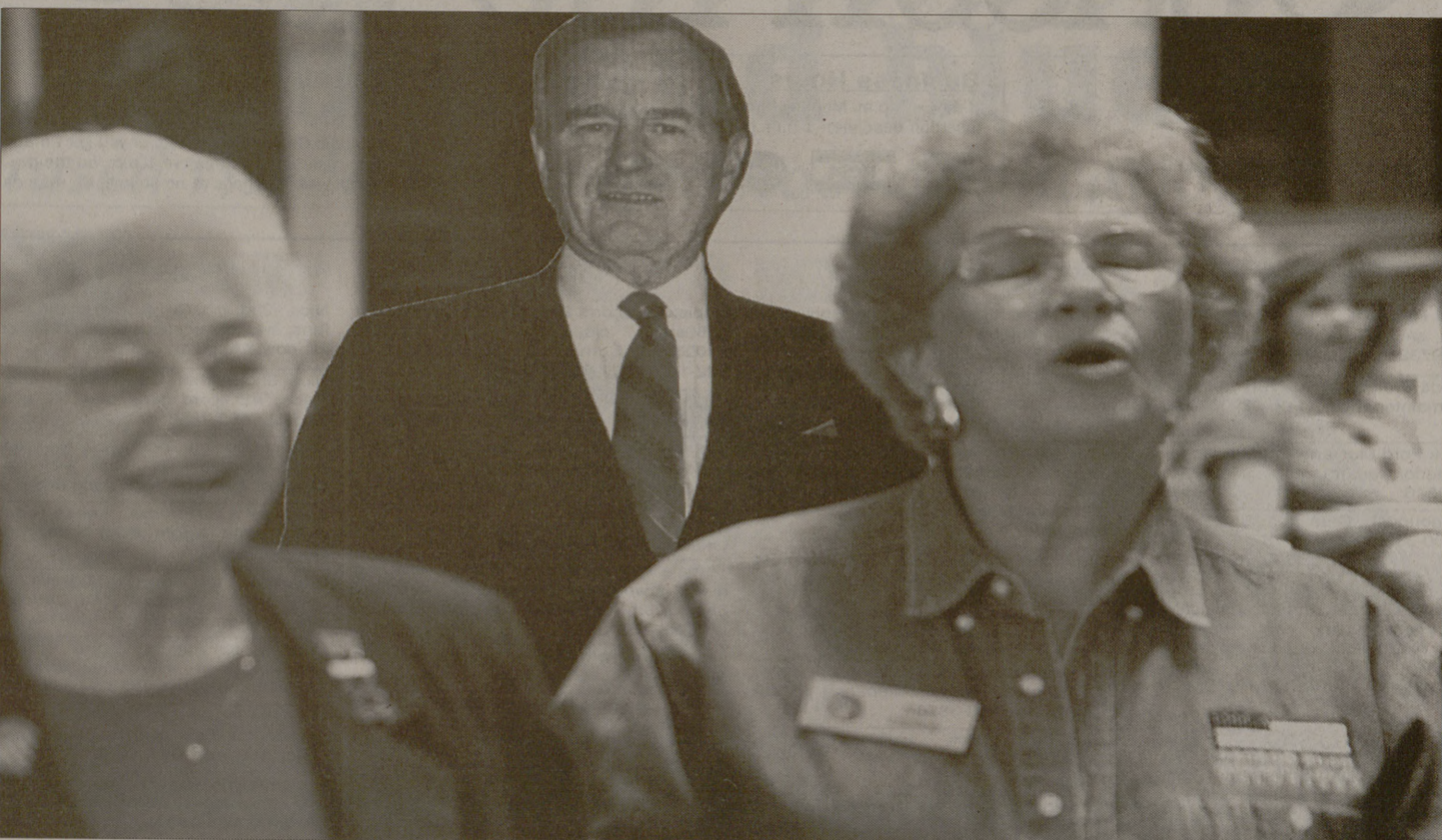
“We are looking for a way forward,” Powell said. “We will be responding in the very near future and then we will see what the step is after that.”

On the Middle East, Powell said the Bush administration is measuring several ideas about creating a temporary Palestinian state, and planned to “weave them into an extension of the president’s vision” of a permanent state side-by-side with Israel.

“We do not intend to mediate this dispute. The dispute can only be resolved by the two parties.”

— Colin Powell
Secretary of State

Happy birthday



Volunteers for the George Bush Library, Katherine Wigington, left, and Joan Ledwig, right, greet and cheer for the 41st visitor at the Tuesday morning celebration for George Bush Sr’s 78th birthday and his wife Barbara’s 77th

birthday. Since Bush was the 41st president, the 41st visitor to the celebration received a gift prize. The celebration, which served cake, ice cream, and balloons to kids, lasted until 3 p.m.

RANDAL FORD • THE BATTALION

Fed says economic recovery modest and uneven

WASHINGTON (AP) — The economy’s recovery from last year’s recession is shaping up to be choppy.

That appeared to be the main message from the Federal Reserve’s snapshot of business activity around the country in late April and May, which was released Wednesday.

“The tone was one of modest but uneven growth, with some major sectors showing signs of improvement while others softened or remained weak,” the Fed said in its survey.

Economists said the report, commonly referred to as the beige book, for the color of its cover, makes it all but certain that Federal Reserve policy-makers will leave short-term interest rates — now at 40-year lows — unchanged at their meeting this month, and probably through the summer.

“This report tells me there is very little momentum in either direction,” said economist Clifford Waldman of Waldman Associates. “Consumer spending is holding up well enough not to have a double dip recession as feared some months ago. But nor do I see a V-shaped boom that some analysts were predicting.”

Manufacturers — hardest hit by last year’s recession — largely reported higher production levels, shipments and orders, but there were pockets of weakness, the Fed said in its survey.

Suppliers of aircraft parts in Boston and San Francisco said orders were down. Manufacturers in Philadelphia, Atlanta, Dallas and San Francisco said demand remained weak for telecommunications

equipment. Deep cuts in capital spending by businesses was a key reason the economy fell into recession.

In a quarterly report assessing potential threats to the global economy, the International Monetary Fund said Wednesday that business investment remained the missing ingredient for a sustainable economic recovery in the United States and Europe.

The IMF said that the near-term outlook “appears largely free of imminent threats to global financial stability.” But IMF economists warned that the failure of corporate profits to rebound was a threat because businesses will not increase spending in the critical area of capital investments until profits recover.

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