

world beat

Abortion vigils grow, continue

(AP) — Abortion rights supporters picketed a Roman Catholic archbishop's house and kept vigil at clinics for a third day Sunday, while opponents held rallies and car caravans in activities building up to the 12th anniversary of the Supreme Court's decision legalizing abortion.

Meanwhile, three men were arrested Saturday in connection with eight anti-abortion bombings in the Washington, D.C., area in the past year.

At least 24 such attacks have occurred since January 1984, and the National Organization for Women sponsored round-the-clock vigils that continued Sunday at 25 family planning centers and abortion clinics in 18 states to protest the violence. Participants generally reported a quiet weekend without incidents.

Tuesday is the anniversary of the landmark court ruling.

In Boston, about 40 pro-choice protesters marched outside the home of Catholic Archbishop Bernard Law, who last week offered the support of the Boston Archdiocese — including medical and financial aid — to any woman of any faith who chose to keep her child rather than have an abortion.

Braving 18-degree temperatures, the demonstrators chanted "Safe, legal, on demand — abortion rights across the land" and carried signs that read "Motherhood by choice, not chance."

Law was not available for comment Sunday because he was on his way to Cuba with a delegation of U.S. bishops, said his secretary, the Rev. Joseph Scorzello.

Across town at Boston's Faneuil Hall, about 1,000 abortion opponents, including Mayor Raymond Flynn, gathered to hear speakers at the 12th annual Assembly for Life. Outside, pro-choice and anti-abortion groups marched in separate circles and traded insults.

More than 90 abortion rights supporters who were keeping vigil for a third day at the Fargo, N.D., Women's Health Organization formed a human chain around the building, remaining outside for 45 minutes as wind chills dropped the temperature to 40 below zero, said Lynn Wilson, president of Citizens for a Real Choice.

At the same time, abortion foes drove past the clinic in a "memorial car caravan" several blocks long, led by a hearse carrying a small white coffin.

The caravan followed a rally outside the Cass County Courthouse, said Susan Richard, president of the LIFE coalition.

In Washington, federal officials announced Saturday that three men had been arrested in connection with eight bombings of abortion clinics and family planning centers in Washington and its Maryland and Virginia suburbs during the past year. Bail hearings were scheduled for Tuesday for Thomas Spinks, 37, of Bowie, Md.; Michael Bray, 32, also of Bowie; and Kenneth Shields, 34, of Laurel, Md., authorities said.

Mary Miller DeCamp, president of the Northern Virginia chapter of NOW, who was participating in a weekend vigil at Commonwealth Women's Clinic in Falls Church, Va., said the arrests would not result in a relaxation of security at area facilities.

"We're still here and we're still taking the same precautions we have been... Lots of times you'll get copycat people... who will say, 'I'll pick up the cross and carry on,'" she said.

Gay ordinance fails in Houston

HOUSTON (AP) — Opponents rejoiced at voters' rejection of two proposed ordinances that would have banned job discrimination against homosexuals and pledged Sunday to campaign against officials who endorsed the measures in the nation's fourth-largest city.

"There's one way we can avoid doing this again, and that's by electing godly, righteous people to office," said Dr. Steven Hotze, leader of Campaign for Houston, a group that fought the gay rights proposals. "We need a slate of candidates from the mayor on down so we can sleep well at night."

But members of Houston's homosexual community said they were not discouraged. "We will continue to screen candidates, endorse them and try to help elect the people we endorse," said Sue Lovell, president of Houston's Gay Political Caucus.

Neither proposition mentioned the words "homosexual" or "gay," but voters were asked to decide whether sexual preference should be barred as a consideration in hiring, firing and promoting city employees. The proposals were defeated by margins of more than 4-1 in a referendum Saturday.

The council delayed implementation of the policy change due to strong public opposition, and groups against the measures quickly gathered more than 60,000 signatures on petitions that forced the council to rescind its vote or hold a referendum.

Silence shrouds shuttle launch

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. (AP) — The five astronauts who will fly America's first military man-in-space mission arrived here Sunday, and though the countdown was set to start at 4 a.m. Monday, the exact shuttle launch time remained a military secret.

Officials have said only that liftoff will occur between 1:15 and 4:15 p.m. EST Wednesday. They contend that keeping the precise time classified will make it more difficult for Soviet spy satellites and trawlers sitting offshore to monitor the flight.

NASA reported Saturday that the Defense Department is considering opening up the countdown to reporters when it reaches nine minutes before the intended liftoff, and a decision was expected Monday. The news media will be permitted to watch the launch from the press site.

Space shuttle Discovery will be carrying a sophisticated new spy satellite into orbit, sources have reported. They say it will be parked in stationary orbit 22,300 miles above the equator south of the Soviet Union, and from this high outpost it will electronically eavesdrop on military and diplomatic communications in much of Europe, Asia and Africa.

Commanding the flight is Navy Capt. Thomas K. Mattingly, a veteran astronaut who circled the moon on Apollo 16 in 1972 and commanded a shuttle flight in 1982. The other crew members, all first-time space fliers, are Air Force Lt. Col. Loren Shriver, Marine Lt. Col. James Buchli and Air Force Maj. Ellison Onizuka and Gary Payton.

The news media will not be able to monitor space-to-ground communications during the flight, which has been a practice for years, nor has the length of the mission been disclosed. Reporters have been told only that they will receive 16 hours notice of Discovery's landing.

For NASA the secrecy is a new experience after 24 years of conducting an open information policy through 45 man-in-space missions.

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