

International

Hostages wait

BEIRUT (AP) — A senior U.N. envoy expressed optimism Monday about chances of freeing Western hostages in Lebanon, but predicted "a long process of quiet and patient diplomacy."

Algeria's ambassador, who has acted as an intermediary, said getting the hostages released might take a year or more.

Israel on Monday rejected a new demand for release of a kidnapped Lebanese Shiite cleric and urged Shiite radicals to use the Red Cross to arrange a hostage-prisoner swap. Israeli officials said the government would only accept a deal if three Israeli soldiers were included.

President Bush was described by White House press secretary Marlin Fitzwater as "cautiously optimistic" about the American hostages in Lebanon. However, Fitzwater said, "He knows that it's probably going to be a longer period of time rather than shorter" before the matter is resolved.

"Certain tendencies, certain trends in the international climate ... suggest that circumstances may be more conducive to a settlement to the hostages problem now than they have been sometime in the past," said Marrack Goulding, U.N. undersecretary-general for peacekeeping operations.

Bloch watched

VIENNA (AP) — French and U.S. agents watched a suspected KGB operative transfer a travel case he had received from Felix Bloch to another KGB agent, a newspaper reported Monday.

Also on Monday, Bloch, a former U.S. diplomat, was quoted in a magazine interview as avoiding a direct question about whether he had spied.

Bloch, 54, worked from 1980 to 1987 at the U.S. Embassy in Vienna and served as its No. 2 official. He was suspended by the State Department on June 22 but no charges have been filed.

The French magazine Paris-Match and the U.S. television network ABC reported last week that a suspected Soviet agent picked up Bloch's travel bag after the two men dined together at a restaurant in Paris.

Paris-Match reported the suspected Soviet agent was a man using the name Reino Gikman on a Finnish passport.

The Austrian daily Der Standard reported that Gikman later passed the bag to another suspected KGB agent.

According to the Paris-Match report, the first transaction took place last May 14 and was filmed and photographed by French agents.

Mexico rising

MEXICO CITY (AP) — Secretary of State James A. Baker III said Monday that Mexico, after years of stagnation, has become an economic model for other debtor nations because of the "bold, far-sighted policies" of President Carlos Salinas de Gortari.

He also said Mexico's record over the past six months in cracking down on drug trafficking has made clear the government's commitment that "it wants to tear the roots of the opium poppy and marijuana plant from its soil."

Baker spoke at the ceremonial opening of daylong talks that featured the presence of an unusually large array of senior Bush administration officials. With Baker were 40 other officials, including four Cabinet members.

Treasury Secretary Nicholas Brady set the tone for the discussions, telling a morning news conference that "great progress has been made in economic and financial fields that are important to our two countries."

Brady hailed the debt agreement Mexico reached with commercial banks two weeks ago that provides for, among other things, a reduction in Mexico's debt servicing obligations. Payments on the country's \$107 billion foreign debt have contributed to a sharp decline in living standards over the past seven years.

Brady said that Mexico has taken steps to make the business climate here more favorable for foreign investment and to lower barriers to trade. Tax reform and deregulation also will help stimulate economic growth, he said.

National

Embryos on trial

MARYVILLE, Neb. (AP) —

Trial began Monday in a divorce case in which the judge must decide whether seven frozen embryos should go to a husband who doesn't want children now or to a wife who cannot conceive naturally.

Junior Lewis Davis, 30, in February sued for divorce from Mary Sue Davis and asked that Mrs. Davis, 28, be barred from ever using any of the seven fertilized eggs without his consent. Mrs. Davis contends she should be able to have the eggs implanted without his consent because it might be her best chance of having a child.

"The question of how we classify these embryos is vital," Jay Christenberry, Mrs. Davis' attorney, said in his opening statement. "While the couple's rights are important, there are other rights we must consider."

Blount County Circuit Judge W. Dale Young must decide if the embryos deserve consideration as a potential child and therefore choose who would better serve the interests of a child, or if the embryos should be considered property and settled as in a regular property dispute.

The case is thought to be the first of its type in the United States.

A medical ethics expert testified Monday that the embryos deserve special respect, but should not be given the same rights as a person.

John A. Robertson, a law professor at the University of Texas, said there is a broad consensus "the pre-embryo at this stage is not a legal subject."

"Because it represents potential life, it deserves a special respect above that accorded any other human tissue, but not the respect of a person," he said.

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Regional

Stabbing investigated

SEATTLE (AP) — A prominent Richland businessman on Monday pleaded innocent to the stabbing deaths of Seattle television personality Larry Sturholm and a friend, Debra Sweiger.

William Pawlyk, wearing red jail coveralls, appeared subdued and said little during his six-minute arraignment before King County Superior Court Judge Frank Sullivan.

Pawlyk, 48, is charged with two counts of aggravated first-degree murder, which is punishable by either death or life in prison without parole.

Sullivan said he would rule later on a request by county Senior Deputy Prosecutor Jeff Baird that a sample of blood be taken from Pawlyk. The judge

granted a request by Pawlyk's lawyer, public defender Michael Filipovic, that police seal Sweiger's Issaquah residence where the killings occurred.

Sturholm, 46, a features reporter for KIRO television in Seattle, was found stabbed to death a week ago at Sweiger's home.

Sweiger, a 35-year-old nurse, died of knife wounds as she was being driven to a hospital by the husband of a friend.

Pawlyk was found in an upstairs bathroom with knife wounds to his throat and wrists.

A court affidavit suggested Sweiger had spurned Pawlyk, a Boeing Computer Services worker active in Richland-area civic organizations, and had planned to travel to the Cayman Islands with Sturholm.

An affidavit filed in Superior Court said Pawlyk had a "common scheme or plan" to murder Sturholm and Sweiger.

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By GARY LARSON



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