

Clinton, Bush take NY primaries



national

(AP) — Front-runner Bill Clinton thumped Jerry Brown in the brutal New York primary Tuesday and added a Kansas landslide for good measure, advancing his bid for the Democratic presidential nomination despite persistent voter unease over his integrity.

Campaign dropout Paul Tsongas made a surprise bid for second place in New York, but deferred a decision on whether to re-enter the race.

Brown said he would press ahead with his candidacy, but Clinton's showing — he led in Minnesota and Wisconsin as well — prompted party elders to suggest the Arkansas governor was all but assured of the nomination.

If so, it would propel the 48-year-old Arkansas governor with the soft Southern accent into a fall campaign against George Bush in a time of exceptional turmoil overseas and economic hardship at home.

Tsongas was elated over his unexpected showing.

"Let me say, the message survives, and the message lives, and the message has real power."

I've spoken to a number of people who asked me not to make a decision tonight or tomorrow and to wait until Friday, so there's a lot of analysis that has to take place ... I have an obligation to do something that is deliberative and thoughtful."

Bush won Republican primaries in Kansas, Wisconsin and Minnesota over the deflated conservative challenge of Patrick Buchanan. He gained nearly all the delegates at stake, and seems on track for clinching a nominating majority when Indiana, North Carolina and Washington, D.C., hold primaries on May 5.

The president's campaign manager is pointing at Clinton already. "We're taking comfort from the fact that voters in New York particularly do not seem to find any of the Democratic candidates particularly acceptable," said Fred Malek.

He is right about that. Interviews with voters in several states reflect continuing concern about Clinton's integrity. The Arkansas governor has been besieged with controversy throughout his campaign over alleged womanizing, the use of marijuana, his record in office and his draft record during the Vietnam war.

Tsongas could re-enter the race if...

WASHINGTON (AP) — Paul Tsongas still had bodyguards, motorcades, media attention and White House dreams Tuesday as Democratic voters in New York made the choices that would shape his future.

Tsongas planned to announce today whether he would keep those dreams alive by resuming the presidential bid he suspended on March 19 for lack of money.

The determining factors were how well he and front-runner Bill Clinton fared in the New York primary.

The former Massachusetts senator refused to say exactly how well he would have to do before he would commit to re-enter the race. But his wife, Niki, said it was "highly unlikely" he would rejoin the fight.

"He would have to do well and Gov. Clinton would have to do poorly," Niki Tsongas said. She said her husband would have to get at least 20 percent of the vote to contemplate getting back in.

Emissaries from the two campaigns were holding preliminary discussions that could lead to Tsongas endorsing Clinton, depending on how the two men fared in Tuesday's contests.

But one Tsongas adviser said there was "no way to deny Bill Clinton the nomination" and Tsongas would only alienate the inevitable nominee if he got back in.

The adviser said Tsongas was being counseled to stay out. "The powers that be around him say absolutely not," said the adviser, who insisted on anonymity.

Jet carrying Arafat lost in sandstorm



TRIPOLI, Libya (AP) — A jet carrying PLO chief Yasser Arafat disappeared in a sandstorm Tuesday night while trying to make an emergency landing in the Libyan desert, PLO officials reported.

"We're trying to find him now," Bassam Abu-Sharif, Arafat's chief adviser, said Wednesday from Tunis, Tunisia. When he spoke, the Soviet-made, Algerian-registered Antonov transport plane was more than nine hours overdue in its flight from Sudan.

Abu-Sharif, sounding distraught but holding out hope the plane made an emergency landing in the desert, appealed to France, Italy, Britain, the United States and Egypt "to help with all possible means to locate the aircraft."

Other sources reached at the Tunis office of the Palestine Liberation Organization chairman said 12 people were aboard. They included three crew members and a team of bodyguards and administrative assistants.

No other PLO official was on the flight from Khartoum, capital of Sudan, the sources said. They spoke by phone to the AP office in Nicosia, Cyprus.

The 62-year-old Arafat has been the undisputed leader of the PLO's Fatah faction, its largest, for 23 years. It wasn't clear who among his many aides and allies would succeed him if he were dead.

Around 8:30 p.m. (2:30 p.m. EDT), the Algerian captain of Arafat's plane, Mohammed Darwish, twice contacted Libyan air traffic controllers saying he was encountering a heavy sandstorm and needed clearance to land at a military air strip in Al-Khofra, PLO sources said in Tunis.

He was told instead to proceed to Sarra where weather conditions were slightly better, they said. In a last communication, Darwish said he was headed for Sarra.

It wasn't known if Darwish originally had scheduled the stop Tuesday night. The PLO sources said he often stopped to refuel at Al-Khofra on the Khartoum-Tunis flight.

George Bush, returning to the White House Tuesday night from a concert, said he knew nothing more about Arafat.

Libyan radio broadcast an appeal to "the International Red Cross, the international meteorological, artificial satellites, and civil aviation authorities" to try to locate the plane.

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