

Bush enjoys final foreign appearance

MOSCOW (AP) — From the stifling heat of a dirt-floor school room in Somalia to the wintry elegance of the Kremlin's gilded halls, President Bush was at home abroad, relishing the foreign policy triumphs of his waning presidency.

The hand that on Sunday signed a treaty with Russia drastically reducing the world's nuclear weapons stocks had two days earlier slapped U.S. Marines on the back for a job well done in Somalia and patted the heads of destitute Somali orphans.

The president returned to Washington just before midnight Sunday from his 25th and final foreign trip, a 19,000-mile journey celebrating what Bush sees as highlights of his presidency — using military force to aid the needy and lessening the threat of nuclear war.

"I think in terms of how the administration will be looked at, I think it will be predominantly because of these successes in world affairs," Bush told a group of Marines in Somalia at an abandoned Soviet air strip now used to fly in relief supplies to the town of Baidoa.

In a rare mood of public reflection, Bush shared with the troops his plans after leaving office Jan. 20 and moving back to Texas.

"It will be a whole shift in gears for me, away from the public life that I've loved and back to the private life that I think everybody also enjoys," Bush said.

His love of the public light was evident that New Year's Day as Bush visited with Marines in their foxholes guarding the air strip, toured an orphanage in Baidoa, chatted with helicopter maintenance crews and sat on a sandbag surrounded by Army troops while he scooped up spaghetti and meatballs from a military ration kit.

Undeterred by the 100-degree heat, the clouds of choking red clay dust stirred up by his heavily guarded motorcade and the choppy helicopter rides that flew him from stop to stop, Bush shook hundreds of hands, posed for hundreds of photos with the troops and waved at hundreds of Somalis chanting "Welcome Bush."

He was clearly in his element, ducking in and out of tents with an "at ease" order to the troops inside, chatting about the difficult conditions, the showers and the snakes.

He was equally comfortable in the presence of royalty — stopping for a brief courtesy call on King Fahd in the Saudi capital of Riyadh en route to Mogadishu — and in the company of a former communist apartheid named Boris Yeltsin.

Bush's affection and respect for Yeltsin were on display as the two men sat side by side signing the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty II in the Kremlin's ornate Vladimir Hall. Bush smiled at Yeltsin warmly and pumped his hand several times during the ceremony and ensuing news conference.

Mexico's president shakes up Cabinet

MEXICO CITY (AP) — President Carlos Salinas de Gortari dumped some prominent officials Monday in a major Cabinet shake-up apparently staged to combat charges of human rights violations and election fraud.

Salinas, who has been pushing reforms of the country's judicial and electoral systems, named a new attorney general, interior minister and energy minister.

He appointed Jorge Carpizo, the head of the governmental Human Rights Commission, as the new attorney general, replacing Ignacio Morales Lechuga.

The attorney general's office, whose duties include the war on drugs, has consistently led the list of agencies criticized for rights violations.

Salinas also replaced Interior Minister Fernando Gutierrez Barrios with the governor of Chiapas state, Jose Patrocinio Gonzalez Blanco Garrido.

The interior minister holds one of the most powerful Cabinet posts, controlling many state security and electoral functions and government media policies.

Gonzalez Blanco Garrido has been heavily criticized for human rights violations in his southern state, although the number of political killings and religiously motivated expulsions has dropped significantly under his administration.

In the past year, elections have taken place in more than half of Mexico, and opposition parties have accused the ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party of fraud.



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