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Clinton declassifies documents

WASHINGTON (AP) — Relaxing government secrecy rules, President Bill Clinton signed an executive order Monday stripping the classified label from millions of national security documents.

The order requires the automatic declassification of all top secret, secret and confidential information 25 years or older, unless it falls into a narrow exemption category, such as revealing the identity of a source of information.

Private experts said it would provide historians with a treasure trove of classified documents, principally from the Pentagon and State Department, about the making of military and foreign policies.

It would not prevent government officials from continuing to use the secrecy stamp despite Clinton's assertion to the contrary, they said.

"It will not fundamentally change the classification habits of current government officials," said Steven Aftergood, a government secrecy specialist at the Federation of American Scientists.

"While these rules sound good, it's not clear whether in practice they mean anything,"

Aftergood said. For instance, he said, the order will not result in declassification of documents showing how much money is spent annually on intelligence.

Clinton's order eases the impact of a 1982 directive by then-President Reagan that vastly increased the scope of what would be classified. No longer will the government presumptively classify certain categories of information.

"The order will lift the veil on millions of existing documents, keep a great many future documents from ever being classified, and still maintain necessary controls over information that legitimately needs to be guarded in the interests of national security," Clinton said in a statement.

For the first time, he said, government officials would be required to justify why information is classified. Federal employees would be encouraged to challenge improper classification and would be protected from retribution for doing so.

The duration of secrecy of most newly classified information would be 10 years, subject to some limitations.

"We will no longer tolerate the excesses of the current sys-

tem," the president said. "For example, we will resolve doubtful calls about classification in favor of keeping the information unclassified."

Two years in the drafting, the order omits a provision once included that would have required officials to use a balancing test before classifying documents, weighing any harm to the national security against the public interest in disclosure.

Instead, it merely authorizes, rather than mandates, agency heads to apply the balancing test.

In that regard, "The order is a major disappointment to us," said Kate Martin, director of the Center for National Security Studies, a private group that lobbies on civil liberties and national security issues.

"When they took out the public interest balancing test," she said, "they did so in order to basically eliminate the role of the judiciary in looking at whether information should be kept secret. Recent events have shown that some kind of outside, independent accountability is necessary, otherwise the government is going to keep information secret that should be made public."

Time Warner sells control of Six Flags

NEW YORK (AP) — Time Warner Inc. agreed to sell control of the Six Flags theme park business in a \$1 billion deal that takes a big bite out of its debt while preserving a home for Bugs Bunny and Batman.

The world's biggest media-entertainment company said Monday it will sell 51 percent of Six Flags to a Boston-based investment group that will pay \$200 million in cash for an operation that will carry \$800 million in debt.

Time Warner will retain a 49 percent stake and will serve as co-manager of the 10 Six Flags theme parks, which will continue to showcase characters like Bugs Bunny and Batman.

"We will retain all the strategic benefits of having Six Flags as an integral part of the Time Warner family," Time Warner chairman and chief executive Gerald Levin said.

The buyer is an investment group led by Boston Ventures, which owns part of tabloid publisher Enquirer-Star Group and other media-entertainment properties.

Time Warner is trying to cut its hefty \$15 billion debt by \$2 billion to \$3 billion by mid-1996 through non-core asset sales. The debt is an outgrowth of the 1989 merger of Time Inc. and Warner Com-

munications Inc.

Questions have been raised about Time Warner's ability to meet its target since its talks have reportedly stalled over selling its 19.4 percent stake in Turner Broadcasting System Inc. Time Warner is believed to want \$1.6 billion for the shares.

The theme park sale should generate enough proceeds after taxes to reduce debt by about \$850 million and boost Time Warner's total debt reduction to \$1.1 billion since the targets were announced in February.

Time Warner acquired the business for \$670 million in cash and assumed debt in two deals in 1991 and 1993.

Six Flags generates more than \$550 million in annual revenue. It claims annual attendance of 22 million its two parks each near Houston, Los Angeles and in central New Jersey, and single parks near Dallas-Fort Worth, Atlanta, St. Louis and Chicago.

Time Warner on Monday reported a smaller loss and increased cash flow for the first quarter as its five main businesses each posted operating gains.

In trading Monday on the New York Stock Exchange, Time Warner rose 25 cents a share to close at \$36.62.

Trucker questioned about slayings

WINSTON-SALEM, N.C. (AP) — A truck driver suspected of killing prostitutes and dumping their bodies alongside interstate highways has confessed to killing two women and will be questioned about other murders, police said.

Sean Patrick Goble, 28, of Asheboro, N.C., was arrested on murder charges Thursday after police found his fingerprints on a plastic bag near a corpse found along Interstate 81 in Virginia.

A search of his bloodstained tractor-trailer cab then turned up the pocketbook of an Ohio woman whose body was found

along I-81 in Tennessee, police said.

Goble confessed to both slayings, and was being held in the Forsyth County, N.C., jail pending his extradition to Tennessee, said Forsyth County Sheriff Ron Barker.

Goble said he strangled Brenda Sue Hagy, a 45-year-old Bloomington, Ind., woman who had been charged with trespassing at truck stops, in January at a service station in Tennessee. Then he dumped her body in Virginia, police said.

He also admitted suffocating Rebecca Alice Hanes, a 36-year-

old prostitute from Ohio, and dumping her body in Kingsport, Tenn., Barker said. Goble has not yet been charged in that murder.

Tennessee authorities said they wanted to question Goble about the 1991 murder of Margaret Sue Goins, 26, of Soddy-Daisy, Tenn., whose body was found a mile from where Hanes' body had been.

Investigators said they also found women's underwear and shoes in Goble's mobile home — key clues because Hagy, Hanes and several other female victims were missing clothing and shoes, police said.

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