

NEWS BRIEFING

A LOOK AT THIS MORNING'S HEADLINES

Oregon boxcar killings may be connected to several other slayings



PORTLAND (AP) — Police are investigating whether the slayings of two men found dead in railroad boxcars are related to as many as seven other slayings across the country.

The Oregon killings occurred in late November or early December, one apparently in Salem and the other in Eugene. The victims, William Pettit Jr. and Michael Clites, each died of a blow to the head.

"I feel very comfortable that it's probably the same suspect," said Salem police detective Mike Quakenbush. Quakenbush said both bodies were found positioned in a particular way, which was not disclosed.

Quakenbush said he had heard from seven other agencies around the country investigating similar crimes, leading Quakenbush to think they could all be the work of the same person or group.

Word of the killings has spread among men who ride the rails. Jerry Johnson, 53, said he was worried about his safety.

"We tramps kind of watch out for each other," Johnson said as he and other men sat at a campfire by railroad tracks in Portland. "If you don't, who's going to?"

Prospects appear slim for any agreement on balanced-budget



WASHINGTON (AP) — Agreement on a balanced-budget plan is now unlikely, Republican leaders said Wednesday as they and the Clinton administration positioned themselves for an election year of blaming each other. Financial markets plunged in reaction.

"I think the odds are better than even, as of today, that there will be no agreement," House Speaker Newt Gingrich, R-Ga., said during a campaign visit to Wyoming. "And I find that a very difficult prospect."

"Can we reach an agreement? I don't know," Senate Majority Leader Bob Dole, R-Kan., said on the Senate floor. "Is it doubtful? Probably. Is it possible? Yes."

The leaders' remarks further doused hopes for a pact with President Clinton on eliminating deficits by 2002 and cutting taxes. And they contrasted with their comments Tuesday as the talks broke off, when they were careful not to characterize the odds of success.

Stock and bond markets sank shortly after Gingrich spoke. The plummet reflected worry by investors who believed until Tuesday that the year long budget stalemate would be resolved.

Shelling raises doubts about force's ability to protect Bosnians



SARAJEVO, Bosnia-Herzegovina (AP) — The muscular NATO-led force that has taken over the old U.N. role of enforcing peace in Bosnia is likely to defeat any force that takes aim at its soldiers.

What Bosnians wonder, after a deadly Sarajevo streetcar shelling, disappearances in Serb-held areas and trouble in Mostar, is whether NATO can protect ordinary people from day to day.

Three weeks into its mission, the NATO-led force is running into challenges similar to those that plagued the much-maligned, underfunded United Nations force in Bosnia.

U.S. Defense Secretary William Perry told Congress that the NATO-led force would be "the biggest, meanest dog in town." But while NATO has no doubt it can protect its own, Bosnians are not sure the toughness will save them.

"As they did with the U.N., the Serbs are testing the patience and will of NATO troops to do anything," said Efram Kulenovic, 69. If NATO fails the test, he said, "we can forget their ability to protect us — and themselves. It will be U.N. impotence all over again — the helmets will just be a different color."

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WHEN

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7:00–7:45 P.M. — Students

Wednesday, January 17
12:00–1:00 P.M. — Faculty/Staff

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*Focus groups will be moderated by Thomas Ricca Associates, a national firm that has successfully completed over 25 University Student Union planning projects over the last eight years. They will also be conducting the formal customer survey later this term.