

NEWS BRIEFING

A LOOK AT THIS MORNING'S HEADLINES

Agreement close on timber swap deal that would save old trees

ROSEBURG (AP) — Agreement is near on a timber swap that would save centuries-old federal timber from logging. Timber that has been the focus of demonstrations by environmentalists, the U.S. Forest Service said Thursday.

Speaking to the Roseburg Area Chamber of Commerce, Umpqua National Forest Supervisor Don Otsby said the deal could be the first of a series of swaps to stop logging of environmentally sensitive areas under the so-called salvage rider.

Roseburg Forest Products could sign the agreement with the Forest Service as early as Friday, said Umpqua spokeswoman Cheryl Walters. The company would trade the controversial First timber sale for 4 million board feet of other trees from partially logged stands.

"An agreement is so darn close," Walters said. "RFP has agreed in concept and we don't see any reason why they would back out."

Roseburg Forest Products began logging last month on the first timber sale after negotiations for the trade broke down. The sale is one of a number that were offered in the midst of the battle over the northern spotted owl and later withdrawn over environmental concerns.

After finding at least one tree that appeared to be 1,000 years old, environmentalists tried to stop the logging. At one point three people were arrested when they chained themselves to junked cars to block a logging road.

Woman says she was afraid for her life in police chase, beating

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Alicia Sotero Vazquez crossed the border from Mexico so her children could have a better life, she said from a hospital bed. After sheriff's deputies clubbed her, she feared for her own.

"I just prayed to God to help me, because I have kids, and my family," Sotero said Wednesday in a teary interview with TV station KMXB.

Sotero, 32, and Enrique Funes Flores were beaten Monday by two sheriff's deputies after a high-speed chase in a pickup crammed with other Mexicans suspected of sneaking across the border.

News helicopters videotaped the chase and beating, and the footage was played repeatedly on television in both the United States and Mexico.

Riverside County Sheriff Larry Smith condemned the beatings Wednesday, calling them a shocking use of excessive force.

Sotero had worked in a now-closed clothing factory in Mexico to support her daughter, 11, and son, 9. She then worked odd jobs but couldn't make enough money, she said.

"I'm really poor, and that's why I decided to come over here, to get my kids an education because I never had one. I only finished second grade," she said.

Tears rolled down her cheeks as she spoke from her bed at an undisclosed hospital where she was treated for dehydration and bruises.

"They hit me worse than an animal," she said. "I just wish they are punished because I didn't do anything bad."

Rescuers shift focus from finding the dead to looking for causes

DUBROVNIK, Croatia (AP) — Investigators turned Thursday to unraveling the final minutes of Commerce Secretary Ron Brown's flight and the reason it crashed near this Dalmatian port, killing all 35 people aboard.

Defense Secretary William Perry said initial speculation had focused on faulty instrumentation. But many questions remained a day after the jet clipped a barren hill in a raging rainstorm and crashed about two miles short of Dubrovnik's Cilipi Airport.

Why was the plane off course? Why did rescue efforts erroneously focus at first on the waters of the Adriatic Sea? Could Croatian, NATO and U.S. rescuers have reached the site any faster?

Even the number of victims was uncertain until more than 24 hours after the crash. Initial reports from Washington said 33 people were on board, but the State Department listed 35 victims Thursday — all Americans except for one Bosnian and a Croat.

"In travel in this part of the world, and in these conditions, you don't always get a good [passenger] manifest," the U.S. Ambassador to Croatia, Peter Galbraith, told a news conference.

Brown, accompanied by Commerce Department staff members and business executives, left the Bosnian city of Tuzla Wednesday afternoon for what should have been a short 130-mile flight south to the Croatian coast.

In Tuzla, he had visited U.S. soldiers serving with the Bosnian peace mission, passing out fast-food and sports videos.

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CORRECTION

In the April 3 issue of the Emerald, Brodie Remington was incorrectly identified as the director of central development programs. His correct title is vice president of public affairs and development. The Emerald regrets the error.

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