

NEWS BRIEFING

A LOOK AT THIS MORNING'S HEADLINES

Nail-filled pipe bomb explodes in Spokane city hall; no suspects



SPOKANE, Wash. (AP) — The possibility that someone may have been sending a political message by bombing City Hall six days before tens of thousands of runners will fill city streets jangled the nerves of officials Monday.

No one was injured and the nail-filled pipe bomb did little damage. A set of oak entry doors deflected the force of the blast across a street to Riverfront Park.

The bomb exploded just yards from the finish line for the annual 12-kilometer Lilac Bloomsday road run, which is expected to attract a record 62,000 runners Sunday.

"Why a shrapnel bomb would be used at that hour, in such an uninhabited location, we don't know, unless it's a message, or a warning, or a practice run," Police Chief Terry Mangan said.

Security is expected to be tight when the 20th annual Bloomsday road race winds through downtown streets May 5.

"Obviously, we're committed to do everything within reason to make sure the safety of runner participants are taken care of," said Don Kardong, Bloomsday founder and a former Olympic marathoner. "As far as we know, this doesn't have anything to do with Bloomsday."

Police had no suspects and few clues to who planted the bomb, the third such explosion in the city in less than a month.

Shrapnel from the blast appeared to be from "a fairly large pipe bomb" and was thrown the length of a football field into the park, Mangan said.

The federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms and FBI joined the investigation. Those federal agencies are still investigating pipe bombs that detonated April 1 in a Spokane suburb.

The blasts were reminiscent of bombings in the 1980s, apparently aimed at diverting police away from simultaneous robberies.

Release of 12 million barrels of oil reserves might lower prices



MIAMI (AP) — President Clinton expressed concern about rapidly rising gasoline prices Monday and ordered the Energy Department to pump up the nation's fuel supplies.

The president authorized the "orderly sales" of about 12 million barrels of oil from the nation's strategic petroleum reserves. Such a move was authorized by Congress last week as part of an overall appropriations bill.

By increasing supplies, Congress might drive down prices.

Sen. Bob Dole, Clinton's probable challenger in the presidential election, said, "I'm glad he's finally concerned about gas prices. I'm glad we finally got his attention."

Dole said President Bush had released 18 million barrels of oil from the strategic petroleum reserve during the Persian Gulf War, and it "had a marginal impact on prices."

Gasoline prices jumped 5 cents per gallon in the past two weeks.

The average price of gasoline nationwide, including all grades and taxes, was \$1.36 a gallon as of Friday, according to the Lundberg Survey of 10,000 gasoline stations. That compares with \$1.31 on April 12 and was 14 cents higher than a year earlier, Lundberg said.

Further, Clinton said he was asking Energy Secretary Hazel O'Leary to review market circumstances and report within 45 days "about the factors that led to the run-up in prices." He asked her to evaluate the expected market prices for the remainder of the peak summer driving season.

Clinton issued his order during a speechmaking and fundraising trip to Miami.

In a statement, the American Petroleum Institute said the strategic reserve "was not intended to be used to control prices or to dampen normal price fluctuations."

Muslim refugees try to see homes; Serbs kill three, injure 12



SJENINA, Bosnia-Herzegovina (AP) — Muslim refugees confronted a Serb roadblock and crossed a minefield Monday in a resolute effort to reach homes they had not seen in years. At least two Muslims were killed and a dozen injured.

A third Muslim died after being wounded in a separate clash with Serbs near Sarajevo, the Bosnian capital. A dozen other refugees were injured in that confrontation.

The Muslim-Serb disputes present a major challenge to the international peace effort, which is based on refugees' freedom to move about. Until Monday, no one had been killed in show-downs between would-be returnees and their former enemies, who don't want them coming back.

The U.S.-brokered agreement that ended the war provided no clear way to enforce its guarantee of freedom of movement. This forced the NATO-led peace force to enter the breach and start performing a task it had steadfastly resisted: scrambling to put out one dispute after another, well aware that any one could touch off new flare-ups in Bosnia.

Swedish and U.S. troops stood between about 300 Muslims and 25 Serbs at a checkpoint Monday near Dobo, about 60 miles north of Sarajevo.

When some Muslims tried to circumvent the obstruction by crossing a nearby minefield to reach their former homes, several blasts were heard and a dozen people were hurt, officials said. They later reported that two Muslims had died.

NATO spokesman Maj. Jerry Rehn said one was killed by small-arms fire of undetermined origin and the second presumably by a mine blast.

A spokesman for peacekeepers in Dobo, a few miles southwest of Sjenina, said seven dead or wounded had been evacuated by helicopter.

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