

NEWS DIGEST

your quick guide to news from around the world

Search begins to fill Cabinet vacancies

1 WASHINGTON — With gaping holes in his staff and Cabinet, President Clinton pledged Thursday to "cast a wide net" for his second-term team, suggesting he may land a Republican or two.

Transportation Secretary Federico Pena told the White House he was resigning — making him the fifth Cabinet secretary who plans to leave. Three more could announce similar plans soon, and the president might lose half his Cabinet.

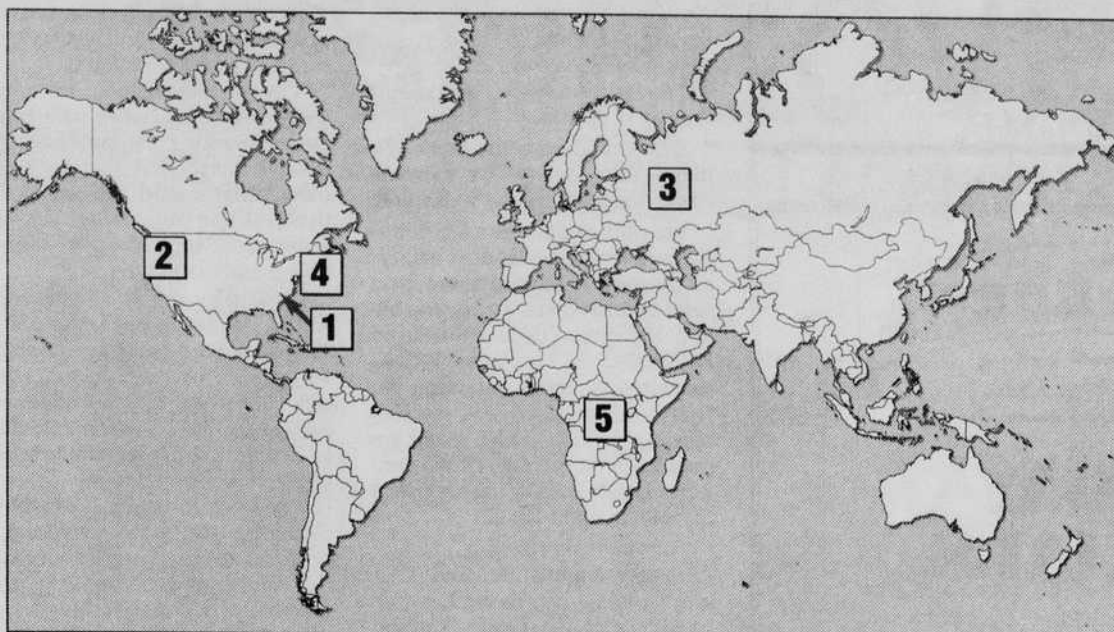
Secretary of State Warren Christopher formally resigned in a White House ceremony Thursday.

Chief of Staff Leon Panetta will announce his resignation soon, and North Carolina businessman Erskine Bowles is the clear front-runner to replace him. Bowles, former deputy White House chief of staff, is reluctant to replace Panetta.

Christopher led the charge of Cabinet officials leaving the administration. Officials have said four others plan to resign: Defense Secretary William Perry, Energy Secretary Hazel O'Leary, Commerce Secretary Mickey Kantor and Pena.

O'Leary and Pena were nudged out of office. The others are leaving on their own.

Also Thursday, another key official, Walter Mondale, said he was leaving as U.S. ambassador to Japan and returning to Minnesota.



Amount of recycling in Oregon goes up

2 PORTLAND — Recycling continues to increase in Oregon, according to an annual survey by the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ).

The survey of the state's garbage haulers and private recycling companies showed 34.7 percent of disposed material was recycled, up from 32.5 percent a year earlier.

The total amount of recovered material collected in Oregon was just under 1.3 million tons, or 804 pounds for each Oregonian.

The total amount of garbage disposed in municipal landfills in 1995 was nearly 2.4 million tons, or 1,511 pounds per person.

Yeltsin tells Russians he's back at work

3 MOSCOW — Impressing doctors with the speed of his recovery, President Boris Yeltsin was up on his feet Thursday and proclaiming he was back at work two days after a quintuple heart bypass.

The Kremlin portrayed the 65-year-old president as a man eager to be back at the helm of leadership — something his surgeon said could happen in 10 to 12 days.

Yeltsin has not yet appeared before the public but issued a statement Thursday. He also sought to counter attacks from the opposition Communists who demanded he step down.

Public can now check doctor backgrounds

4 BOSTON — Massachusetts residents dialed in by the hundreds Thursday for never-before-available information on their doctors: their malpractice payouts, disciplinary records and criminal history.

It is the first time in the United States such detailed doctor information has been made available to the public through a toll-free line.

"People are calling with five or six names," said state medical board spokeswoman Kim Hinden, adding that five frazzled operators handled more than 500 calls by early afternoon.

Weapons traffic may spark war in Africa

5 In midnight flights or in open, legal deals, the hardware of war has been flowing into central Africa's bloodied heartland in the 2 1/2 years since the Rwanda genocide, U.N. and independent investigators report.

Two sources have been the government arms industry in South Africa and the lucrative black market also in South Africa.

The assault rifles, ammunition, mortars and land mines that reach Rwanda, Burundi and eastern Zaire are fueling an ethnic conflagration that threatens to explode into a war among nations.

The worry is that the spreading violence will engulf Zaire. Bigger than Alaska and Texas combined, with 200 ethnic groups and bordering on nine other nations, its collapse could plunge all of central Africa into crisis.

Zaire has been a hub for transshipping war material since the 1980s, when the CIA funneled arms through its back country to the UNITA rebel force in neighboring Angola.

Last January and again in June, Russian cargo planes crashed on takeoff in Kinshasa, Zaire's capital. Airport officials later disclosed that the first plane carried unspecified cargo for UNITA; the other had just delivered military equipment from Moscow.

Russia, left with huge weapons stocks after the Cold War, has become a prime wholesaler for arms brokers. Prices are as low as \$150 for an AK-47, the reliable assault rifle seen everywhere in the turmoil in eastern Zaire.

—The Associated Press

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