

# Impeachment inquiry vote goes to House Thursday

*If the proposal succeeds, Clinton will become the third U.S. president to face a possible impeachment*

By David Espo  
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — With a House vote set for Thursday on launching an open-ended impeachment inquiry, Democrats rushed to counter Republican plans while still underscoring their disapproval of President Clinton's affair with Monica Lewinsky.

At the White House, spokesman Joe Lockhart accused the GOP leadership of using the impeachment issue "to embarrass the president" and produce political gain for Republicans at the polls this fall.

Majority Leader Dick Armey, R-Texas, said the issue would come to the floor for a vote on Thursday. Republican officials expressed confidence they would prevail, thus making Clinton the

third president in history to face possible impeachment proceedings.

"The fact of the matter is, it is about obstruction of justice. It is about lying to the American people," Armey told reporters Tuesday. "It is about using all the instruments, and many of the people in the White House ... to go out and tell a story that the president himself knew to be untrue."

The GOP-controlled House Judiciary Committee approved a sweeping impeachment inquiry in a party-line vote on Monday, after first brushing aside two Democratic alternatives.

With midterm elections less than a month away, political calculations weighed heavily as the issue moved toward a vote on the House floor.

Rank-and-file Democrats caucused privately during the day to discuss their response to the GOP proposal.

Leaders are likely to redraft a

plan offered in the Judiciary Committee on Monday that would have limited the scope of the inquiry to the Lewinsky affair and called for it to be concluded by Nov. 25. One possible change would set a deadline of Jan. 1, a date that Rep. Henry Hyde, the committee chairman, has set as his goal for concluding work on the issue.

A second proposal defeated on Monday, offered by Rep. Howard Berman, D-Calif., would have required the committee to first decide whether Independent Counsel Kenneth Starr's allegations, if proven, would constitute impeachable offenses. If so, the Judiciary Committee would then be empowered to investigate with unlimited time.

Party sources, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the Democratic rank-and-file group remains divided, however. Some liberal lawmakers from safe seats favor no inquiry on grounds that Clinton's offenses don't rise to the level of impeachment. But

others, including moderates who face difficult election battles, are likely to vote for the GOP measure, officials said.

"What works in nine districts doesn't work in the 10th," said Rep. Gary Ackerman of New York. He said the Democratic leadership is "trying to figure out where the equilibrium is."

"There are Democrats from rural, conservative districts who will lose if they don't vote" for the GOP proposal, conceded one Democratic official, speaking on condition of anonymity.

The White House would like all Democrats to vote against the Republican plan, officials said, to buttress the claim that the GOP is pushing a partisan impeachment probe. But House Democratic leader Dick Gephardt's objective is somewhat different, officials said — it is to ensure the re-election of as many Democrats as possible this fall.

White House officials — concerned with the president's fate — have circulated polling in re-

cent days suggesting that Democrats will fare best nationally in the elections if they oppose the GOP measure. They say Republicans are vulnerable to election-year criticism that they want to open the way to a prolonged investigation at a time when the public favors a swift end to the impeachment drama.

Republican polling has detected a change, as well, according to sources who spoke on condition of anonymity. A survey taken recently for the Republican National Committee reported an increase in the number of Democrats intending to vote compared with a few weeks ago, although it still lags behind Republicans.

Against that backdrop, some junior Republicans spoke privately about the prospects for a last-minute compromise on the impeachment inquiry with Democrats, although any type of agreement seemed unlikely before the roll is called on Thursday.

# Yugoslavian crackdowns draw NATO closer to airstrikes

*Officials fear the crackdowns will lead to instability in south Serbia*

By Dusan Stojanovic  
The Associated Press

BELGRADE, Yugoslavia — Moving closer to NATO airstrikes, the United States told Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic on Tuesday that he has failed to show the West he really means to end his harsh crackdown in Kosovo province.

U.S. envoy Richard Holbrooke met Milosevic for the second day Tuesday after visiting the southern Serbian province, where Yugoslav forces were battling ethnic Albanian rebels seeking independence.

In Washington, President Clinton said Holbrooke was telling the Yugoslav leader that NATO is prepared to act if Milosevic fails

to honor U.N. resolutions ordering him to withdraw from areas of conflict and allow a political settlement.

He warned that, unchecked, Serb violence in the province could lead to instability throughout the region.

"The stakes are high," Clinton said. "The time is now to end the violence in Kosovo."

After meeting with ethnic Albanian political leaders in Kosovo, Holbrooke said Serbian security forces still maintain a strong presence.

"U.S. diplomatic observers are doing a terrific job bringing us information, and the information they're bringing is not good," Holbrooke said.

Milosevic's seven-month crackdown against the secessionists has killed hundreds, left tens of thousands of ethnic Albanians

homeless and led to growing resolve among NATO allies to stop the bloodshed by striking Yugoslav army targets if necessary.

Kosovo is a province of Serbia, the main republic of Yugoslavia. But ethnic Albanians form 90 percent of the 2 million-strong Kosovo population, and most favor self-rule.

Hours after Holbrooke left Kosovo for Belgrade, reporters saw about 100 Yugoslav military vehicles of all sorts — ranging from armored personnel carriers to trucks loaded with troops — moving outside Kosovo in an apparent show of Milosevic's compliance with international demands.

Additionally, state-run Serbian TV claimed that all Serbian special police units were pulled out of the province — a key international demand.

Defense Secretary William Cohen told Congress a pullback of troops in Kosovo by Milosevic was not enough to ward off NATO attacks. Airstrikes might be followed by some "international presence" on the ground, he said.

If more Serb forces don't pull out of the province, NATO intervention "will become inevitable," French President Jacques Chirac said.

However, Yugoslav government spokesman Miodrag Popovic told Associated Press Television News that the complete withdrawal of Yugoslav troops from Kosovo is out of question.

"Who in the right mind would do so? Is there a country in the world that would do so, especially with an armed rebellion on their hands?" Popovic asked.


Milosevic told Holbrooke in talks Monday night that his government is willing to seek a "political solution" to the crisis. But he also called the NATO threats against his country "a criminal act."

Holbrooke, who negotiated the 1995 agreement that ended the Bosnian war, was dispatched to the Yugoslav capital of Belgrade in what appeared to be a last-chance diplomatic effort.

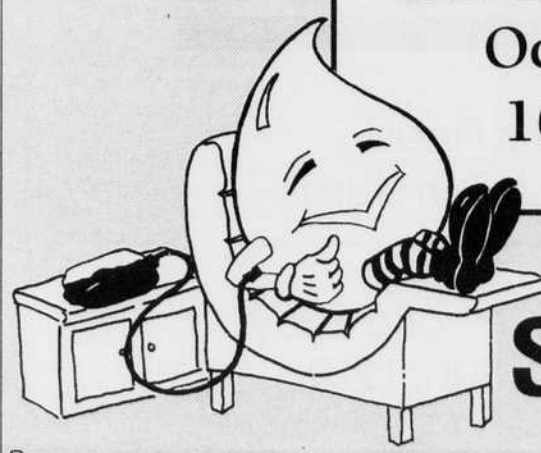
NATO officials say they are ready to launch airstrikes. No decision is expected until Thursday, when NATO ambassadors meet in Brussels.

Canada's Foreign Affairs spokeswoman Sophi Legendre said evacuation of nonessential diplomatic staff and families of all diplomatic staff from the country's Belgrade embassy was completed Tuesday.

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