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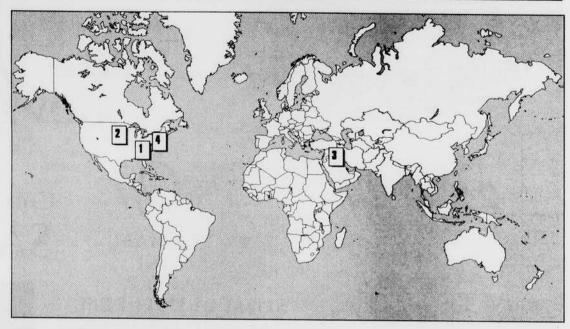
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News Digest



JFK rued Diem defeat, released tapes reveal

BOSTON — Weeks before his own assassination, President Kennedy said he was troubled by his actions preceding the overthrow and killing of South Vietnam's president, according to tapes made public today.

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"I was shocked by the death of Ngo Dinh Diem. He was an extraordinary character, while he became increasingly difficult in the last few months. He has been able to hold his country together for the last 10 months," Kennedy said in an Oval Office tape on Nov. 4, 1963.

Two days earlier, a group of dissident generals assassinated Diem, and the United States became increasingly drawn into the civil war there.

Kennedy also questioned what the outcome of the coup and assassination would be.

"The question is now whether the generals can stay together and build a stable government or whether public opinion will turn on Saigon."

The recording was among 37 hours of tapes released by the John F. Kennedy Library and Museum. Four hours of the tapes had been in the possession of Kennedy's personal secretary, Evelyn Norton Lincoln, who died in 1995 and left them to Robert L. White, a collector of Kennedy memorabilia. White gave the tapes to the library earlier this year.

In the tapes, Kennedy expressed regret over sending a cable that preceded the Diem overthrow. Stephanie Fawcett, former senior foreign policy archivist for the JFK library, said the wire gave indirect support of the coup.

Early screening for diabetes advised

2 CHICAGO — People should be considered for diabetes testing beginning at age 25 — 20 years earlier than now recommended — to save them from blindness, kidney failure and amputations, government researchers say.

Earlier screening likely would mean earlier diagnoses and treatment to avoid the debilitating complications of the disease, said the researchers, led by Dr. Michael M. Engelgau of the federal Centers for Disease Control in Atlanta.

Their report was published in Wednesday's Journal of the American Medical Association.

Diabetes afflicts 16 million Americans, and at least a third of them are unaware they have the illness, experts estimate. It is the leading U.S. cause of blindness, kidney failure and amputations and kills 180,000 a year. Dr. Gerald Bernstein, president of the American Diabetes Association, agrees with the study's conclusions, even though his group recommended last year that routine screening begin at age 45 among the general population.

The ADA also recommends that testing be considered earlier than age 45 among people in high-risk groups, such as non-Caucasians, the obese and people with a family history of diabetes.

Bernstein said in a telephone interview Tuesday that even though the CDC report differs from the guidelines, it is consistent with their intent and approach.

"What we are learning, unfortunately, is this is now a disease of children," said Bernstein, director of diabetes management programs at Beth Israel Health Care Systems in New York. One-fourth of new diabetes cases among people under age 20 are now type 2, he said.

Formerly called adult-onset or insulin-independent diabetes, type 2 diabetes generally develops after age 40 and is treated only with dietary changes and pills, though many type 2 patients now take insulin shots.

Type 2 is making alarming gains among youth because of rising childhood obesity and the prevalence of sedentary lifestyles, said Bernstein, who was not involved in the new study.

New Lebanese leader takes oath of office

BEIRUT, Lebanon — Completing the first smooth transition of power in a peaceful Lebanon in nearly 30 years, the nation's new leader took the oath of office Tuesday and promised to clean up a graft-riddled government.

In a speech repeatedly interrupted by applause, President Emile Lahoud told lawmakers that taxpayers want a transparent civil service where nobody is above the law.

"It is the people's right, before anything else, that they see how the decent are rewarded and how a thief's hand is chopped off, whoever that may be," he said.

On foreign policy, Lahoud is expected to change little. In his speech, he pledged to continue close relations with Syria, without whose approval he would not have been elected. Syria stations 30,000 troops in Lebanon and is the main power broker.

Lahoud said Lebanon would continue to ally itself with Syria in any peace negotiations with Israel. Beirut has long rejected Israel's attempts to negotiate a separate peace that would involve Israeli troops withdrawing from the buffer zone they occupy in southern Lebanon.

The choice of Lahoud, a Ma-

ronite Catholic, respects the religious divisions that dominate the politics of this nation of 3.2 million: The president is a Maronite Christian, the prime minister is a Sunni Muslim and the parliamentary speaker is a Shiite Muslim. The assembly is divided equally between Muslims and Christians.

Lahoud is the 11th president since independence from France 55 years ago. Two previous presidents took over after assassinations in Lebanon, which ended a 15-year-civil war in 1990.

Lahoud, a 62-year-old Britishtrained general, was elected by Parliament on Oct. 25 amid hopes that he would rebuild the administration as he had done the army: taking an organization fractured by the 1975-90 civil war and welding it into a coherent body free of sectarian tension.

'Nappy Hair' book causes furor in school

A NEW YORK — A white Brooklyn teacher who gave an acclaimed children's book called "Nappy Hair" to her mostly black and Hispanic third-graders was removed from her classroom after parents complained and threatened her.

Ruth Sherman, 27, was transferred out on Tuesday after a tense school meeting Monday night.

"The term 'nappy' is generally derogatory and not every parent felt that using a book like 'Nappy Hair' in a classroom setting, although the author was black, was a wise way to go," said Board of Education spokesman J.D. LaRock. LaRock said that despite some "provocative passages," the book has a positive message.

Told in a gospel-like, call-andresponse style, the book is about a little girl with the "nappiest, fuzziest, the most screwed up, squeezed up, knotted up" hair. It received rave reviews, including one from The New York Times.

"The idea that it is a racist book is ridiculous," said the author, Carolivia Herron, who believes the book should be used to teach racial diversity. "This book is a wonderful celebration of nappy, African-American hair."

The district superintendent told Sherman to report to district headquarters instead of her classroom, pending further investigation, according to Ron Davis, a spokesman for the teachers union.

Sherman, who began teaching full-time this fall, could face transfer or disciplinary action. She did not return calls Tuesday.

Davis said several parents at the meeting stood up and threatened Sherman.

— The Associated Press