

NEWS DIGEST

**Ramsey grand jury recesses until Wednesday**

**1** BOULDER, Colo. — A grand jury investigating the JonBenet Ramsey slaying met for nearly seven hours Tuesday before recessing with plans to return to work Wednesday as speculation mounted that a decision soon would be made.

When the grand jurors finished for the day, they were escorted to their cars by armed sheriff's deputies.

"The grand jury will return for more work tomorrow," said Suzanne Laurion, a spokeswoman for District Attorney Alex Hunter. She declined further comment.

The sheriff's deputies were part of a stepped-up effort to keep the growing number of reporters and cameramen away from the jurors.

City officials erected "Media Free Zone" signs in the courtyard of the Boulder County Justice Center, barring reporters from areas where they once stood to videotape the jurors.

Hunter avoided reporters so he could focus on the case, Ms. Laurion said.

"I think he wants to play it real close to the vest ... and I think he wants to not be distracted," she said.

Hunter fueled speculation last week by telling reporters to stay by their phones over the weekend, implying the jury's work was nearing an end.

**Port, six contractors face fines over airport work**

**2** SEATTLE — The Port of Seattle and six contractors face more than \$127,000 in fines for alleged safety violations that may have exposed workers to asbestos during renovation at Seattle-Tacoma International Airport, the state Department of Labor and Industries says.

The port and the companies can appeal the citations and fines announced Monday.

Asbestos, once prized as a building material for its ability to resist heat and corrosives, has been linked to lung disease, including cancer.

The largest penalty, \$63,000, was assessed against Martinez Melgoza and Associates, a Seattle consultant on the project to renovate airport restaurants.

The consultant was cited for seven willful violations, which occur when an employer knows safety rules are being broken or intends to break them.

Among other things, L&I says, Martinez Melgoza failed to set up enclosures to confine asbestos to work areas, failed to make sure workers wore respirators, failed to provide decontamination facilities and failed to ensure asbestos was cleaned up or adequately contained after removal.

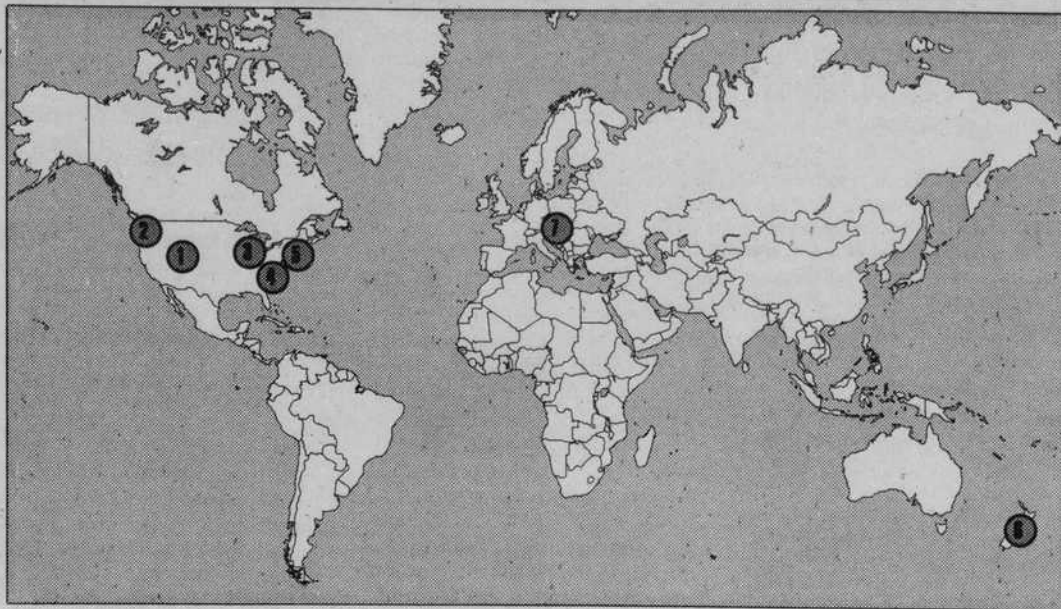
The company will contest the violations, said attorney Douglas Hales, who added that it seems unlikely that any workers were exposed to asbestos.

**Americans watching fat, but ignoring calories, exercise**

**3** CHICAGO — Many of the more than two-thirds of U.S. adults trying to lose weight could fail because they're either cutting calories or exercising but not doing both, a nationwide survey found.

Thirty-five percent of men and 40 percent of women who said they were trying to lose weight are not counting calories, according to a report in Wednesday's Journal of the American Medical Association.

Many are eating less fat, but they may be consuming as many



or more calories from lower-fat foods, researchers said.

Even those who are combining exercise and calorie reduction often aren't exercising enough, researchers said. Only 42 percent of the men and 37 percent of the women who said they were trying to lose weight are meeting federal recommendations of at least 150 minutes of exercise each week.

The findings could help explain why obesity is increasing even though Americans spend \$33 billion a year on weight loss products and services, said the study's lead author, Dr. Mary K. Serdula, a medical epidemiologist in the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Division of Nutrition and Physical Activity.

**Virginia officials to investigate inmate sex complaints**

**4** RICHMOND, Va. — Gov. Jim Gilmore said Tuesday he has ordered Virginia's top public safety official to investigate complaints of widespread sexual abuse by guards at the state's largest prison for women.

The inquiry was announced after The Associated Press reported sexual misconduct complaints at the prison nearly tripled in the first nine months of this year compared with the last nine months of 1998. There have been 25 complaints this year, up from nine a year ago.

The reported cases are "the tip of the iceberg ... in this little cesspool (of) seductions," inmate Bobinette Fearce told the AP.

She and others interviewed by the AP said most inmates are afraid to report abuse because they fear reprisals from guards. The Fluvanna Correctional Center for Women near Charlottesville has 900 inmates and nearly 500 employees.

"We can't assume anything ... until we know the facts," Gilmore told reporters. "So let's go out there and get the facts, and I've directed the secretary of public safety to do that."

American Civil Liberties Union attorney Donna Lee said she knew of no other women's prison with more sexual abuse complaints.

"That's a strong indication of a very serious problem," she said. There are about 140,000 women in U.S. jails and prisons.

**Search for lunar water comes up dry**

**5** WASHINGTON — An attempt to find water on the moon by crashing a used spacecraft into the lunar surface has come up dry, researchers say.

In a report prepared for presentation Wednesday at a meeting of astronomers in Padua, Italy, a researcher from the University of Texas said no water was detected

from the crash of the Lunar Prospector spacecraft into a moon crater.

The Lunar Prospector, which had completed its mission of mapping the moon from lunar orbit, was sent smashing into a crater near the moon's south pole on July 31. Instruments on the spacecraft earlier had detected the presence of hydrogen, suggesting the crater could contain ice. Scientists hoped the violence of the crash would splash up a plume of water-bearing dust.

More than a dozen Earth- and space-based telescopes observed the crash site. Researchers hoped that ultraviolet radiation, shining through the dust plume from the crash, would bear the spectral signature of water. No evidence of water was found, said David Goldstein, the University of Texas researcher who headed the experiment.

"As expected, we didn't make a big splash, or we all would have seen a water signal quickly,"

Goldstein said in a statement.

**U.S. mercy mission planes fly to edge of Antarctica**

**6** CHRISTCHURCH, New Zealand — After a 24-hour delay caused by bad weather, two U.S. military cargo planes flew to the South Pole early Wednesday to prepare to rescue a polar research station's doctor who has a lump in her breast.

Two Air National Guard Hercules LC-130 cargo planes set out for McMurdo base on the northern coast of Antarctica after high winds and swirling snow eased in Antarctica.

When the planes arrive in McMurdo, they must wait until the temperature at the Amundsen-Scott South Pole Station rises above minus 50 degrees Celsius (minus 58 degrees Fahrenheit) before flying there to pick up Dr. Jerri Nielsen.

A replacement doctor for the station and a team of medics to treat Nielsen are on one of the

planes, which are fitted with skis to allow them to land on the ice at Amundsen-Scott base. The base is run by the U.S.-based National Science Foundation.

Nielsen, 44, is the only physician among 41 researchers at the Amundsen-Scott base. She discovered a lump in her breast earlier this year but could not be evacuated because of the harsh polar weather.

**Conservative Austrian party decides against coalition**


**7** VIENNA, Austria — The conservative junior partner in Austria's coalition government decided Tuesday to become an opposition party, a move that may lead to political instability and new elections next year.

The decision, made by leaders of the Austrian People's Party, came only hours after the center-left Social Democrats of Chancellor Viktor Klima had urged the conservatives to reconsider their earlier threat to join the opposition despite their third-place election finish.


The Social Democrats were seeking to prevent the far-right Freedom Party of nationalist Joerg Haider from entering the government — a development that could prompt Israel to break off diplomatic relations with Austria.

If the Social Democrats stick to their motto: "No coalition with the Freedom Party" and the People's Party of Foreign Minister and Vice Chancellor Wolfgang Schuessel indeed goes into opposition, this small neutral country would be without a government, and new elections would have to be held next year. Final results from the Oct. 3 national election announced earlier Tuesday confirmed that the Freedom Party finished second in the balloting.

The Associated Press



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