

News Digest

Time Warner being acquired by AOL for about \$166 billion

1 NEW YORK — Time Warner, the world's largest media and entertainment company, is being acquired by America Online for about \$166 billion in stock in what would be the biggest corporate merger ever.

The merger announced today marks the biggest bet yet that the Internet will be one of the most dominant features in the media landscape of the future.

"This really completes the digital transformation of Time Warner," Time Warner's chairman, Gerald Levin, told analysts in a conference call this morning. "These two companies are a natural fit."

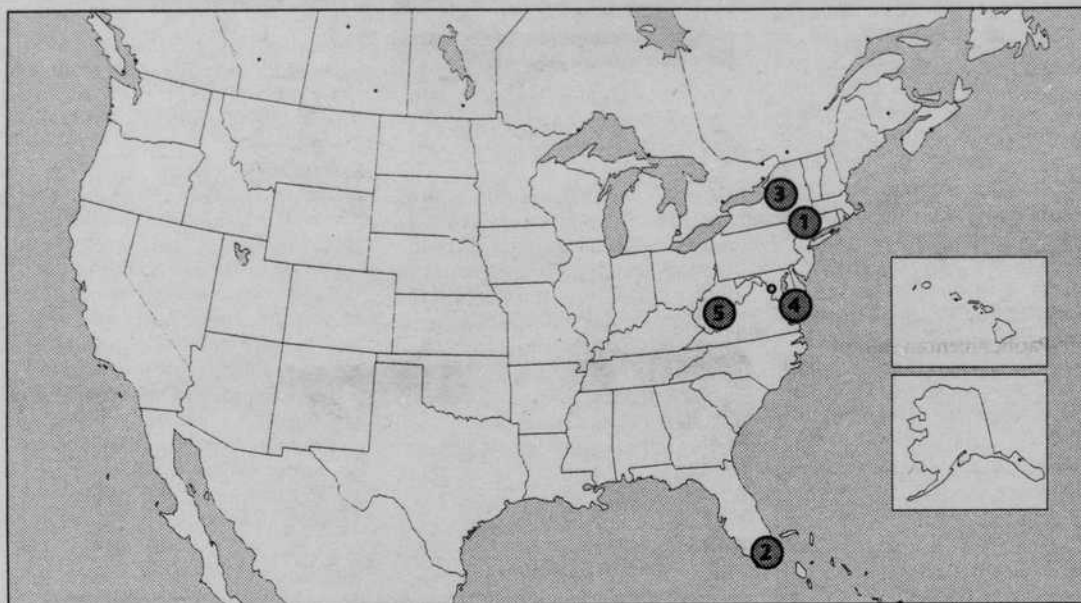
At a time when traditional media companies are struggling to reinvent their Internet strategies, the merger would give Time Warner — the leading provider of media content such as movies, music and magazines — a huge and powerful platform for reaching people online. AOL is the nation's largest online company with some 20 million subscribers.

The deal also gives AOL a key tool for distributing its services: access to Time Warner's large cable network system, the nation's second largest after AT&T's with 13 million cable subscribers.

Judge orders Elian Gonzalez to remain in the United States until March

2 MIAMI — A Florida judge on Monday ordered 6-year-old Elian Gonzalez to remain in the United States until March, a ruling that delighted the Cuban boy's relatives in Miami and defied a federal government order that he be sent back to Cuba by Friday.

Miami-Dade Circuit Judge Rosa Rodriguez issued a temporary protective order so she can hear arguments filed by Elian's Miami relatives, who are seeking temporary custody of him. The order requires Elian to remain in the area



until the March 6 hearing.

Waving a copy of the ruling, Lazaro Gonzalez, the great-uncle who is seeking temporary custody of Elian, yelled "Victory for Elian!" in Spanish before going inside the family's home in Little Havana.

"Today is a great day for Elian," said his attorney, Spencer Eig. "[The ruling] will provide Elian Gonzalez his day in court."

If Lazaro Gonzalez is appointed Elian's guardian, he could seek political asylum for the boy.

Gore announces new money, commitment to combat AIDS

3 UNITED NATIONS — With AIDS the No. 1 killer in sub-Saharan Africa, killing 10 times more Africans than war, Vice President Al Gore pledged Monday to put the continent's AIDS crisis on the world's security agenda and outlined a new U.S. effort to fight the epidemic.

Presiding over the first Security Council meeting to address a health issue, Gore announced that the White House has asked Congress for \$150 million for vaccine research and prevention pro-

grams in Africa and will convene a meeting of business leaders in Africa to start developing prevention programs in the workplace.

"We tend to think of a threat to security in terms of war and peace," Gore said in the first speech by a U.S. vice president to the 15-member body. "Yet no one can doubt that the havoc wreaked and the toll exacted by HIV/AIDS do threaten our security."

AIDS is now the leading killer in sub-Saharan Africa, a region where poverty and wars have already taken a heavy toll. In 1998, 200,000 people died as a result of armed conflicts in Africa, compared to about 2.2 million from AIDS.

U.S. Ambassador Richard Holbrooke scoffed at reporters' suggestions that Gore was using his U.N. appearance to further his campaign for the Democratic nomination for president.

"None of what he's doing here today has any direct impact on the present phase of the primary season, which is intense and being conducted in two states which are far away from here," Holbrooke said.

Clinton urges quick vote on China trade to avoid politics

4 WASHINGTON — President Clinton, stung by the collapse of global trade talks at Seattle, urged Congress to vote "at the earliest possible time" on a trade deal with China to keep it from becoming embroiled in election-year politics.

Clinton launched a drive Monday to line up votes for granting China permanent normal trading relations with the United States as part of a deal to allow the world's most populous nation to join the World Trade Organization.

"This agreement is a good deal for America," the president said. U.S. companies would gain better access to China's market in every sector from agriculture to telecommunications to automobiles as Beijing cuts tariffs on American goods by half or more over five years, he said.

The China agreement likely will be the last major trade initiative of Clinton's presidency. Clinton named Commerce Secretary William Daley and Steve Ricchetti, deputy chief of staff in the White House, to lead the congress-

sional effort.

The campaign faces stiff resistance from organized labor, environmental groups and their Democratic allies, who believe that low wages and lax pollution standards in China will undercut American workers. Religious groups are expected to raise objections about China's human rights problems.

Talks recess with no accord between Israel and Syria

5 SHEPHERDSTOWN, W. Va. — Peace talks between Israel and Syria recessed Monday without agreement on new borders or any other major elements of a land-for-peace treaty despite rigorous American mediation.

As the two delegations packed to go home, State Department spokesman James P. Rubin said they would resume negotiations on Jan. 19, probably in the Washington area. "We are on the right track," he said. He gave no indication how the gaps might be closed quickly.

The basic shape of a treaty has been clear since Prime Minister Ehud Barak took office last July. Israel would surrender virtually all the Golan Heights, a strategic plateau on the Syrian frontier, for peace, provided security measures are found to take the place of the highland Israel has held since the 1967 Six-Day War.

Syria insists on a pullback to the Sea of Galilee, thereby letting it recover a stretch of land it captured in the 1950s. Another scenario would push Israel back to borders set in 1923. Or patches of land might be swapped. But Barak has not specified what line he wants drawn between Israel and an Arab country with which Israel has fought three major wars.

In Tel Aviv, an estimated 100,000 Israelis massed in pouring rain to protest Barak's apparent willingness to cede the Golan Heights for peace with Syria.

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