

WASHINGTON WHISPERS

A lifeline for the U.N. chief?

Although the Clinton administration insists that United Nations Secretary General **Boutros Boutros-Ghali** must go, the Egyptian-born diplomat may soon get two powerful endorsements in his bid for a second term as chief of the world body. Diplomatic sources say that African nations are expected to endorse Boutros-Ghali's candidacy when he attends the 50-member Organization of African Unity summit in Cameroon next week. The meeting is crucial for his beleaguered campaign to remain in office for a second term: If he gets the OAU's backing, the 100-plus members of the non-aligned movement, which includes most African states, are likely to follow suit. A majority of nonaligned countries will defer to the African group, which insists that one of its own, like Boutros-Ghali, should be at the helm of the U.N. In any duel over who should become the U.N. chief, China, which supports Boutros-Ghali and is in the nonaligned corner, can match any American Security Council veto.

FLIGHT DATA

The Pentagon acknowledges that an Air Force C-137 carrying the first Commerce Department delegation overseas since the ill-fated flight of **Ron Brown** to Bosnia had to make an emergency landing late last week in Manila because of "excessive heat" in the cabin. The cause: a malfunctioning air conditioner. But insiders report the incident as harrowing, especially coming so soon after the crash of Brown's flight, which killed 35 people. According to one source, seven passengers sleeping in the front of the plane were rushed to the rear after crew members warned that a fire had broken out. Only two hours before, the plane had carried Commerce Secretary **Mickey Kantor** from Indonesia to Thailand. When the aircraft, carrying mainly Commerce



staffers, made the emergency stop in the Philippines, passengers were seated in crash position—with knees up and head down—and were wearing oxygen masks, the source said. An Air Force official said a faulty valve sent hot air—perhaps as hot as 200 degrees—into the cabin, touching nonflammable material and creating smoke but no flames. The official said the pilot dropped the plane to 10,000 feet, where it flew for an hour before landing. The plane also had problems earlier, including a four-hour delay taking off from Andrews Air Force Base because of oxygen and electronic problems and a delay at a refueling stop in Alaska because of rudder problems. The aircraft was returning from Asia without Kantor because it

was needed for another VIP flight—that of Vice President **Al Gore**.

VEEPSTAKES, PART 2

In the run-up to the Republican convention, more and more interest groups are flogging their favorites for vice president. Here is one list, in order of preference, from a group of Christian conservatives likely to be influential at the San Diego gathering: Rep. **Christopher Cox** of California, Sen. **Rick Santorum** of Pennsylvania and Sen. **John Ashcroft** of Missouri. All are cultural and fiscal conservatives and antiabortion. Cox and Santorum are both Roman Catholics. Ashcroft is a member of the Assembly of God.

THINK AGAIN

Rep. **Steve Gunderson**, the only openly gay Republican member of Congress, is under strong pressure to change his decision not to run for re-election to a ninth term. Weary of the GOP's "growing image of intolerance," Gunderson didn't want to face a primary challenge. Now, however, Wisconsin farmers and agribusiness interests, as well as other gay Republicans, are pressuring him to get back in the

race, and there are growing indications he might do so. The reason: the recent death of Rep. **Bill Emerson** puts Gunderson in line to become chairman of the powerful House Agriculture Committee.

OLD WOUNDS

Poland's new president, **Aleksander Kwasniewski**, arrives in Washington next week in the midst of a new controversy over the credibility of one of America's most respected Holocaust scholars. At issue: the circumstances surrounding the killing more than 50 years ago of two relatives of **Yaffa Eliach**, a professor of Judaic studies at New York's Brooklyn College. During World War II, Eliach and her family were among 29

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ALEXANDER LEONOV, Russia's new security chief, in pledging to crack down on foreigners

Jews from the then Polish village of Ejszyski who were hidden by Christian Poles, enabling them to escape the Nazi slaughter of 4,000 other Jews in the community. After the Germans were driven out of Poland, Eliach says, she and her family returned home, where they were attacked by a band of anti-Semitic Polish partisans on Oct. 20, 1944. According to her recounting of the ordeal, gunmen shot and killed her mother and baby brother as she and a second brother looked on. Eliach, who assembled the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's "Tower of Life," an exhibit of prewar Jewish life in Ejszyski, has devoted decades to documenting the fate of her family and the town's other Jews. But now several Polish-American fringe organizations have accused her of fabricating the tale of her mother's and brother's deaths to defame Poland. They have also launched a

sustained campaign on the Internet to discredit her. As a result, the Polish Ministry of Justice has announced an official investigation into the case and has gotten cooperation from the U.S. Justice Department's Office of Special Investigations. Both Eliach and Michael Berenbaum, director of the Holocaust Museum's Research Institute, insist that her story is true and is backed by numerous witnesses. And what do mainstream Polish-American organizations say? Les Kuczynski, national executive director of the Chicago-based, million-member Polish-American Congress, noted that his group "did not call for the investigation."

TICKET TO RIDE

For \$5,000 a seat, GOP stalwarts can join Bob Dole in his private car aboard the Victory Express, the train he plans to

take to San Diego for the GOP convention. Lower down the scale, a seat in Newt Gingrich's car is a relative bargain: \$1,500. Insiders expect lobbyists will scoop up the big-ticket seats, but other riders can pay \$350 for a place elsewhere on the train. The trip begins August 10 in Oakland, Calif., and will make eight stops to pick up passengers en route to the convention. Rallies will be held along the way in San Luis Obispo and Glendale, Calif., before the train pulls into San Diego. However, don't expect Dole to reap any monetary benefits from the trip — at least not directly. All proceeds will go to the California Republican Party.

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