

National News

Voter argues: 'Punish House coup plotters'

An American residing overseas insisted that the House Managers coup plotters should pay for their crimes, in a letter to *U.S.A. Today* on Feb. 15. "Several of the key House Managers of the impeachment trial committed nothing less than the treasonable offense of attempting a coup d'état to oust the legitimate leader of the U.S.," argued Timothy S. Williams, writing from his residence in Bonn. "Let the national healing begin with the truth. This truth should start with criminal charges against the perpetrators of this trial. . . . Whether anyone has the courage to charge them with their crimes is another matter. For the sake of the nation, I hope someone will," he wrote.

In its editorial, *U.S.A. Today* defended independent counsel Kenneth Starr as "an able prosecutor," citing the fact that he obtained more than a dozen convictions. It insisted that Democrats drop all actions against Starr and that "any review of Starr's conduct should be left to the three-judge panel that appointed him or Judge Norma Holloway Johnson."

Hatch, DOJ take aim at McDade amendment

Senate Judiciary Committee chairman Orrin G. Hatch (R-Utah) has proposed a counter to the "McDade amendment"—the watered-down version of the McDade-Murtha "Citizens Protection Act" which is due to become effective in April—lying that it "would cripple the ability of the Department of Justice to enforce Federal law and cede authority to regulate the conduct of Federal criminal investigations and prosecutions to more than 50 state bar associations." The McDade amendment bypasses the DOJ's notoriously corrupt Office of Professional Responsibility and creates a misconduct review board with power to make public, information concerning investigations, classified material, and other confidential information.

Hatch claimed that because the DOJ

must investigate multi-state cases involving terrorism, drugs, fraud, and organized-crime conspiracies, under the McDade amendment, Justice Department "decisions will be subject to review by the bar and ethics boards in each of these states at the whim of defense counsel, even if the Federal attorney is not licensed in that state." He said his corrective bill would set specific standards for Federal prosecutors to be enforced by the Attorney General. It would establish a commission of Federal judges, appointed by the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, to review and report on the relationship between the duties of Federal prosecutors and regulation of their conduct by state bars and the disciplinary procedures by the Attorney General. The original version of the McDade-Murtha Bill would have placed responsibility for naming such a committee in the hands of the President.

Meanwhile, Deputy Attorney General Eric Holder opened the weekly Justice Department briefing on Feb. 4 with a warning: "In just over two months, the so-called McDade amendment will become law. And as many of you know, this is of great concern to us here at the Justice Department and throughout the law enforcement community. The law would protect the average criminal and not protect the average citizen, and that's because it will handcuff prosecutors by requiring them to comply with a patchwork of contradictory state rules."

Holder, who is featured to speak at Al Gore's Feb. 24-26 conference on "corruption," said the DOJ fully supports Hatch's proposal.

Pennsylvania court: Law holds HMOs to account

The Pennsylvania Supreme Court has ruled that health maintenance organizations (HMOs) can be held legally accountable for negligence, and cannot hide behind Federal law, to avoid responsibility. The case involved a May 1991 incident in which U.S. Healthcare negligently delayed giving authorization to transfer Basile Pappas to a university hospital for treatment of a neurological emergency. The HMO's denial and delay resulted in permanent quadriplegia to Pap-

pas. In its December 1998 ruling, the Pennsylvania Supreme Court set a precedent by finding that HMOs can't avoid liability under the Federal law, Employee Retirement Income Security Act (ERISA), which was intended to provide uniform Federal protection of employee benefit plans. Under ERISA, when a group HMO's actions result in disability or death, the patient or family has no legal right to sue the HMO under state laws.

The Pennsylvania court in *Pappas v. U.S. Healthcare* drew on a 1995 U.S. Supreme Court ruling on ERISA stating: "Nothing in the language of [ERISA] or in the context of its passage indicates that Congress chose to displace general health care regulation, which historically has been a matter of local concern. . . . Congress did not intend to preempt state laws which govern the provision of safe medical care." A concurring opinion cites *Dukes v. U.S. Healthcare*: "Patients enjoy the right to be free from medical malpractice regardless of whether or not their medical care is provided through an ERISA plan. . . . [Q]uality control of benefits, such as the health care benefits provided here, is a field traditionally occupied by state regulation."

U.S. Healthcare has asked for a rehearing of the case.

Robertson cans Christian Coalition's president

The fissures in the Christian Coalition widened dramatically in the wake of Pat Robertson's proclamation in January that the "Get Clinton" impeachment operation had failed. Donald Hodel, who has been president of the Christian Coalition for the past 20 months, was abruptly ousted when he disputed Robertson's remarks that the President's State of the Union speech had "hit a home run" and fatally doomed the impeachment. After Robertson, founder and chairman of the Coalition, repeated his stance that the Republicans had bungled the impeachment case and should accept that the Senate was a "hung jury," Hodel wrote to the founder and chairman of the Christian Coalition, suggesting that he step down and accept a post as chairman emeritus. Instead, Robertson sent Ho-

del a letter accepting Hodel's resignation as president—a resignation that Hodel had never tendered.

According to an unnamed Coalition source cited in the *Washington Times* on Feb. 10, Hodel's conflict with Robertson had started earlier. Hodel reportedly felt that Robertson was making repeated gaffes on the 700 Club TV show, and was seeking expedient political deals at the expense of the Coalition's "moral" agenda. In fact, according to the *Times* story, some Republicans have suggested that Robertson's statements may have been intended to help Senate Republicans make a graceful exit from a prolonged impeachment trial, without incurring the wrath of a unified religious right.

Judge orders CIA, DIA to release 'Diana files'

U.S. District Court Judge Henry Kennedy handed down an order on Feb. 5 for the CIA and the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) to produce documents and to appear for questioning by attorneys for Mohamed Al Fayed, whose son Dodi was killed on Aug. 31, 1997 in the Paris car crash that claimed the life of Princess Diana. The case is still under criminal investigation in France. The order came in response to a motion, filed on behalf of Al Fayed by the Washington law firm Williams and Connolly, demanding that the CIA and DIA agencies release material that could shed light on the circumstances surrounding the crash.

In November 1998, an Internet news service, *APB News*, learned that the National Security Agency (NSA) had more than 1,000 pages of documents on Princess Diana. *APB* had filed a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request with the NSA in June. The NSA has refused to release any documents, claiming that their declassification would reveal U.S. intelligence methods and procedures. The NSA letter to *APB* noted that most of the documents had originated with the CIA and the DIA.

Mohamed Al Fayed, a civil party in the French criminal investigation, filed his Federal court action to obtain the files under a law that allows foreign nationals engaged in court actions abroad to access relevant U.S.

government documents. Judge Kennedy's ruling gave the CIA and the DIA a deadline of Feb. 12, to turn over their files to Williams and Connolly.

Given the formal ties between U.S. and British intelligence services, it is almost certain that any information developed by the CIA, the DIA, or the NSA on the activities of Princess Diana would have been available to the British secret services. Similarly, U.S. agencies have access to many of Britain's top-secret operations, and that may bring about the downfall of Prince Philip and the House of Windsor, if evidence can be brought to light that the royals ordered the murders of Diana and Dodi.

Special Forces 'exercise' terrorizes Texas town

The U.S. Army Special Forces Command acknowledged that helicopter-borne troops from its "Delta Force" counterterrorism section staged a mock attack on Kingsville, Texas, a town of 25,000, on Feb. 8. On Feb. 12, another urban warfare exercise took place in Port Aransas, a town of 2,200. According to the Corpus Christi *Caller-Times*, "about 60 soldiers from Army Special Forces teams based in Fort Bragg, North Carolina, swooped in on eight helicopters for a training assault on abandoned buildings in downtown Kingsville. Explosions and rifle fire startled nearby residents, and the attack caused a fire that gutted an abandoned police building and blew windows out of another building nearby."

According to the *New York Times* of Feb. 16, Maj. Jeff Fanto, spokesman for Army Special Operations Command headquarters at MacDill Air Force Base in Florida, "said the training by the Army's Delta Force . . . was routine. 'They're practicing skills of getting in and out of urban areas and special operations they're responsible for,' Major Fanto said."

A spokesman for the Kingsville police department, which cooperated with the Army on the mock attack, told *EIR* that the fire started when soldiers were cutting through the bars of an abandoned jail cell, practicing prisoner liberation.

SEN. TRENT LOTT kicked off a series of Republican "town meetings," on Feb. 15 in Warren, Michigan, which aim to get the GOP out from under the party-of-Monica-Lewinsky scandal. The party plans 150 town meetings, to thump the tub for a 10% tax cut in "this era of budget surplus." The Senate Majority Leader ranted that "Washington has a moral duty and fiscal responsibility to lower American taxes."

CONSERVATIVE revolutionary Rep. John Kasich (R-Ohio) announced Feb. 15 he will seek the Republican Presidential nomination. Chairman of the House Budget Committee, Kasich called for running America "from the bottom up," through tax cuts and budget austerity.

THE NEW YORK TIMES on Feb. 6 finally reported on the scandal that House Majority Whip Tom DeLay (R-Tex.) may have committed perjury in a 1994 Texas civil case. The story first appeared in the *New Republic*, and involves false statements by DeLay concerning a suit against the Albo Pest Control Co., where he was chairman. In deposition, DeLay said he was not chairman of Albo, but later listed that as his post in his official Congressional earnings filings.

THE FBI in Richmond, Virginia announced the creation of a "corruption hot line" on Feb. 2, only hours after a black Richmond City Councilman, Rev. Leonidas B. Young, pleaded guilty to corruption charges. The local FBI special agent in charge told a press conference that area residents can call the "corruption hot line," to make allegations of criminal wrongdoing by any public official. He denied any FBI targeting of black officials.

MISSOURI prosecutor Jim Justus wants to try former death row inmate Darrell Mease for murder again. Mease's sentence was commuted by Gov. Mel Carnahan at the request of Pope John Paul II, during his St. Louis visit. Justus was angry at having been cheated of his death sentence.