

# National News

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## U.S. and China move to restore military ties

U.S. Secretary of Defense William Cohen indicated at a press conference on Nov. 4, that China and the United States had been conducting negotiations to restart the military-to-military ties that had been severed after NATO warplanes bombed the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade on May 7.

The Chinese "have indicated that they would like to re-establish those contacts," Cohen told reporters at the Pentagon. "We do hope to re-establish the kind of military-to-military contacts that we had prior to the incident."

Secretary Cohen said that he would like to have exchange visits with Chinese Defense Minister Chi Haotian, but indicated that no concrete steps for this had yet been agreed upon. However, Pentagon spokesman Ken Bacon told reporters that a Pentagon team, headed by Deputy Defense Secretary Kurt Campbell, planned to visit Beijing later in November to explore ties that could result in the visit of a high-level Chinese military delegation to the United States in December or January. Cohen had originally planned to visit China in June, but the trip was cancelled after the Chinese Embassy bombing.

A U.S. destroyer visited the port of Hong Kong at the invitation of the Beijing government early in November.

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## Spotlight on rights violations in Virginia

Amnesty International has called for an investigation of treatment of prisoners at Wallens Ridge, Virginia, the *Richmond Times-Dispatch* reported on Nov. 5. The "supermax" prison was set up during the current administration of Gov. James Gilmore.

The call for an investigation was triggered by complaints from New Mexico inmates, who were sent to this prison as punishment. The inmates said that they were subjected by guards to electroshock hazings and brutal "initiation rites."

Both Virginian and New Mexican officials called the allegations "exaggerations of

the truth."

Complaints have previously been filed against mistreatment of prisoners at Red Onion, the other supermax prison. A call by Human Rights Watch was rebuffed, and two suits have been filed against Department of Corrections director Ronald Angelone.

Connecticut is planning to send 500 prisoners to Wallens Ridge. Virginia has prison space to spare.

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## Record executions by Bushes, Gilmore

*EIR* has reviewed the killing records of avowed "compassionate conservatives" Texas Gov. George W. Bush, Florida Gov. Jeb Bush, and Virginia Gov. James Gilmore. The hypocrisy of their claim to compassion is breathtaking.

With Texas, Florida, and Virginia in the lead, the United States as a whole is on course, with 83 executions to date this year, to setting a record for the greatest number of executions since 1954, while 3,600 men and women await execution in the nation's prisons.

Texas has executed more than 100 people since Bush became governor in 1995, more executions than under all other governors combined since the death penalty was reinstated there 1982. Texas has carried out 184 executions since 1982.

Virginia's Gilmore, with 14 executions this year to date (the state's record of 17 in a year was achieved in 1909), has never granted clemency to a single death-row inmate. Virginia's courts, with his support as governor, and before that, as Attorney General, are also leading the nation in their refusal to find reversible error in death row appeals. While state supreme courts and Federal appeals courts find such error in 63% of death sentences nationwide, the Virginia figure is just 14%. Virginia's Fourth Circuit is known as the "black hole" of death penalty cases, with not a single appeal stayed, out of 26 that have reached it in the past seven years.

The U.S. Supreme Court has agreed to hear four crucial death penalty appeals this term. Three of them are from Virginia (whether state appeals to Federal courts should be drastically curtailed), and one is from Florida (whether use of the electric

chair is Constitutional). Gilmore, joined by both Bushes and 32 other governors, wants the court to rule in favor of dramatically reducing the role of the Federal courts in cases involving prisoner allegations that their Constitutional rights have been breached.

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## Pentagon backed off from cyber-warfare

Plans to use computer hacking and other electronic attacks against Yugoslavia during the war there, so as to crash trains, open dam floodgates, and generally demolish civil society, were deterred by warnings from Defense Department attorneys that this could subject the U.S. officials to war crimes charges, the *Washington Post* reported on Nov. 8.

A legal-guidelines report, "An Assessment of International Legal Issues in Information Operations," issued midway through the war against Yugoslavia, while cyber-warfare planning was being completed, described some specific actions as war crimes, and warned that officers must use the same legal considerations for such weapons as for bomb and missile attacks. The destruction of financial systems, the false broadcast by a "morphed" TV image of the enemy's leader saying that a cease-fire is in effect, the release of radioactivity on civilian populations by the wrecking of nuclear safety systems, are among those actions warned against. The *Washington Post* says that the Pentagon reports such actions were never carried out.

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## Even Zionist lobby is angry at Al Gore

The hard-core Zionist lobby weekly *The Forward*, in its lead editorial of Oct. 29, headlined "Al of Arabia," assailed the Vice President for his announcement that he would ban all U.S. offshore oil drilling—including drilling rigs already up and running. While acknowledging Al's longstanding loyalty to the Jewish community, including his "standing up against the Rev. Jesse Jackson's demagoguery in New

York," *The Forward* warned, "But Mr. Gore's vow that if elected President he would ban any new offshore drilling for oil and gas along the California and Florida coasts . . . is enough to make one wonder just what star he's steering by. It's been barely a generation since the Organization of Arab [sic] Petroleum Exporting Countries mounted the oil embargo that nearly brought America to its knees. It was in reaction to that attack on our economy—an attack motivated by the Arab hatred of Israel—that our country began seriously to step up development of domestic sources of oil."

*The Forward* noted that American offshore oil drilling sites have higher environmental standards than any others, and their expansion led to a drop in the price of oil. "For Mr. Gore to pipe up at this juncture with a proposal to ban offshore drilling in some of our most promising waters—a ban that would balloon our trade deficit and force us back into the arms of the Arabs—can only be seen as lunacy. Or as a signal that Mr. Gore will do anything to placate any bloc of likely supporters, in this case the environmentalist wing of the California and Florida primary voters. Either way, his vow on offshore drilling suggests a candidate adrift."

## EPA, DOJ sue seven electric utilities

The Environmental Protection Agency and the Department of Justice filed suit on Nov. 3 against seven large U.S. electric utilities, alleging that the companies have been upgrading their coal-fired plants without adding modern pollution controls, as required by the Clean Air Act of 1970. The seven are American Electric Power Co., Cinergy Corp., FirstEnergy Corp., Illinova Corp., Southern Co., TECO Energy Inc. and Southern Indiana Gas & Electric Co. The EPA also filed an administrative order against the Tennessee Valley Authority, a government-owned corporation, charging similar violations. The charges involve 32 plants in West Virginia, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Mississippi, Ohio, Tennessee, and Alabama.

"Today we file the first complaints in one of the largest investigations in the history of EPA, launched two years ago and still ongoing," said EPA Administrator Carol M.

Browner at a Nov. 3 press conference reported in the *Washington Post*. Attorney General Janet Reno added, "We are asking Federal courts in five cities to force these utilities to install the pollution controls they should have installed years ago."

The companies argue that they have merely been doing routine maintenance at the plants, hence the newer pollution controls are not required. They disputed what they called EPA's "new interpretation" of the Clean Air Act. Dale Heydlauff, American Electric Power's vice president for environmental affairs, said the lawsuits "take decades of industry maintenance and repair practices previously deemed acceptable by EPA and retroactively convert them to unlawful activities."

"These utilities have been cheating on a decades-old agreement with the American public," said Mike Casey of the Washington-based Environmental Working Group. "They were let off the hook in terms of key air pollution standards on the understanding they would not upgrade their facilities. And that is what they have been doing, but they have been categorizing it as routine maintenance."

## Albright courts Serbian opposition

Secretary of State Madeleine Albright met with half a dozen Serbian opposition leaders at the State Department on Nov. 3, and announced afterwards that the United States would be willing to see sanctions against Yugoslavia lifted if there were "free and fair elections." She told reporters that under no circumstances would Milosevic win, if elections were free and fair. Asked why she was so certain that Milosevic could not win, she snapped, "If my mother had wheels, she'd be a bicycle. But that's not going to happen, either."

After the State Department meeting, the delegation met with National Security Adviser Sandy Berger at the White House. The administration, according to some news accounts, is considering approving the shipment of "humanitarian" heating oil to a number of Serb towns controlled by opposition forces. The shipments have been pledged by the European Union.

**BILL BRADLEY** accused Al Gore of "abandoning that fundamental Democratic principle of universal health care for all Americans," after the defeat of the administration's health-care plan in 1994. "In the case of health care, Al Gore decided it wasn't worth standing and fighting," Bradley said on Nov. 8, accusing the Vice President of retreating into "small, symbolic things."

**ONE MILLION** California children under five years of age live in poverty (28.6%), according to a report released on Nov. 8 by the Oakland-based group Children Now. The study is based on 1995 data (the latest available), when the Federal poverty level for a family of four was an annual income of \$15,150, or below \$12,400 for a family of three.

**MIT** and Britain's Cambridge University are forming a partnership, the Cambridge-MIT Institute—a project which is 80% funded by the British government, and 20% by British private businesses. MIT President Charles M. Vest said the intention is "to educate the future leaders of the global economy." The institute will create a joint curriculum, eventually involving all of MIT.

**WILLIAM WELD**, the former Massachusetts governor and "Get LaRouche" prosecutor, is a prominent player in the education-for-profit "industry," according to a New York Times News Service story published in the *Richmond Times-Dispatch* on Nov. 5. The idea is to turn the \$700 billion education sector into "the next health care"—a milk cow for corporate looting.

**G.W. BUSH** said he would reappoint Alan Greenspan as chairman of the Federal Reserve, if elected President, according to an interview in *Red Herring* magazine. "I think Alan Greenspan has done a good job," he said. Bush, whose fortune was made entirely through the political-banker channels of his father, commented, "It's important not to politicize Federal Reserve decisions."