



IN THE NEWS

Top stories from the state, nation and world

'Freemen' Stand-Off Moves Into Second Week

JORDAN, Mont. — The Freemen, who are holed up on an isolated farm where they claim to have their own legal system, should surrender and face an established court, a leader of another militant group said Sunday.

Others urged that outsiders stay away and not get involved in the stand-off between federal authorities and the Freemen, barricaded on a wheat farm on the snow-covered prairie of east-central Montana.

More than 100 FBI agents have been keeping watch on the Freemen's compound, 30 miles outside Jordan, since two leaders of the group were arrested on March 25.

A third member of the group surrendered Saturday. Authorities won't say how many people are still at the farm, but 14 of them are believed to be wanted on various state and federal charges.

Neighbors said the Freemen have built bunkers and have openly stockpiled food, fuel and weapons — including possibly military armaments.

FBI agents have twice stopped a pair of sympathizers trying to reach the farm.

"Stay home, and let the negotiators and the people on the site handle this problem, so we don't have a Waco or a Ruby Ridge," John Parsons of the Tri-State Militia of South Dakota said Sunday.

"The key thing here is that we need a peaceful solution to this problem. They need to come out and face their forum in a court of law and state their problems in a court of law under a system that is just," Parsons said on ABC's "This Week With David Brinkley."

The Freemen deny the legitimacy of the government. Members call their compound, a cluster of houses and other buildings on a 960-acre wheat farm, "Justus Township" and insist they have their own laws and their own courts.

Clinton Urges Senate To Raise Minimum Wage

WASHINGTON, D.C. — President Clinton pressed the Republican-controlled Senate on Saturday to stop blocking a vote on raising the minimum wage because "we should not leave behind anyone who is willing to work hard."

Making the case in personal terms,

Clinton said that while a senator's pay has increased by a third over the past five years, the wages of millions of American workers have been stuck at \$4.25 an hour.

"It's hard to raise a family on \$4.25 an hour," Clinton said in his weekly radio address. "We must make sure the minimum wage is a living wage."

Clinton and congressional Democrats propose to raise the minimum wage to \$5.15 in two 45-cent steps over the next two years.

As it stands, Clinton said, the purchasing power of the minimum wage will fall to a 40-year low this year if Congress does not act.

On Thursday, in a 55-45 roll call, Democrats fell five votes short of the 60 needed to shut off Senate debate and force a vote on an amendment to boost the minimum wage.

During the debate, Republicans accused the Democrats of raising the issue to embarrass Senate Majority Leader Bob Dole, Clinton's certain opponent in the November election.

Beijing Police Prevent Amy Tan From Speaking

BEIJING — Chinese police prevented American author Amy Tan from speaking at a fund-raising dinner, apparently because the event was on behalf of Chinese orphans, organizers said Sunday.

Police first asked the Inn Lido to cancel the Saturday night dinner benefiting the Wisconsin-based Philip Hayden Foundation because of permit violations, hosts and guests said.

The authorities then allowed it as long as Tan would not speak. Decorations for the charity were removed and the 450 guests were divided among three rooms.

"Hotels like the Lido have big events full of foreigners all the time," said an organizer, who spoke on condition of anonymity. "They don't close things down because of a permit violation."

China's treatment of orphans became a sensitive subject for the government last year after reports by British television and a human rights group raised questions about high death rates at state-run homes for orphans.

The U.S.-based Human Rights Watch-Asia accused the government of condoning the children's mistreatment and neglect to keep down the number of orphans under state care.

It was not known whether Tan, best known for her best-selling novel "The Joy Luck Club" and the movie it inspired, planned to talk about orphans in her speech. Tan circulated among the tables in the ballroom but did not take to the podium.

World Christians Journey To Israel for Palm Sunday

JERUSALEM — Christian pilgrims from around the world marked Palm Sunday with a procession down the slope of

the biblical Mount of Olives — the path Jesus rode into Jerusalem in the days before his crucifixion.

Carrying palm fronds and olive branches, several hundred worshippers chanted prayers and sang "Hosanna" and "Hallelujah."

They passed through the Garden of Gethsemane to St. Ann's Church inside the walled Old City.

The pilgrims said they were not deterred by the series of suicide bombings that killed 62 people in Israel, including four bombers, since Feb. 25.

Some said their faith and belief in God gave them the strength to fight fear. "If I were to die today, I'd know I'd be in God's hands," said Dorothy Hutchinson, 61, from Leicester, England.

Palm Sunday marks Jesus' triumphant entrance into Jerusalem from Jericho on a white donkey the Sunday before his crucifixion, when his followers laid palm branches in his path.

The day begins the Catholic church's most solemn period, the week that ends with Easter next Sunday.

The Eastern Orthodox Church, which follows a different calendar, celebrates Palm Sunday next week and Easter the following Sunday.

Pilgrims from three Atlanta churches waited in line outside the 800-year-old Church of the Holy Sepulcher, built on the site where many Christians believe Jesus was buried and resurrected.

K-Mart Protesters Stage Saturday March and Rally

GREENSBORO — About 300 K-mart workers, union activists, local ministers and college students staged a march, rally and display of civil disobedience Saturday designed to keep their fight with the retailer in the public eye.

The crowd was twice as large as any previous K-mart protests in Greensboro and came one week after supporters picketed K-mart stores from Cleveland to Houston.

After the hour-long rally, protesters traveled by bus to a Super K-mart Center, where 18 people were arrested and charged with trespassing.

After forming a circle in the parking lot and singing spirituals, the group was calmly led away by police.

Workers at the city's distribution center have been fighting since 1993 for a contract guaranteeing higher wages and better working conditions. K-mart recently gave workers a 50-cent raise, bringing top pay at the center to \$9 an hour.

K-mart managers at the Super K-mart declined to comment, instead handing out a prepared statement criticizing the union's tactics, which they described as "confrontational."

The statement reiterates K-mart's position that the company pays a competitive market wage.

FROM WIRE REPORTS

Yeltsin Calls for End to Combat In Chechnya, Offers No Specifics

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS
MOSCOW — Desperate to show voters that he would stop the war that has been sinking his presidency, Boris Yeltsin on Sunday announced a halt to combat operations in Chechnya, a limited withdrawal of troops and a willingness to hold indirect talks with the rebels' leader.

But his long-promised peace plan stopped short of promising an end to the fighting and left scant hope for an imminent settlement.

Yeltsin refused to budge on the separatists' two main demands — full withdrawal of Russian troops and independence for Chechnya — and his tone was more tough than conciliatory.

"Without doubt, we will not put up with terrorist acts and we will respond to them adequately," Yeltsin said in taped remarks broadcast Sunday night.

The announcement came just 11 weeks before Russia's presidential election, with the unpopular Yeltsin trailing Communist Gennady Zyuganov and with voters demanding an end to the bloodshed in Chechnya.

It also capped a month of withering air and ground attacks on Chechen strongholds, apparently intended to push the rebels into the southern mountains before the plan was announced.

Thousands of troops were reportedly continuing large-scale operations Sunday in eight sealed-off mountain villages of southeastern Chechnya, and Yeltsin's open-ended statement left it unclear what would become of troops in such hot spots.

The announcement was met with skepticism by politicians, analysts and even Russia's military commander in Chechnya, who cast doubt on the feasibility of the unilateral cease-fire, which Yeltsin said would begin within hours.

"It's unlikely that combat operations will be stopped right after the president's statement," Gen. Vyacheslav Tikhomirov told NTV Independent Television from Chechnya. "You understand, it's impossible."

A series of broken promises and defied orders throughout the 16-month-old war have raised questions both about Yeltsin's intentions and his control of the army.



Russian President **BORIS YELTSIN** indicated he might speak with rebel Chechen leaders.

His Security Council declared the military operation in Chechnya to be effectively completed as of Jan. 25, 1995. But fighting has raged on for another 14 months and the death toll is now estimated at over 30,000. Most of those killed were civilians.

Reading a statement at his desk, a Russian flag at his side, Yeltsin declared a unilateral cease-fire in Chechnya starting at midnight Sunday, along with unspecified, phased withdrawals "from the tranquil areas of Chechnya to its administrative borders."

He said democratic elections for a new Chechen parliament would be held and he was prepared to hold talks with those loyal to rebel leader Dzhokhar Dudayev "through go-betweens."

Talks last year with rebel officials failed and the Kremlin has refused to negotiate with Dudayev. Yeltsin appeared to signal some flexibility in linking the rebel leader's name to talks and he acknowledged in follow-up questions by three Russian TV anchors that Dudayev enjoys "certain, though not quite unsullied, influence" among Chechens.

Yeltsin said Moscow would try to give Chechnya as much autonomy as possible — "more than to any other republic." He said Russia did not fear the autonomy of its regions as long as they were peaceful.

Many Blacks Throw Support to Sanders

Leading black Democrats say they don't believe Gantt can beat Jesse Helms.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS
FAYETTEVILLE — Black Democrats who rallied behind Harvey Gantt six years ago are throwing their support behind his opponent, and race is the reason.

Gantt, who is black, lost to Jesse Helms in the last election and is jockeying for a second run against North Carolina's Republican senator. But much of the support he received from the black community may go to his white opponent Charlie Sanders.

Marion "Rex" Harris, a heavyweight in Fayetteville's minority community, is among those who have defected to the Sanders camp.

"No black will beat Jesse Helms," Harris said as Sanders campaigned on a gospel radio station catering to black listeners. "I think many of us feel he has the chance to beat Jesse Helms."

The race sentiment is echoed among black leaders in other communities across North Carolina, where some 696,328 African Americans are registered to vote. That's about 18 percent of the state's voting population.

"You've got a lot of folks who don't like Jesse, but they're not going to vote for a black man," N.C. Rep. Mickey Michaux, a 10-term Democrat from Durham, told

the Morning Star of Wilmington. "A white Democrat would have an easier time beating Jesse Helms."

Some complain Gantt, 53, faded into the woodwork after the 1990 election, largely ignoring blacks who stuffed envelopes, handed out bumper stickers and raised money in support of him.

"They said that he never once dropped a postcard or picked up the phone to thank them," said N.C. Rep. Thomas Wright, a second-term Democrat from Wilmington. "People take it personally."

Gantt defends the past six years, saying he's been busy running his architectural firm and rearing his children for college, while taking time to speak before churches, Democratic Party organizations and service clubs.

After the radio talk show, Harris wasted little time seeing to it that Sanders, 64, met influential black leaders associated with the minority-owned United National Bank.

"He's the one who's going to beat Jesse Helms for us," Harris told William Pratt, a bank worker who can drum up a lot of votes as leader of a statewide Masonic organization.

It's estimated that blacks will make up 25 percent of the primary vote in North Carolina, a large enough chunk to swing the May primary. Sanders insists the issues he talks about on the campaign trail — such as health care, education and the economy — are colorblind.

"I think what North Carolinians, whether black or white, have to decide is

who is going to be able to beat Jesse Helms," Sanders said. "Harvey ran a great race in 1990. He came close, but he didn't win. I don't think he can win in 1996."

Doug Heyl, Sanders' campaign manager, said Gantt lost in 1990 not because of his race but because he didn't respond to race-based allegations and criticism from Helms. The incumbent won with 53 percent of the vote.

Six years later, Gantt casts aside the idea that a black man cannot beat Helms. "People have been saying that all my life," he said. "They've said, 'I don't think a black man can go to Clemson. I don't think a black man can be mayor of Charlotte. I don't think a black man can be the Democratic nominee for U.S. Senate.'"

As for ignoring voters, Gantt says the fact that he didn't spend six years actively campaigning won't hurt him when voters go to the polls May 7. "I don't feel like I'm losing support from the African-American community," he said.

In some pockets of the state, that appears true. "Nobody up this way knows Sanders," said N.C. Rep. Howard Hunter, a Democrat whose district skirts the Virginia line in the northeastern part of the state. "Gantt is a household name."

Lori Ann Harris, executive director of the N.C. Legislative Black Caucus Foundation and research director for Gantt's 1990 campaign, agrees with voters who say Sanders has a better chance of beating Helms. "In the final analysis, it's going to be an issue of race," she said.

SPECIAL ADVANCE SCREENING

Martin Lawrence

Lynn Whitfield

A Thin Line Between Love & Hate

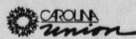
While some women are waiting to exhale, this one is ready to get even.

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