

Cheney Endorses 3 Nations' NATO Ambitions

DUBROVNIK, Croatia, May 7—Vice President Dick Cheney on Sunday endorsed the NATO membership aspirations of Croatia, Albania and Macedonia, and said they can "help us rededicate ourselves to the basic and fundamental values of freedom and democracy," AP said.

"The Adriatic Charter countries have expressed a desire to fully join the trans-Atlantic community, and we support that," the vice president said as he sat down for talks with leaders of the three nations.

Seated at a diamond-shaped table with Croatian Prime Minister Ivo Sanader, Albanian Prime Minister Sali Berisha and Macedonian Prime Minister Vlado Buckovski, Cheney thanked all three for their help in the war on terror.

"We deeply appreciate the fact that all of you are already engaged alongside NATO and US forces in places like Afghanistan and Iraq," he said. Albania and Macedonia have small contingents in Iraq.

Cheney spoke as he neared the end of a three-nation trip that placed



(L-R) Albanian Prime Minister Sali Berisha, US Vice President Dick Cheney, Croatian Prime Minister Ivo Sanader and Macedonian Prime Minister Vlado Buckovski, stand during the Adriatic Charter meeting in Dubrovnik, May 7. (Reuters Photo)

heavy emphasis on democratic reform in areas that either were part of the Soviet Union during the Cold War or lay in the Kremlin's long shadow.

The vice president and his wife were to fly back to Washington during the day after deciding to return home ahead of schedule. Aides attrib-

uted the change in plans to purely personal reasons.

The United States has long encouraged NATO aspirations for Croatia, Albania and Macedonia, and former Secretary of State Colin Powell traveled two years ago to Tirana for the signing of the Adriatic Charter.

"It's very important both for NATO and the EU to take in new members," Cheney said. "You who aspire to these organizations help rejuvenate it and rededicate ourselves to the basic and fundamental values of freedom and democracy and are a very important part of our collective security."

Japan, US to Develop Supersonic Jet

TOKYO, May 7—Japanese and US aerospace agencies and companies plan to develop a low-noise, fuel-efficient supersonic jet to take off where the Anglo-French Concorde ended, a press report said Sunday.

The Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA) and its giant US counterpart NASA will work out the details of the joint program in June, the business daily Nihon Keizai Shimbun reported, without naming its sources.

The two sides, who plan to form a consor-

tium with several Japanese aerospace makers and US Boeing Co., will then launch joint research on the project sometime in the summer, AFP quoted the daily as saying.

The research and development cost of the Japan-US project is estimated to reach "several hundred" billion yen, the daily added.

Currently, one hundred billion yen is worth some \$880 million.

Japan already agreed with France last year on conducting joint research on supersonic

transport, and the new project with the United States will help further propel its drive into the global aviation market, it said.

Japanese companies succeeded last year in flying a small supersonic jet prototype on a trial basis, prompting the US side to sound them out on the joint project, according to the Nihon Keizai.

There has been no supersonic jet in commercial service since Concorde bowed out in late 2003 after nearly 28 years in the skies.

Obasanjo's Third-Term Bid May Tear Nigeria Apart

LAGOS, Nigeria, May 7—Nigeria, Africa's most populous country, may be thrown into chaos and instability if plans to extend the tenure of President Olusegun Obasanjo beyond 2007 succeed, AFP quoted politicians and analysts as saying.

The Nigerian parliament, the National Assembly, this week began debating a package of constitutional reforms which would allow Obasanjo to run for a third term in office.

Under Nigeria's 1999 constitution the president must step down next year

after serving two four-year mandates, but his supporters have submitted a bill which they hope will prolong his rule.

The plan has drawn outrage from the opposition, organizers have and a large swathe of the public. It has also split the ruling party, with supporters of Vice President Atiku Abubakar now bitterly opposed to their former allies.

"The plot is doomed to fail. It is a still-born because 99 percent of Nigerians are against tenure elongation," opposition leader and rights activist Gani Fawehinmi told AFP Saturday.

"What is happening in the National Assembly, the rowdiness and the fighting is a reflection of the people's rejection of the evil agenda," he said.

"But if it is eventually carried because the government is using money, oil blocs and other inducements to get the legislators to pass the bill, Nigeria will engulf in chaos and crisis of monumental proportions," he said.

Chavez Seeking 25-Year Tenure

CARACAS, Venezuela, May 7—President Hugo Chavez said that Venezuelan voters should have the chance to decide whether he should govern the country for the next 25 years, AP said.

Speaking at a stadium packed with supporters in central Lara state, Chavez said he would hold a referendum to put the question of his remaining in office to Venezuelans if the opposition pulls out of upcoming presidential elections.

"I am going to ask you, all the people, if you agree with Chavez being president until 2031," he said.

It was not clear if Chavez was talking about holding a legally binding vote to eliminate term limits or proposing a plebiscite.

Chavez said Friday that he said he might seek "indefinite" reelection through a referendum if the opposition boycotts the presidential vote.

"I would call a national referendum to have the

people decide if I can continue here indefinitely or if I have to go after six years," he said.

Opposition leaders accuse Chavez, a former paratroop commander first elected in 1998, of becoming increasingly authoritarian and opening dangerous divisions along class lines in Venezuela—the world's fifth largest oil exporter.

The Venezuelan Constitution allows a president to be reelected only once in immediate succession. Chavez is eli-

gible for reelection to another six-year term in December, but if he wins he would not be able to run again in 2012.

Polls indicate Chavez is likely to win the Dec. 3 election, and international observers have signed off on recent votes as fair.

Four government opponents have announced plans to run against Chavez, although not all have agreed to participate in primaries to choose a single opposition candidate.

Malaysia Will Establish Anti-Cyber-Terrorism Center

KUALA LUMPUR, Malaysia, May 7—Malaysia is to establish an international center to fight cyber-terrorism, providing an emergency response to high-tech attacks on economies and trading systems around the globe, reports said Sunday.

Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said during a visit to the United States that the facility, sited at the high-tech hub of Cyberjaya outside Kuala Lumpur, would be funded and supported by governments

and the private sector, AFP reported.

The New Straits Times said the center would be modeled on the Center for Disease Control in Atlanta, which helps handle outbreaks of disease around the world.

Abdullah—who announced the initiative at the close of the World Congress on Information Technology in Austin, Texas—said the threat of cyber-terrorism was too serious for governments to ignore.

"The potential to wreak havoc and cause disrup-

tion to people, governments and global systems has increased as the world becomes more globalized," he said according to the daily.

"The economic loss caused by a cyber attack can be truly severe, for example, a nationwide blackout, collapse of trading systems or the crippling of a central bank's cheque clearing system," he said.

"It is imperative that countries throughout the world work in concert to wipe out this danger." Abdullah said that big

names including Symantec Corp. of the United States, Japan's Micro and Russia's Kaspersky Lab had agreed to take part in the "International Multilateral Partnership Against Cyber-Terrorism" (IMPACT).

In another boost for the Southeast Asian nation, which has gone to great lengths to develop its information-technology sector, computer giant Dell Inc. said it would set up a technology and development center in Cyberjaya.

Analysts:

Thai King Wants Democracy, Not Intervention

BANGKOK, Thailand, May 7—Thais breathed easier when their king intervened in a months-long political crisis, but analysts say the world's longest-reigning monarch wants them to turn to democracy not him for a solution, AFP said.

Influential King Bhumibol Adulyadej sparked a frenzy of activity after his speech late last month on the crisis that has sent tens of thousands into the

streets and led prime minister Thaksin Shinawatra to step aside.

In a televised speech, he branded controversial snap polls that were boycotted by the opposition "undemocratic." And he called opposition requests for him to name a new prime minister "irrational".

Instead he ordered the judiciary to break the deadlock that has left parliament unable to convene to form a new government, warning

their jobs were on the line if they could not find a legal remedy.

"You cannot think in haste and pass the buck to the king..." he said.

Warring parties and leaders of the anti-Thaksin protests suddenly committed to compromise, agreeing to take part in any new elections.

And the courts themselves jolted into action. One will rule Monday morning on the validity of the polls, which could pave the way for fresh ones.

"If this was a fully functioning democracy, the king would not have needed to do this," said political scientist Michael Nelson, a visiting scholar at Chulalongkorn University.

"But Thailand does



Bhumibol Adulyadej

things differently, it's not an ideal democracy." James Klein, head of the Asia Foundation in Thailand, said the country "has got used to relying on its king," although other nations also looked to figureheads in times of crisis.

WORLD News In Brief

Final Summons

DAMASCUS—Syria has issued a final summons for former vice president Abdel Halim Khaddam, branded a traitor by Damascus and currently living in exile in France, to appear in court. Khaddam and 24 other family members including his wife Najat Marqabi have been called to appear in court in his hometown of Banias in northwestern Syria in June.

Peace Talks Plea

KATHMANDU—Nepal's Maoist leader has urged the new government, which wrested power from King Gyanendra last month, to begin peace talks as soon as possible and warned that the rebels would fight on if need be.

Under Pressure

LONDON—British Prime Minister Tony Blair was under pressure on Sunday from parts of his ruling Labour Party to say when he will throw in the towel after dismal results in local elections.

Military Deployment

COPENHAGEN—Support for Denmark's military deployment in Iraq remains strong, a poll carried out for news think-tank Mandag Morgen on Sunday showed.

Get Many Years Younger And Stay Young

Khanhah Moo

The First Institute Of Hair Treatment in Iran

Tel: 88800280, 88908423, 88899828, 88893123

Address: Vahid-e Arsh St., next to Africa Cinema
Email: khaneh_c_moo@hotmail.com

Iranside Aluminum Contractors of Aluminum Projects in Buildings

Aluminum door and windows, glass and aluminum facade, composite-panel facade, suspended ceiling and aluminum net

Address: No: 14, 10th Golestan Street, Bijan Boulevard, North Majdideh, Tehran, Iran
iranside@yahoo.com

email: 021 22 32 48 30

Fax: 021 22 32 48 31

Tel.: 021 22 51 74 22

Mobile: 0912 116 67 54