

# U.S. Navy prepares to end latest bombing practice

By The Associated Press  
INTERNATIONAL

VIEQUES, Puerto Rico — The U.S. Navy gave up more than a third of its land on Vieques and prepared to end its latest round of bombing practice on the Puerto Rican island. Opponents were unapaised and pressed on with their protests.

The transfer of 8,100 acres on Monday was part of an agreement reached last year between the White House and the U.S. territory to quell rising tensions over the bombing exercises.

"It represents a great opportunity for the Navy to demonstrate we are great neighbors on Vieques," said Lt. Jeff Gordon, a Navy spokesman.

But protesters — who have put themselves in the line of fire of the inert bombs to delay exercises daily since they began Friday — continued demonstrating, calling for the Navy to leave for good.

The Navy says the range provides unique training that saves American lives in combat. It denies the claims of opponents that 60 years of bombing and shelling have harmed islanders' health.

More than 140 protesters have been arrested since Thursday. Many were charged Monday with trespassing on federal property and ordered to pay bail ranging from \$3,000 for first-time of-

## ap news capsules

fenders on Vieques to \$10,000 for those convicted in previous protests.

**NATIONAL**  
SAN FRANCISCO — The city's Board of Supervisors has approved a measure that will make San Francisco the only city in the nation to pay for employees' sex-change operations.

The measure offering benefits to city workers who want to switch their gender passed the board 9-2 Monday and awaits the signature of Mayor Willie Brown, who has said he supports it.

"It is landmark legislation," Supervisor Mark Leno said. "This is not like losing one's hair."

San Francisco will apparently be the only governmental body in the nation to make the benefits available. The state of Minnesota offered similar benefits but the program was phased out in 1998. Oregon decided against offering benefits in 1999.

An audience filled with transgenders and supporters wearing florescent green and pink stickers cheered and hugged after the votes were tallied.

LOS ANGELES — Negotiators for Hollywood writers and studios worked

into the wee hours today to settle their contract dispute a day after the mayor pleaded with both sides to avoid a work stoppage.

With a 12:01 a.m. Wednesday contract expiration looming, representatives for the Writers Guild of America and the Alliance of Motion Picture & Television Producers were trying to bridge a \$100 million gap between their respective demands.

Failure to make a deal could mean a strike that would halt movie and television production, possibly delaying the fall TV season.

Progress has been difficult to gauge because both sides have imposed a news blackout.

"We all know that time is running out," Mayor Richard Riordan told a news conference Monday. "Once again, I call on the producers and writers to work together in the spirit of compromise and save tens of thousands of Los Angeles jobs from the cutting-room floor."

SEATTLE — Thousands of signs have been distributed to area teachers as they prepared to stage a one-day walk-

out to protest state funding proposals.

"We're doing this because every day our students are being shortchanged," said John Dunn, president of the Seattle Education Association, which represents 4,800 teachers and staff at city schools.

Schools in Seattle and nearby districts planned to shut down for the day today, giving an unexpected holiday to more than 70,000 students.

Teachers are protesting the amount of money set aside for education in state budget proposals.

The missed day will be made up at the end of the school year, said Lynn Steinberg, spokeswoman for the Seattle School District. She said district officials support teachers' aims, but not their methods.

### WASHINGTON

WASHINGTON — Drinking and driving by teen-agers has declined by almost one-fifth in states with stricter alcohol laws, according to a 30-state survey of high school seniors.

The survey, appearing today in the American Journal of Public Health, shows that policies discouraging risky drinking can have an impact on young people, said Alexander C. Wagenaar of the University of Minnesota, first author of the study.

Wagenaar said the survey was done before all 50 states set the legal blood alcohol concentration level at 0.02 percent for drivers under 21. The effects should eventually be seen in every state, he said.

"Clearly it shows that the laws are working," Mothers Against Drunk Driving spokeswoman Wendy Hamilton said. "Teen-agers are getting it."

There is a different threshold for adults, however. For at least 19 states and the District of Columbia, the legal limit for adults is now 0.08 percent. A federal law passed last year requires a 0.08 level in all states by 2004. States that fail to comply could lose federal highway funds.

WASHINGTON — A plan to establish a huge global fund to combat AIDS and other infectious diseases in developing countries gained momentum as world finance leaders ended the spring meetings of the International Monetary Fund and World Bank.

The finance ministers and central bank governors also expressed confidence the global economic slowdown, led by a stalling U.S. economy, would be short-lived.

They said economic fundamentals were sound even though Japan is slipping

into recession and growth in much of Asia and Latin America is slowing. By contrast, prospects for Europe are favorable, they said.

The ministers pledged there would be a substantial increase in funds to fight AIDS and other infectious diseases in poor countries. U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan said at a conference in Philadelphia Monday that an effective campaign to combat AIDS would cost \$7 billion to \$10 billion.

The IMF also agreed on most of the details of a \$10 billion rescue package for Turkey and said it was prepared to resume loans to Argentina if the government approves a package of budget cuts and taxes. Crisis in both countries threatened to unsettle global financial markets.

WASHINGTON — Senate Republicans are finding it hard to keep President Bush's emphasis on income tax cuts while still squeezing in other things like estate tax repeal and marriage penalty relief.

Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott, R-Miss., told reporters Monday that if budget negotiations produce a tax cut ceiling below \$1.3 trillion over 10 years, "you've got a problem with achieving the things that the Congress and the American people support overwhelmingly."

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