

Bush makes official trip to Europe to sell missile defense system

By the Associated Press
INTERNATIONAL

MADRID, Spain — President Bush opened his first official trip to Europe today, eager to sell his missile defense system, support NATO expansion and assure U.S. allies that despite trans-Atlantic tensions, they have a "trustworthy friend" in Washington.

Upon landing at Madrid, the president and first lady Laura Bush were greeted by Spanish dignitaries, then headed to Zarzuela Palace to meet with King Juan Carlos and Queen Sofia. Bush was meeting later with Spanish Prime Minister Jose Maria Aznar.

"I'm used to explaining positions that some people don't agree with," Bush told European journalists Monday. "That has never prevented me from finding a positive. And the positives in our relationship with NATO and the European Union and individual countries far outweigh some of the negatives that occur because we don't agree on every issue."

ap news capsules

Bush talks Wednesday with NATO allies in Brussels, Belgium. On Thursday, he'll be in Sweden to attend a summit of U.S. and European Union officials. After a state visit in Poland on Friday, Bush travels to Slovenia to meet with Russian President Vladimir Putin.

Even though he's new on the international scene, Bush said, "I think the Europeans are going to find that they have got a trustworthy friend in the Bush administration, one that will stay steady and true."

JERUSALEM — Expectations dimmed today that a U.S.-mediated agreement would emerge anytime soon to end Israeli-Palestinian violence, even though Israel said it accepts a proposal made by CIA chief George Tenet.

Raanan Gissin, a close aide to Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, said Israel has concerns about the wording of

the American proposal to end violence and get peace talks back on track, but accepts it.

"Despite our reservations, we accept the proposal as it is," Gissin said. He warned, however, that any violence after a cease-fire would mean a cooling off period — an Israeli requirement before progressing on the political track — would have to begin again.

The Palestinians said the two sides failed to agree and they complained of American bias toward Israel in the meeting. They were submitting their formal, written response to Tenet later today.

Jibril Rajoub, Palestinian security chief of the West Bank, said the Americans had not dealt with Palestinian reservations about setting a timetable for an Israeli commitment on lifting a security closure on the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Diplomatic efforts were to continue today, though Rajoub said today morning that another three-way security meeting appeared unlikely for the day. Tenet's schedule is kept secret.

NATIONAL

HOUSTON — Dayon Kane spent the day spraying his home with disinfectant, pulling up soggy carpets, and carrying soaked clothes and furniture to the street curb.

A respite Monday from the rain gave Kane and thousands of other residents a chance to return to their homes, some of which were almost completely submerged a day earlier.

Flooding caused by remnants of Tropical Storm Allison had forced some 20,000 Houston-area residents to flee as nearly 3 feet of rain swamped parts of the city in less than a week. The storm has been blamed for at least 20 deaths in Texas and Louisiana.

Most of the rest of the nation's fourth-largest city, however, appeared near normal on what Mayor Lee

Brown declared a "day of recovery." Freeways were open. Water was back within the banks of bayous.

The storm caused more than \$1 billion in damage in Houston, said Harris County Tax Assessor Paul Betten-

court.

Twenty-eight counties in southeast Texas were included in a state and federal disaster declaration.

In Louisiana, the total damage was "\$15 million and counting," said Ken Johnson, a spokesman for Rep. Billy Tauzin, R-La. The storm left an estimated 3,500 homes muddy and water-logged.

MILFORD, N.Y. — Though the nation's highest court has ruled that the Christian Good News Club has the right to gather at a public school, the Bible study group may never actually meet in the building.

Milford Central School district officials are weighing two options in response to the U.S. Supreme Court's

ruling Monday: barring all groups from meeting there or pushing starting times back for all clubs until 5 p.m. or 6 p.m., a few hours after students are dismissed.

The Rev. Stephen Fournier, organizer of the Good News Club, said the second choice wouldn't work because the group wants to meet directly after school so it can reach the most students.

In 1996, Fournier and his wife, Darleen, requested access to Milford's K-12 school so young children could learn Scripture, play games and listen to Bible stories. When they were denied, they sued, arguing the district allowed other groups like the Boy Scouts and 4-H use the facilities.

By a 6-3 vote Monday, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that once Milford opened its doors to after-school civic meetings with a moral theme, the school district could not exclude an evangelism club without violating First Amendment free-speech rights.



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