

National News Briefs

U.S. Directs \$50 Million To Study of Alzheimer's

WASHINGTON, July 16 (AP) — Federal researchers will receive an additional \$50 million over the next five years for research into prevention and treatment of Alzheimer's disease, the White House said today.

The \$50 million had already been appropriated for the Institute on Aging, part of the National Institutes of Health. But President Clinton announced that the money would be dedicated to Alzheimer's, which affects four million Americans.

Maureen Reagan, the older daughter of former President Ronald Reagan, who has Alzheimer's, welcomed Mr. Clinton's announcement but said more was needed. The organization Ms. Reagan represents, the Alzheimer's Association, has called for \$100 million for research this year.

"The disease just gets worse every day," she said on CNN's "Late Edition."

Mr. Clinton said the number of Americans with Alzheimer's was expected to triple by 2050. Currently, 1 in 10 people over the age of 65, and as many as 50 percent of those over 85, have Alzheimer's disease.

Minor Damage Reported From Geomagnetic Storm

WASHINGTON, July 16 (Reuters) — A severe geomagnetic storm that hit Earth this weekend interfered with data from at least one weather satellite and some power systems, government scientists said today.

But forecasters at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration said the worst of Saturday's storm, caused by a huge solar flare on Friday, was over.

"It has died down now," said Craig Sechrest, an agency forecaster in Boulder, Colo.

The storm, which hit Earth's magnetic field at 10:40 a.m. Saturday, was the biggest since October 1989, the agency's Web site said.

It was classified as severe to extreme with potential effects on radio, communications, power systems and aviation. The Federal Aviation Administration had no reports of problems, a spokeswoman said.

Mr. Sechrest said that some power companies had minor problems and that any erroneous data from satellites was not enough to make the satellites unusable.

The sun spot that produced Friday's flare blasted billions of metric tons of plasma and charged particles toward Earth at three million miles per hour.

Fire in White House Causes Little Damage

WASHINGTON, July 16 (AP) — A crew repairing the East Wing of the White House ignited a small fire today, but it caused little damage, a White House spokeswoman said.

Paint debris from a window shutter ignited as workers used a torch to burn off old paint, Nanda Chitre, the spokeswoman, said. Three fire trucks responded; the fire was quickly extinguished. There was no estimate of damage, and workers resumed work almost immediately.

The East Wing contains the Clintons' living quarters and public areas including the East Room, where news conferences are often held and the display room for two centuries of White House china.

Jewelry Thieves Give Up, And Free 6 Captives

ROLLING HILLS ESTATES, Calif., July 16 (AP) — Armed robbers held six people hostage overnight in a jewelry store, before freeing the captives and being arrested today, the authorities said.

The last three hostages and the gunmen walked out of the shop about 11 a.m. today. The hostages were unharmed, the authorities said.

At 5:20 p.m. Saturday two men dressed in business suits and claiming to be police detectives entered Morgan's Jewelers, pulled out handguns and began robbing the store.

An employee activated a silent alarm, and the police arrived as the men were leaving, said Cmdr. Bill McSweeney of the sheriff's department. The men saw the officers and went back inside, taking six people hostage, he said. At one point nearly 100 officers surrounded the store in this town about 30 miles southwest of downtown Los Angeles.

The men, identified as Robert James Miller, 47, of Los Angeles, and Matthew Lou Ross, 48, from Michigan, were being held in lieu of \$1 million bail each, Sgt. Brenda Cambra said.