

# U.N. Chief Dismisses Top-Ranking Aide From U.S.

Special to The New York Times

By ELAINE SCIOLINO

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WASHINGTON Jan. 18 — After months of barely concealed disagreements, Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali has dismissed the highest-ranking American official at the United Nations, Administration officials said today.

Melissa F. Wells, 62, was asked to leave the post of Under Secretary General for management and administration when her contract expires in April. A Clinton appointee and a career foreign service officer, Ms. Wells has served as Ambassador to Zaïre, Mozambique, Guinea-Bissau and Cape

Verde. The United States nominated her for the United Nations job 10 months ago but did not protest the dismissal, a senior State Department official said.

When Mr. Boutros-Ghali informed Secretary of State Warren Christopher last week that he did not want to renew Ms. Wells's contract, Mr. Christopher replied that the United States would go along, but only if her replacement was an experienced manager who was committed to reforming the unwieldy United Nations bureaucracy.

"There was no protest," the senior official said. But asked whether she had lost the

confidence of the State Department, Michael McCurry, the department spokesman, replied, "No," adding: "This was a personnel decision that was up to the U.N. Secretary General. I think we indicated on our part that it's essential to have someone in that position, the under secretary for management, who is both qualified and experienced, and we will certainly make recommendations for filling that post that will be consistent with our strong interest in having administrative and bureaucratic reform at the United Nations."

Although the post is especially important for the United States because

the person who holds it is responsible for spearheading the reform of the huge United Nations bureaucracy, a senior official said Ms. Wells had in fact lost the confidence of Washington because of what Administration officials described as an uneven performance. Ms. Wells was also responsible for security, contracts and support services for peacekeeping operations. In a blunt letter of resignation labeled "strictly confidential," sent to Mr. Boutros-Ghali on Friday, Ms. Wells criticized his centralized style of operating and complained about feeling excluded from decision-making.

"While many of us heads of departments have varying degrees of individual contact with you, I have not once during my tenure here experienced that sense of in-house collegial spirit under your leadership," she wrote.

She is expected to return to service in the State Department. Ms. Wells' departure was first reported by Reuters and The Washington Post. She was the sixth person in seven years to hold the highly political job, and she antagonized Mr. Boutros-Ghali last summer when she started an extensive investigation into alleged mismanagement of helicopter contracts by four senior procurement officials, according to United Nations officials.

Responding to the Administration's demands, she has argued for the naming of an inspector general to investigate waste and mismanagement, an idea that has not had the support of Mr. Boutros-Ghali. Late last year, Mr. Boutros-Ghali was said to be angry with Ms. Wells when the General Assembly's budget committee cut out funds for several projects he had requested.

# U.N. Chief Fires American in Charge of Reforming World Body

By Julia Preston  
Special to The Washington Post

Jan 18 '94

UNITED NATIONS, Jan. 17 — Secretary

General Boutros Boutros-Ghali has fired Melissa Wells, the highest-ranking American official working at the United Nations and the head of an effort to reform the world body's inefficient bureaucracy, U.N. officials and diplomats said today.

Wells, 62, lost support of both the secretary general and the U.S. mission here, the sources said. She clashed repeatedly with Boutros-Ghali in the 10 months since she took the job of undersecretary-general for administration and management, which in

addition to placing her in charge of the reform program also gave her responsibility for security, contracts and support services for peace-keeping operations.

Her removal further delays a reform effort that has been hampered by a steady turnover of top officials: she was the sixth person in seven years to hold the top management post at the United Nations.

In her highly politicized job, Wells was caught between Boutros-Ghali, an administrator seeking to expand the organization's world role; the U.N. bureaucracy that she managed, which is unwieldy and slow to change; and the U.S. mission at the United Nations, which has been pressing to streamline the organization to satisfy an American

Congress concerned about waste and fraud in the U.N. bureaucracy.

Early this month, Jean-Claude Aimee, the secretary general's chief of staff, formally asked the U.S. mission to withdraw Wells, a career U.S. Foreign Service officer, when her one-year contract expires in April, sources said. But in a letter of resignation Wells sent Boutros-Ghali on Friday, she said she would step down Feb. 17.

In her letter, which was provided to The Washington Post by Wells sympathizers, she criticized the secretary general's centralized management style. She said he was "not fully benefiting" from the talents of his U.N. staff because it had been "difficult and all too rare" for them to find out from him what he hoped

to accomplish. She warned that he was keeping too many decisions for himself or his close aides.

One of her clashes with Boutros-Ghali came when she was in charge of marshalling the U.N. budget through the General Assembly last year. Boutros-Ghali, according to U.N. officials, was furious that the assembly's budget committee whittled back many funds he wanted to respond to a host of new demands facing the United Nations. But U.S. officials felt Wells had not been aggressive enough in pushing for deeper cutbacks.

Wells also faced fierce criticism for her handling of an investigation of alleged abuse in U.N. contracts for cargo airplanes for U.N. peace-keeping operations.

Jan 18



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... clashed with secretary general