

Congressional roundup**McConnell's subcommittee
hears case of anti-U.N. soldier**

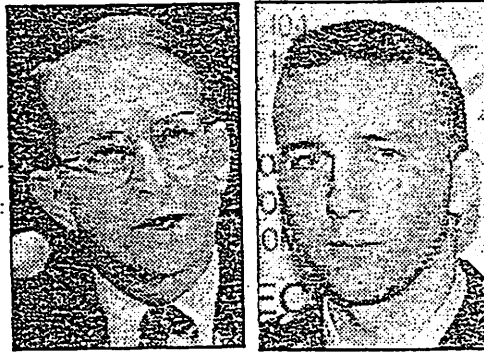
By MIKE BROWN
Staff Writer

WASHINGTON — Kentucky attorney Ronald Ray was on Capitol Hill yesterday to argue the case of the American soldier who refused to wear a United Nations cap and insignia on a U.N. peacekeeping mission in Macedonia.

The self-described "country lawyer" from Crestwood argued before Sen. Mitch McConnell's subcommittee that President Clinton had no authority to order the Macedonia deployment and that the U.N. cap and shoulder badge are illegal.

It was the first congressional hearing to address the controversy of Michael New, an enlisted Army medic court-martialed in January for failing to obey an order to wear the prescribed uniform.

New, a Texan from near Houston, contended that the U.N. uniform additions were not authorized by Army regulations and would signify a shift of his allegiance from the United States to the United Nations. His stand has made him a hero to many



Attorney Ronald Ray, left, is representing Spc. Michael New, 22, who was court-martialed for refusing to wear U.N. insignia or submit to U.N. command.

on the nation's political right.

McConnell, as he has before, indicated agreement with Ray's contention that Clinton lacked legal authority to send troops to Macedonia without congressional approval.

However, asked after the hearing whether he planned to push for legislation in the New case, the Kentucky Republican said he did not know.

McConnell, who invited Ray, is

chairman of the appropriations subcommittee responsible for foreign operations, including some U.S. funding for U.N. peacekeeping operations.

U.N. Ambassador Madeleine Albright, the first and only other witness yesterday, devoted her testimony to defense of the Clinton administration's budget request for UNICEF and other U.N. programs and touched on the New case only briefly in response to McConnell's questions.

In essence, she repeated the position of the State and Defense departments that the president did not need congressional approval to commit U.S. soldiers to the multinational force in Macedonia and that soldiers can't pick and choose which orders to obey.

Three Democrats showed up to voice support for Albright and the United Nations generally but left before Ray took the witness chair.

While the hearing broke no new ground in the New controversy, Ray said afterward that the session was valuable because it allowed him to lay out his legal case before Congress.