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Off The Wire

National and international news
from the Reuter News Report

Hostages on hijacked bus rescued by Israeli troops

RAFAH, Israeli-occupied Gaza Strip — Israeli troops early today stormed a hijacked bus where Arab guerrillas held about 30 Israeli passengers hostage for nearly ten hours. The passengers were freed after shots rang out as the Israeli troops raced toward the bus and a blinding flash pierced the sky. A soldier who took part in the operation told Reuters that the three Arab guerrillas aboard the bus were all killed. This was confirmed by military officials in Tel Aviv.

One official said two Israeli soldiers were lightly wounded in the operation near Rafah, a desert town on the Egyptian frontier. Dazed passengers were led away by jubilant soldiers, who patted each other on the back. One middle-aged woman sat, head in hands, and shook uncontrollably. Seven or eight other wounded passengers were laid out on stretchers near the bus, which was parked near an olive grove. Most appeared to be suffering from shock and were later ferried away by helicopters. The bus was seized on its regular evening route from Tel Aviv south to the Mediterranean town of Ashkelon.

Rebels attacking in Nicaragua

MANAGUA, Nicaragua — Nicaraguan officials said Thursday it was being attacked by rebel groups in a two-pronged assault that represented the biggest move so far against the left-wing Sandinist government. Nicaraguan military leaders told a news conference that the country was under mass attack by 8,000 insurgents thrusting from neighboring Honduras and backed by the Central Intelligence Agency. The military chiefs also said Nicaragua's southern port of San Juan del Norte was being attacked by another rebel group, the Revolutionary Democratic Alliance, based in Costa Rica.

Cyclone rends Madagascar port

ANTANANARIVO, Madagascar — Cyclone Kamisy Thursday destroyed most of the port of Mahajanga, killing 15 people and seriously injuring 30 with winds of up to 150 miles per hour, Malagasy radio said. The radio said 80 percent of the port on this island east of Africa had been wrecked. The radio said whole sectors of Mahajanga, which has a population of 45,000, were under water. Over the weekend the cyclone leveled most of the island's major norther port, Antsiranana. The radio gave no casualty figures for Antsiranana where 30,000 of the city's 40,000 inhabitants were made homeless and had little food or water. Before returning to Madagascar Cyclone Kamisy devastated the French-administered island of Mayotte in the Comoros archipelago, according to reports from Paris.

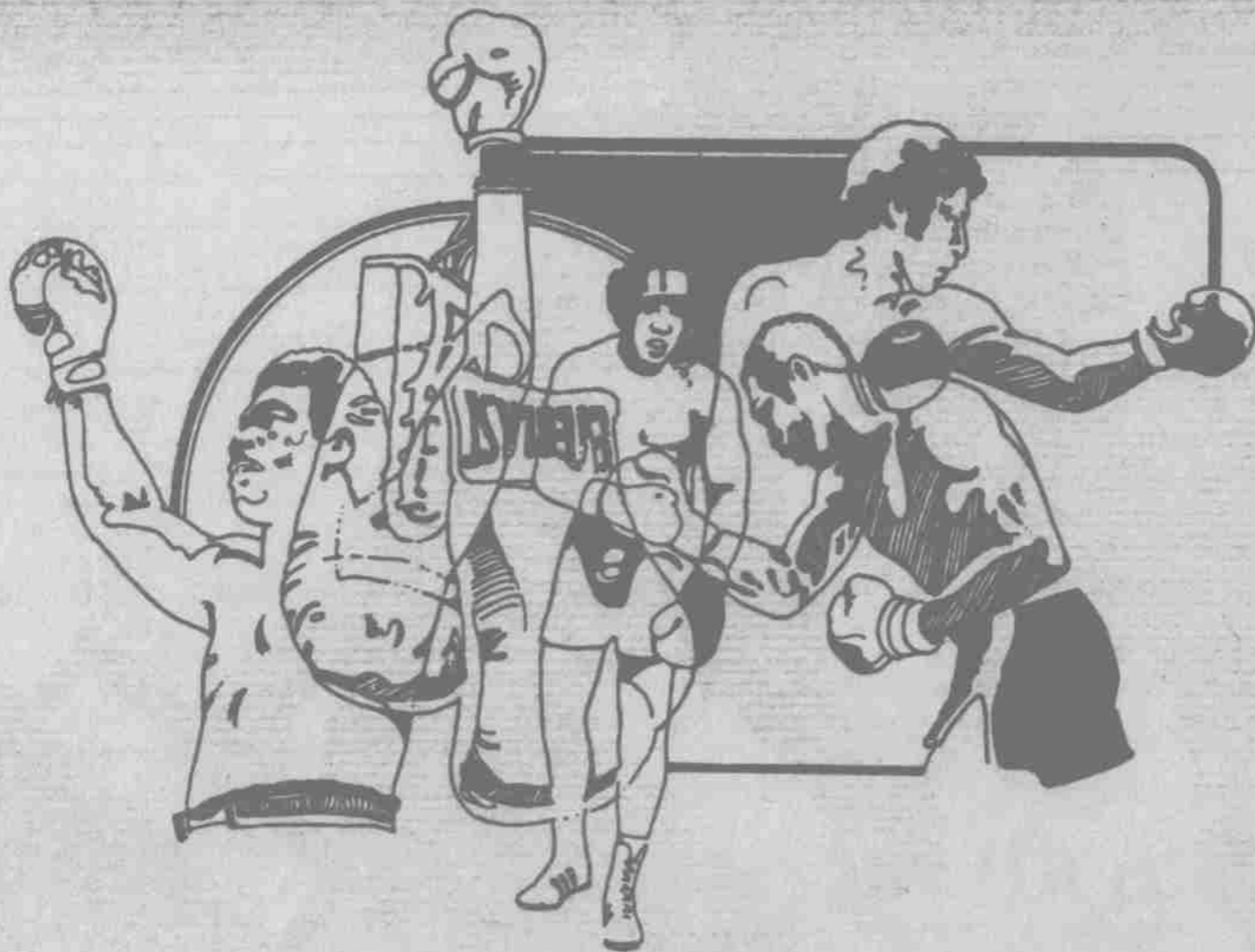
European Parliament wants babies

STRASBOURG, France — The European Parliament Thursday called for a baby boom, warning that Europe's future role could be jeopardized because it is falling seriously behind the rest of the world in producing children. The 430-member parliament, which has a largely advisory role, approved a resolution urging social affairs ministers to come up with ways of reversing a decline in European Community birthrates to 1.68 babies per mother in 1982 from 2.79 two decades ago.

Robot cop gets award

NEW YORK — It was a real "no comment" situation Thursday when a robot was named New York City's cop of the month. The department's only remote mobile investigation robot won the honor and stood mute as Police Commissioner Benjamin Ward read a citation praising it for its work. The robot, known as RMI, was cited for its performance last January when, while on loan to police in Elmira, N.Y., it was sent into an apartment to determine if a gunman involved in a hostage situation was still alive. RMI has a remote control television camera that can pan 360 degrees and police were able to see that the gunman was dead.

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