

News Digest

By The Associated Press

Weapons debate continues Poindexter, North take the Fifth Amendment

WASHINGTON — Two of President Reagan's recently departed national security aides — both still active-duty military officers — refused to publicly answer questions Tuesday from a House committee trying to explore the Iranian-Contra arms-and-money connection.

The dramatic invocations of Fifth Amendment rights by Vice Adm. John M. Poindexter and Marine Lt. Col. Oliver L. North brought an increasing aura of mystery to the burgeoning foreign policy scandal.

The twin refusals to testify came as the Reagan administration appeared, still, to be at odds with itself over exactly what happened and how officials should respond to congressional demands for answers. Retired Maj. Gen. Richard V. Secord, another principal figure in the controversy, took the Fifth Amendment before the Senate Intelligence Committee.

In citing their constitutional right against self-incrimination, Poindexter, Reagan's former national security adviser, and North, fired as a key National Security Council aide, declined in separate, nationally broadcast, appearances before the House Foreign Affairs Committee to discuss any aspect of U.S. arms sales to Iran or the transfer of profits to Nicaraguan Contra rebels.

"I must decline to answer that question at this time because of my constitutional rights under the Fifth



Amendment," Poindexter, who resigned Nov. 25, told the committee.

"On the advice of counsel, I respectfully and regretfully decline to answer the question based on my constitutional rights," responded North, who worked for Poindexter at the NSC.

Sen. Patrick J. Leahy, D-Vt., vice chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee, said he was frustrated by the repeated refusal by Poindexter and North to testify.

"I wish the White House would stop talking about the tremendous cooperation they're showing, when the people they used throughout this (arms deal) keep coming up and taking the Fifth," Leahy said in a telephone interview from Puerto Rico.

Weapons dispute resolution clears ways for cease-fire

MANILA, Philippines — The government and rebels resolved a dispute over weapons Thursday, removing the last obstacle to a truce in the Communist insurgency that has plagued the islands since 1969.

Spokesmen for President Corazon Aquino and the rebel National Democratic Front said the 60-day cease-fire would begin at noon Wednesday (12 p.m. Tuesday CST).

Both sides said the agreement provides that armed guerrillas will not enter "population centers" and soldiers will not confiscate rebel weapons during security patrols.

The last-minute negotiations over the cease-fire stemmed from a military threat to seize illegal weapons, including those belonging to the Communist New People's Army that were found in "security operations" during the truce.



Guerrilla officials said they agreed to go ahead with the truce even though some details had not been resolved, including a definition of the "population centers" off limits to armed guerrillas.

Negotiations began Aug. 5. Mrs. Aquino refused to discuss rebel demands for major economic, social and political reforms until the Communists agreed to stop fighting.

Prominent Soviet dissident reportedly dies in prison

MOSCOW — Anatoly Marchenko, a prominent Soviet human rights activist who recently was pressured by the KGB to emigrate to Israel, has died in prison at the age of 48, a friend said Tuesday.

The dissident, who spent 20 years in prison and internal exile, was a member of the disbanded Helsinki Watch Group that tried to monitor Soviet compliance with the 1975 accord on human rights. He also wrote the harrowing dissident chronicle "My Testimony" about his labor camp experiences.

Marchenko's wife, Larisa Bogoraz, has said she believed Marchenko began a hunger strike Aug. 4 to protest the authorities' refusal to allow her to visit him. She speculated during an interview in November that authorities had begun force-feeding him.

In a letter dated Aug. 4 that made its way to a Western human rights group and was released in October, Marchenko wrote of beatings and repeated terms in a cold isolation cell.

Bogoraz said she was told by a KGB officer Nov. 21 that "Marchenko is feeling wonderful," but the International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights claimed nearly two months earlier that he was in poor health, partially deaf and lame, and suffering from a chronic bleeding ulcer.

Marchenko was arrested in 1957 after a fight in the barracks of the hydroelectric power station at which he worked. He escaped while serving a two-year sentence in Kazakhstani work camps but was captured while trying to flee the country at the Soviet-Iran border.

Seismic maps reveal Earth's hidden secrets to researchers

SAN FRANCISCO — Crude maps of the depths of the Earth show its molten metal core is not a smooth sphere, but instead is roughened by mountains taller than Everest and valleys six times deeper than the Grand Canyon, researchers said Tuesday.

Friction from the sloshing of the liquid across these features may explain why the planet rotates with a slight jerkiness that makes a day five-thousandths of a second longer or shorter than 24 hours every decade, said the scientists from NASA, the California Institute of Technology and a British laboratory.

"There has been no previous evidence for bumps on the core," said Caltech geophysicist Robert Clayton. "They were only speculated. This is direct evidence that they exist."

The maps of the core-mantle boundary, located about 2,000 miles beneath Earth's surface, were made using a 5-year-old technique called seismic tomography, in which varying speeds of earthquake waves through molten and solid rock are measured.

The maps of the core-mantle boundary were made by Clayton, Caltech geophysics graduate student Olafur Gudmundsson and professor Don L. Anderson, who used worldwide records of thousands of earthquakes that occurred between 1971 and 1980 and measured more than 4.5 on the Richter scale.

The maps provide poor resolution, or detail, and failed to map the core-mantle boundary in some places, especially the Southern Hemisphere.

But far beneath the Philippine Sea, the core shows a "low" or valley at least six miles deep, more than six times the depth of the Grand Canyon. Beneath the Gulf of Alaska, there is a 6-mile-high mountain on the core — taller than Mount Everest.

Other underground mountains were found under eastern Australia, the central North Atlantic, the northwestern Pacific, Central America and south-central Asia. Valleys exist in the core beneath the southwestern Pacific, the East Indies, Europe and Mexico.

Study: Women tie knot later than ever

WASHINGTON — American women are postponing marriage longer than ever before, tying the knot later than even their great-great grandmothers of the 1890s, the Census Bureau reported Tuesday.

The typical first-time bride is 23.3 years old when she goes to the altar, the highest median age for women to marry since the government started keeping that statistic in 1890.

And the median age of 25.5 for their bridegrooms hasn't been topped since 1900, according to the bureau's study, "Marital Status and Living Arrangements: March 1985."

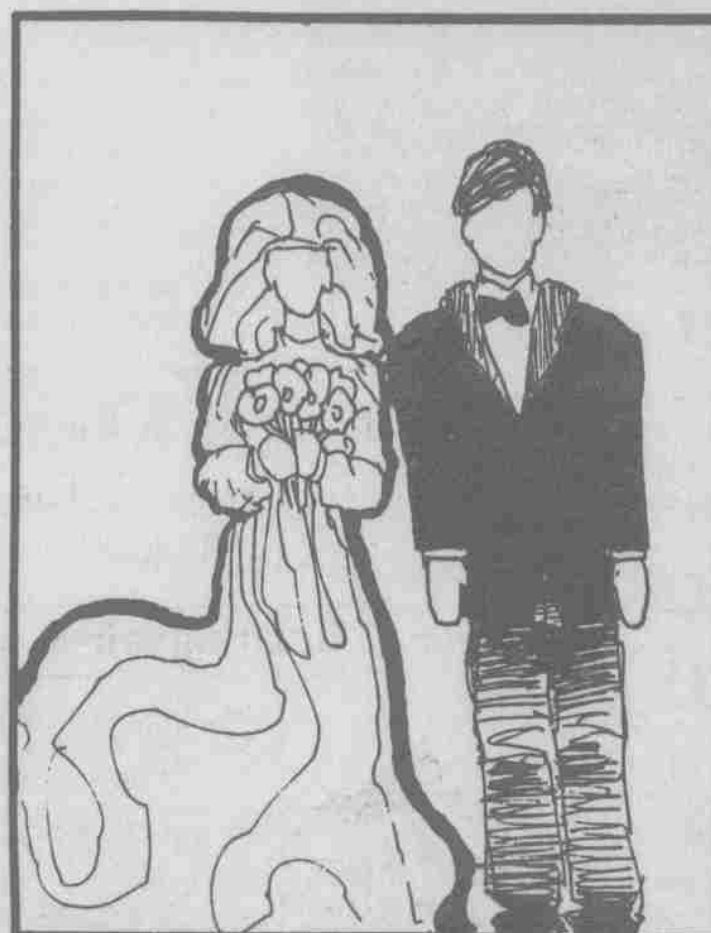
The number of unmarried couples living together has leveled off at about 1.9 million after skyrocketing in recent years, confirming a preliminary finding issued a year ago. New figures, due out later this month, are expected to show a small increase for 1986.

There were 128 divorced people per 1,000 people living with their spouses, up from 47 per 1,000 in 1970. The ratio for men is 103, compared with 153 for women, because men are more likely to remarry after divorce and do so sooner than women.

More than one American adult in 10 lives alone, triple the number since 1960, although the rate of increase slowed in recent years as tighter economic conditions discouraged young people from setting up their own households.

Indeed, among people aged 18 to 24, 60 percent of men and 48 percent of women still lived either at home with their parents or in college dormitories. This is up from 52 percent of men and 35 percent of women in 1960.

Postponement of marriage by young people has been widely noted by social scientists in recent years, as children of the post-World War II Baby Boom generation opted



to concentrate on their educations and careers.

The result has been a steady rise in the median age of marriage from the record lows of 20.1 for women and 22.5 for men posted in 1956. The median age means that half marry younger than that age and half older.

Engineers test-fire redesigned shuttle booster

BRIGHAM CITY, Utah — Morton Thiokol on Tuesday test-fired a section of its redesigned space shuttle booster, measuring the strain of launch conditions on new rocket joint configurations, O-ring materials and insulation.

The 2 1/2-minute test was the third in a series of 10, but the last scheduled under conditions simulating those that

existed on Jan. 28 when the space shuttle Challenger exploded shortly after launch, company officials said.

"It was totally uneventful, which is what we're glad to see. That verified that the approach we were taking is the right approach," said Allan McDonald, engineer-in-charge of the booster redesign team.

In place of the Viton O-rings used on the Challenger's boosters, Morton Thiokol engineers Tuesday tested O-rings made of silicone and Arctic Nitrile. The new materials are designed to make the joint seals more elastic in cold weather, Moore said.

Cold temperatures have been partially blamed for failure of the rings aboard the Challenger.

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