

News Digest

By The Associated Press

Reagan blasts Soviet missile stand; promotes negotiator

WASHINGTON — President Reagan, setting the stage for a new round of superpower arms control talks, promoted the chief U.S. negotiator on Monday and charged the Soviet Union had "backtracked" from his understandings with General Secretary Mikhail S. Gorbachev to cut nuclear stockpiles.

Appearing to match a move by the Kremlin, the president announced that Max M. Kampelman, who received final instructions in the Oval Office before flying to Geneva for the resumption of talks on Thursday, will

serve both as head of the U.S. delegation and as State Department counselor.

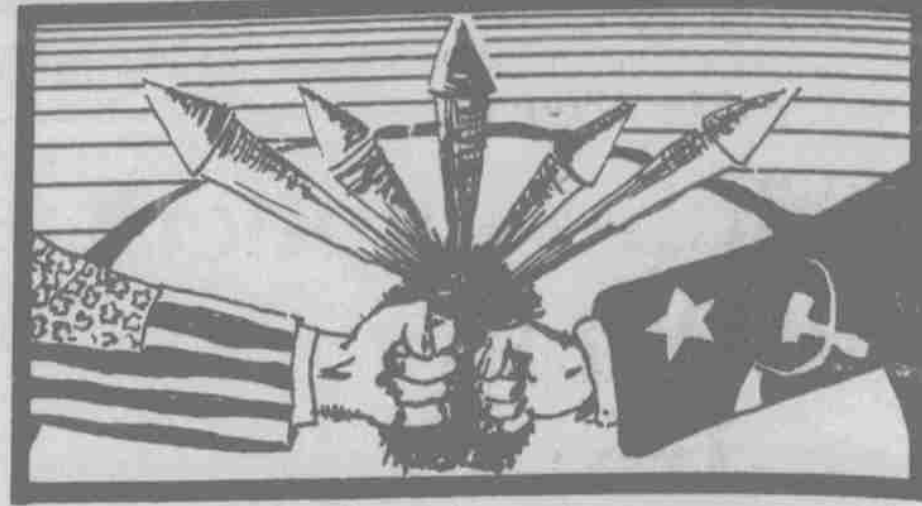
The Soviets had just named Yuli Vorontsov, the first deputy foreign minister, to replace veteran negotiator Viktor P. Karpov while also retaining his policy post. Kampelman, whose appointment requires Senate confirmation, would hold the counselor's job in Washington while also conducting negotiations in Geneva about one-third of the year.

In a statement issued by the White House press office, the president said

the Soviets were trying to hold progress on deep reductions in nuclear missiles "hostage" to U.S. acceptance of a Soviet effort to "cripple" the U.S. Strategic Defense Initiative.

Reagan said the anti-missile program, known popularly as "Star Wars," was vital to Western security and it would proceed "as expeditiously as possible."

The president's statement indicated Kampelman would not give ground in order to conclude a treaty to eliminate U.S. and Soviet missiles in Europe or one to reduce longer-range nuclear weapons by 50 percent.



Weinberger: U.S. needs higher defense spending

WASHINGTON — Higher defense budgets are necessary to meet the continuing Soviet military buildup and because there is "no prudent way to scale back American interests around the world," Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger told Congress on Monday.

Weinberger's familiar message came during his first appearance on Capitol Hill before the new 100th Congress in support of President Reagan's request for a 7.7 percent increase in military spending at a time when the administration has proposed to cut many domestic programs.

The requested \$312 billion defense budget would amount to an actual 3 percent increase after inflation, the smallest hike sought thus far by Reagan as part of his program to "rearm America."

Much of the hearing dealt with U.S. military strategy rather than specific items in the defense budget. Sen. Sam Nunn, D-Ga., the new committee chairman, has called a series of hearings to try to outline overall U.S. defense strategy rather than debate specific weapons.

Still, Weinberger defended several budget requests, chiefly the administration's proposals to buy two more aircraft carriers and sharply increase spending for the "Star Wars" anti-missile research project.

The administration wants \$660 million as a down payment for the carriers, which would cost \$6.9 billion. It also requested \$5.78 billion next year for the Strategic Defense Initiative, as Star Wars is formally known, compared with the current SDI budget of \$3.5 billion. A separate request would add \$500 million this year to the SDI budget.

Weinberger said he supports deployment "as soon as possible," but only if it is the first stage of a full-scale SDI system.

Weinberger would not go beyond saying he hopes it can be within "a very few years... the sooner the better."

Envoy works for hostages' release

BEIRUT, Lebanon — Anglican Church emissary Terry Waite said upon returning to Moslem west Beirut on Monday he was optimistic he could help win the release of Americans and other foreigners held hostage in Lebanon.

"Signs have been given to me that now is a reasonable time to come back, and one is able to pursue the contacts and hopefully to be able to try and work a resolution to the problems we face," Waite told reporters.

Waite, personal envoy of Archbishop

of Canterbury Robert Runcie, criticized secret U.S. arms sales to Iran, which the Reagan administration says was made at least partly in an effort to help win release of Americans here. Waite said trading arms for lives cheapens human life.

Waite has been credited with helping to win freedom for three Americans who had been held by Islamic Jihad, a pro-Iranian Shiite Moslem group.

Sixteen foreigners remain missing in Lebanon — six Americans, five

Frenchmen, two Britons, one Italian, an Irishman and a South Korean.

Waite had cited fighting between Shiite Moslem militiamen and Palestinian guerrillas for control of the two camps as one factor that delayed his trip, originally planned for Christmas.

When Waite met reporters in the hotel's lobby, a militiaman sat next to him holding an AK-47 assault rifle.

Waite made two previous trips to west Beirut in 1985 to negotiate with the kidnappers.

Theologian suspended; plans to teach anyway

WASHINGTON — The Rev. Charles Curran, the priest-theologian under Vatican fire for his views on sexual ethics, said Monday that he had been suspended from teaching at Catholic University of America but planned to show up for the start of spring term anyway.

Curran, arguing that his suspension was not proper, said he planned to be present Thursday to teach a class — at least to a portion of the students who have signed up for it.

He said he would continue to fight to keep his position as a professor of moral theology at the school, and he raised the possibility that he might take the matter to civil court.

On Monday, school officials distributed a letter to him in which the school's chancellor, Archbishop James Hickey of Washington, said Vatican condemnation of Curran's relatively liberal views made a "serious and pressing" case against him — a case warranting suspension.

Curran labeled the suspension unwarranted, contrary to

recommendations from school officials and indicative of "a lack of appreciation for the needs and rights of students." Hickey's letter, dated Friday, informed Curran that he was being suspended — with pay — pending final resolution of his case.

The theologian, who was on sabbatical all last year as the controversy came to a head, has been under fire from top church officials for years because of his views on birth control, divorce, homosexuality and other sexual issues.

After a seven-year investigation and final efforts at negotiations, including a trip by Curran to Rome last spring, the Vatican told him in August that his authorization to teach as a Catholic theologian was being revoked.

Catholic University is the nation's only Vatican-chartered university, and it requires that teachers in programs leading to certain church-sponsored degrees have a canonical mission.

Court favors cigarette makers; leaves smoking liability case intact

WASHINGTON — The Supreme Court on Monday left intact a decision shielding cigarette makers from any legal liability for allegedly failing to warn adequately about the dangers of smoking.

The court refused to review a federal appeals court ruling that such legal claims are pre-empted by federal law.

Monday's action represented a significant victory for three cigarette manufacturers sued by a New Jersey woman who died of lung cancer.

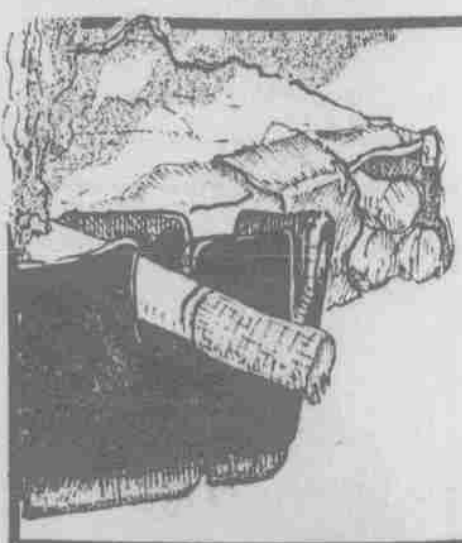
No national legal precedent was set, however, and the same issue some day likely will return to the nation's

highest court.

Rose Cipollone of Little Ferry, N.J., smoked for 40 years before quitting in 1982, after her right lung was removed. She died in 1984 but her husband, Antonio, continued her 1983 products liability lawsuit.

The suit names as defendants Liggett Group Inc., Philip Morris Inc. and Loew's Theatres Inc., which owns Lorillard.

Murray H. Bring, a lawyer for Philip Morris, said, "... we remain confident that our legal position on this issue is correct and we expect it will be upheld in these other jurisdictions as well."



In Brief

Movie moves mercy killer

AVON PARK, Fla. — Roswell Gilbert, serving a life sentence for the fatal shooting of his ailing wife, said Monday that the television movie about the case was "factual but traumatic."

"It's an odd experience," the 77-year-old retired engineer said in an interview from Avon Park Correctional Institution.

He said he watched the NBC drama "Mercy or Murder?" Sunday night with about 25 inmates at the minimum-security prison.

Scenes of his wife's bout with the degenerative diseases of Alzheimer's and osteoporosis made his cry, he said. He still maintained he did no wrong in shooting Emily Gilbert, his wife of 51 years, two years ago.

"I have no regrets about it... I couldn't stand to see her suffering. She wanted to die," Gilbert said.

Japanese students get Soviet message

TOKYO — Japanese schoolchildren received a reply Monday from Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev after they wrote 144 letters last August asking him to work for the abolition of nuclear weapons, a city assemblyman in northern Japan said.

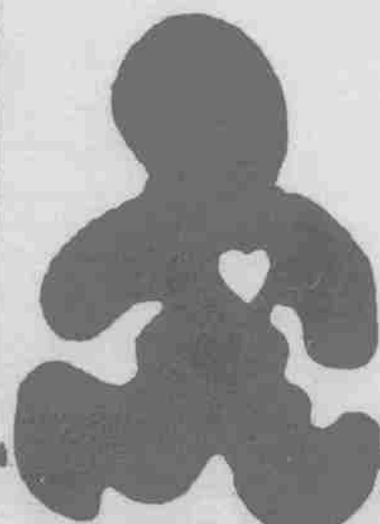
Hiroshi Shimogawara, an assemblyman in Morioka from the opposition Socialist Party, said the children sent 149 similar letters at the same time to President Reagan but have not received a reply.

Shimogawara said he had urged schoolchildren in Morioka to write such letters to the two leaders last year.

Shimogawara quoted the reply as saying: "The Soviet Union shares the unrest of nuclear fear with the people all over the world. The Soviet Union continues to work for the abolition of nuclear weapons."

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