

# News Digest

By The Associated Press

## Reagan, panel studying Iran crisis

WASHINGTON — President Reagan was described Tuesday as helping to stitch together places and dates spelling out the Iran-Contra connection as his point-man on the furor declared "there is absolutely no stonewalling."

White House deputy press secretary Albert R. Brashear said Reagan has met twice with Chief of Staff Donald T.

Regan for lengthy discussions touching on the president's recollection of events chronicling the clandestine sales of U.S. arms to Iran.

At the same time, retiring NATO ambassador David Abshire, brought to the White House from Brussels to help coordinate responses to an array of investigations, pledged that Reagan

will meet "in the very near future" with a commission investigating National Security Council operations.

A spokesman for the Tower Commission said late Tuesday that Reagan has a date to meet with the panel, which he named to investigate the workings of the National Security Council and its role in the Iran-Contra crisis.

Spokesman Herbert E. Hetu said the White House proposed a date for such a meeting on Tuesday and the three-member panel accepted.

Hetu said the three-member panel also decided to ask for an extension of their Jan. 29 deadline for completing their investigation and reporting to the president.

## Panel says train sped up before crash

WASHINGTON — Senators called Tuesday for expanded drug testing of train operators and new authority for federal regulators to deal with what an official described as widespread tampering with automatic safety devices on trains.

Federal railroad officials, appearing at the first in a series of congressional hearings prompted by the Amtrak accident, said the government is severely limited in what it can do at present.

Both drug use and equipment tampering have been implicated in the Jan. 4 collision of an Amtrak passenger train and three Conrail freight locomotives near Baltimore.

Top Amtrak officials, in their first extensive public comments on the accident, put the blame directly on the Conrail crewmen.

"The evidence is overwhelming that the sole cause of the accident . . . was the outrageous conduct of the Conrail crew in violating not one but a whole series of important operating rules," declared W. Graham Clayton, Amtrak chairman.

Tests on the engineer and brakeman aboard the Conrail locomotive involved in the collision have shown marijuana in the blood and urine.

Witnesses told the Senate transportation appropriations subcommittee that a signal warned the Conrail engineer nearly a mile before the track intersection that he should slow to 20 miles an hour and stop.

## Inmates: CIA knew of Contra arms-for-cocaine swap

MIAMI — Two federal inmates say they flew arms to the Nicaraguan Contra rebels and drugs back to the United States with the knowledge of the CIA and the Drug Enforcement Administration. "It was guns down, cocaine back," one inmate said.

A spokeswoman for the CIA denied the charge Tuesday, as have a DEA spokesman and two top leaders of the Contras fighting Nicaragua's leftist Sandinista government.

Jorge "George" Morales Garcia is scheduled for trial Monday on charges of smuggling 461 kilograms or 1,014 pounds of cocaine from Costa Rica to

the Bahamas. The second inmate, Gary Betzner, flew two missions for Morales and is serving a sentence for cocaine smuggling and facing attempted escape charges.

Morales said he received some of his instructions on the guns-for-drugs trade from the CIA contact in Costa Rica.

"The CIA was very, very aware of it," Morales told The Associated Press. He said his CIA-directed arms flights continued even after Congress banned such aid.

CIA spokeswoman Kathy Pherson denied the accusation Tuesday.

## In Brief

### Air Force destroys missile during test

VANDENBERG AIR FORCE BASE, Calif. — A Minuteman I missile with a secret, experimental re-entry vehicle was destroyed after launch Tuesday when it went out of control, the Air Force reported.

In a statement limited to the barest details, Capt. John Sullivan of the Space Missile Test Organization at Vandenberg Air Force Base described the destroyed missile as a modified Minuteman I, which was launched at 12:35 a.m.

He did not disclose the trajectory, altitude or location of the Minuteman when it was destroyed.

### Two planes collide; five die

INDEPENDENCE, Mo. — A military plane and a private plane collided over the Lake City Army Ammunition Plant on Tuesday, killing all five people aboard, authorities said.

The crash, which occurred about 12:30 p.m. over the plant east of Kansas City, involved a U21 fixed-wing military plane headed for Fort Leavenworth, Kan., said Lt. Col. John Garlinger, public affairs officer at Fort Leavenworth.

The civilian plane was a Piper Navajo, he said. There were believed to be three people aboard the military plane and two aboard the private plane, Garlinger said. Each plane can seat up to six people.

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## No relief for dollar, economists say

WASHINGTON — Treasury Secretary James A. Baker III will meet on Wednesday with the finance ministers of Canada and Japan to discuss monetary issues, but there was little indication that the Reagan administration is ready to join in steps to ease the dollar's sharp fall.

Administration officials, who spoke on the condition of anonymity, said Tuesday that despite the recent plunge in the dollar — which this week brought the currency to a new post-World War II low against the Japanese yen — Baker seems content to allow the dollar to continue falling with market pressures.

That's because a lower dollar should eventually begin to ease this nation's trade deficit, estimated at a record \$173 billion last year.

A lower dollar makes imports more expensive and U.S. goods cheaper overseas.

However, the dollar has been decreasing in value steadily for nearly two years, while the trade deficit has actually worsened.

Still, administration officials and private

economists say that — despite a miserable showing in November — monthly trade figures have been generally improving since last summer, and that a further decline of the dollar against major currencies could soon translate into a marked decrease in imports.

Baker planned meetings with Canadian Finance Minister Michael Wilson in Ottawa and Japanese Finance Minister Kiichi Miyazawa in Washington.

Japanese and West German officials have voiced concern that the plunge of the dollar — and the accompanying rise of their currencies against it — could trigger recessions in their countries.

Miyazawa is expected to approach Baker with a request for a high-level meeting of finance ministers and central bankers from the world's five major industrial powers — the United States, West Germany, Britain, France and Japan — to consider coordinated steps to prop up the dollar.

## Soviet scientist wants rules for nuclear plants

WASHINGTON — A top Soviet scientist, conceding his nation was too slow to tell the world about the "unthinkable" disaster at Chernobyl, called Tuesday for global rules on the safety of nuclear power plants and to ensure that information about future accidents is shared quickly.

In a rare congressional appearance by a Soviet official, Yevgeny Velikhov, the man assigned to bring the Chernobyl disaster under control and to investigate its causes, testified to the Senate Labor Committee about the April 26, 1986, accident and its aftermath.

Velikhov, the vice president of the Soviet Academy of Sciences, agreed with the complaint of committee Chairman Edward M. Kennedy, D-Mass., that the Soviet government should have shared news of the tragedy immediately, rather than remaining quiet for days.

"That is my personal view," said Velikhov, a top nuclear adviser to Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev. "At the time, I think most of our interest was connected with internal developments. But I agree with you, and, for the future, I think it is important to have informational agreements" regarding any serious incidents involving nuclear power plants.

When Sen. Thad Cochran, R-Miss., asked if he favored an "international regime of safety standards," Velikhov, in halting English, replied "Yes. It is necessary to develop special standards. I think that is very important."

**Daily Nebraskan**

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The Daily Nebraskan (USPS 144-080) is published by the UNL Publications Board Monday through Friday in the fall and spring semesters and Tuesdays and Fridays in the summer sessions, except during vacations. Readers are encouraged to submit story ideas and comments to the Daily Nebraskan by phoning 472-1763 between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. Monday through Friday. The public also has access to the Publications Board. For information, contact Harrison Schultz, 474-7660. Subscription price is \$35 for one year. Postmaster: Send address changes to the Daily Nebraskan, Nebraska Union 34, 1400 R St., Lincoln, Neb. 68589-0448. Second-class postage paid at Lincoln, NE. ALL MATERIAL COPYRIGHT 1987 DAILY NEBRASKAN