

News Digest

By The Associated Press

Reagan takes the stand Chief executive answers to investigative panel

WASHINGTON — President Reagan, silent for weeks on the Iran arms sale scandal, answered "all questions" Monday from an investigative committee about authorizing secret weapon shipments to Tehran, the White House said.

Reagan met for 76 minutes with the three-member committee he named Nov. 26 to probe the actions of the National Security Council staff following disclosure that profits from secret arms sales to Iran were diverted to Contra rebels in Nicaragua.

It was the first time Reagan had discussed the Iran initiative with any outside group.

"In the course of the meeting the president answered all of the panel's questions," a White House statement said. "The wide-ranging review included the development of policy in relation to Iran, the factual history of the president's role in the Iran initiative and the U.S. foreign policy process in general."



It was not known whether the president cleared up confusion resulting from contradictory statements by current and former White House aides about when he first authorized arms shipments to Iran.

Reagan has denied that the arms sent to Iran were part of a swap for Americans held hostage in Lebanon.

Aquino defuses anger, allows protest march

MANILA, Philippines — President Corazon Aquino sent Cabinet ministers to join 15,000 protesters marching on the presidential palace Monday, defusing some of the wrath over last week's shooting and proving her control over the military.

She overruled military officers who said they could not ensure her safety.

Aquino lifted barricades around Malachang Palace and kept soldiers away to allow students, workers and

peasants to march to condemn the killings of 12 leftist protesters by marines last Thursday.

She dispatched at least eight of her ministers to lock arms with demonstrators Monday and lead them peacefully to the palace gates.

Her action softened the anger of both left- and right-wing groups, who said her administration could not control the military and was responsible for a street clash bloodier than

any during the 20-year Marcos era.

Officials said Mrs. Aquino wanted to show her sympathy with the demonstrators.

Organizers accused Aquino of abandoning her pledge to give priority to helping society's downtrodden. They demanded the resignations of top military and police officers whom they blamed for last week's killings during a demonstration for land reform.

State authorities seize gambling devices

LINCOLN — About 100 video gambling devices were seized Monday morning throughout Nebraska, culminating a six-month Nebraska State Patrol investigation that stemmed from a citizen's complaint about video gambling devices in Lancaster County.

Patrol Criminal Division Lt. Larry Ball of Lincoln said that the counties in which misdemeanor citations for possessing a gambling device or for promoting gambling were being issued included Lancaster, Saline, Seward, Saunders, Sarpy, Scottsbluff, Cheyenne, Hall, Lincoln, Buffalo, Platte, "and possibly Douglas."

Ball and Lancaster County Sheriff Ron Tussing said that five Lancaster County establishments were involved: Waverly Farms, at U.S. 6 and Interstate 80; Jim and Pat's Tavern in Sprague; The Roadhouse in Bennet; and Merle's Food and Drink and the El Ranchito Mexican Restaurant and Cantina, both in Emerald. No seizures were planned in Lincoln, said Ball and Lincoln Police Chief Dean Leitner.

Navy crew missing after plane crash

NAPLES, Italy — U.S. forces searched today for seven crew members of a Navy aircraft that crashed in the central Mediterranean, a U.S. Navy spokeswoman said.

The plane went down shortly before midnight Sunday, said Chief Journalist Patricia Hooks.

She said the aircraft was on a routine flight in support of 6th Fleet operations.

Others details, including the type of aircraft, were not immediately available, Hooks said.

She said a special investigation was under way to determine the cause of the crash.

The identities of the crew members were being withheld until relatives could be notified.

The 6th Fleet ended a week of maneuvers on Sunday that were described as the largest exercises in the Mediterranean in the past year.

Iran reports 3,000 Iraqi casualties in Basra attack

NICOSIA, Cyprus — Iran said its troops turned a battle area "into a graveyard for the Iraqi forces" Monday, killing or wounding 3,000 in a push that brought Iran closer to the southern Iraqi port city of Basra.

Iraq retorted that Iran had not advanced "even a single inch" and said the Iranians were retreating. It claimed Iran suffered 2,000 casualties in the overnight fighting and conceded only

30 casualties among its men.

The Tehran government claimed that Iraq launched a counteroffensive to coincide with the conference of 43 Islamic countries in neighboring Kuwait but that the attack was defeated.

In Washington on Monday, the State Department said Iraqi forces had not attempted a counteroffensive.

A State Department official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said

Iranian troops were keeping up a severe artillery barrage against Basra, Iraq's second largest city with 1 million people.

The Iranian and Iraqi battle claims were monitored in Nicosia. The two Persian Gulf neighbors have been at war since September 1980.

Iraq launched its big ground offensive toward Basra on Jan. 9, saying it was out to destroy Iraq's "war machine."

An Iranian communique quoted by Iran's official Islamic Republic News Agency said Iranian forces seized new positions overnight west of the Jasim River, six miles from Basra. IRNA located the newly captured positions as west of Fish Lake along the Dual Canal and west of the Jasim in Shalamchah region.

Iraq said it fired two missiles at economic and military centers in Basra on Monday, inflicting substantial damage.

Daily Nebraskan

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.

Subscription price is \$35 for one year. Postmaster: Send address changes to the Daily Nebraskan, Nebraska Union 34, 1400 R St., Lincoln, Neb. 68588-0448. Second-class postage paid at Lincoln, NE.

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Challenger

America honors shuttle crew with fund raiser, dedications

Fourteen-year-old Tami Quinn in Grants Pass, Ore., raised \$6,000 for NASA. Audiences at "Star Trek IV" see a dedication to Challenger's crew as the film opens.

The international outpouring of grief set off last Jan. 28, when the space shuttle exploded, has been channeled into dozens of projects over the past year to remember the astronauts.

The largest is the Challenger Center project taken on by the crew members' families.

They are trying to raise \$50 million for a space science teaching laboratory in Washington and a regional center in Houston, and to provide scholarships and sabbaticals for teachers to attend. About \$250,000 had been raised by Jan. 6, and the families hope businesses will donate 10 percent of their sales on Wednesday's anniversary.

In another major effort, about \$1.2 million has been collected for the Challenger astronauts' 11 children, ages 2 to 25.

In Bath, N.Y., Haverling High School students raised \$17,000 in their "Pennies for Space-Rebuild the Spirit" fund. They plan to ask the president where to send the money.

The Soviet Union named craters on Venus for McAuliffe, the high school teacher who was to have been the first "ordinary" American in space, and Judith Resnik, the only other woman on the flight that ended in disaster just more than a minute after liftoff.

Apollo astronaut widow urges shuttle families to file lawsuits

HOUSTON — The widow of an astronaut who died in an Apollo spacecraft accident urged the families of crew members killed in the Challenger explosion to file lawsuits, saying NASA and space contractors, "don't care anything about you."

"They don't care about me, financially or morally," said Betty Grissom, widow of astronaut Virgil I. "Gus" Grissom.

Grissom and astronauts Edward White and Roger Chaffee died in 1967 when a fire erupted inside their Apollo 1 spacecraft while they were conducting tests on a launch pad at the Kennedy Space Center.

Mrs. Grissom said she would have received no financial judgment for her husband's death if Houston attorney Ronald D. Krist had not filed a last-minute lawsuit for her in 1972. The suit resulted in a \$350,000 award from North American Rockwell, the Apollo prime contractor.

Department of Justice officials recently announced that four Challenger families had agreed to a settlement of about \$1 million apiece in return for not suing the federal government.