

News Digest

By The Associated Press

Senate committee: Cut Nicaragua's aid

WASHINGTON — The Senate Foreign Relations Committee voted 11-9 Wednesday to halt U.S. aid to Nicaragua's anti-government guerrillas in the first major test of sentiment in the new Congress toward the Contras.

However, even supporters of the measure passed by the Democratic-controlled committee conceded it will be vetoed by President Reagan if it eventually passes the Senate and the House.

"I think we have the votes on the

floor to pass it, but of course the president will veto it and I doubt that we can override the veto," said Sen. Claiborne Pell, D-R.I., chairman of the panel and an opponent of Contra aid. No action by the full Senate is likely for several weeks, he said.

The vote came after more than three hours of debate in which both sides repeated their arguments favoring or opposing the program.

The program has been highly controversial ever since the Contras, with

secret U.S. help, began fighting Nicaragua's leftist government six years ago. Congress banned U.S. military aid for two years but narrowly reversed itself last fall and voted for \$100 million worth of aid, including \$70 million in military help, for the current fiscal year.

The bill sent to the floor Wednesday would not specifically block the \$40 million. It has no cut-off figure or date in it. The measure would simply ban U.S. help for the Contras, and Sen.

Christopher Dodd, D-Conn., one of the sponsors, said if it eventually becomes law, it would halt whatever part of the \$100 million package had not been spent.

Dodd's bill also includes \$300 million worth of economic aid to other Central American nations, including El Salvador, Honduras, Costa Rica and Guatemala. But Sen. Nancy Kassebaum, R-Kan., called the cut-off of Contra aid the "emotional lightning rod of this issue."

Soviets sign pardon for Jewish activist

GENEVA — Soviet authorities have signed an unconditional pardon for imprisoned Jewish activist Josef Begun, a Soviet official said Wednesday.

Samuel Ziv, head of the Soviet Anti-Zionist Committee and Vice President of the Soviet-American Friendship Association, said Soviet President Andrei Gromyko or one of his deputies signed the pardon Tuesday night.

Ziv was in Geneva for the current session of the U.N. Human Rights Commission.

Earlier Wednesday Yelena Bonner, wife of Nobel Peace Prize laureate Andrei Sakharov, said in Moscow there were no news of the 55-year-old Begun.

Georgy Arbatov, head of the Soviet Union's U.S.A.-Canada Institute, said in a televised interview last weekend that Begun already had been freed. But on Tuesday, Soviet Foreign Ministry spokesman Gennady Gerasimov said authorities would "most likely" free Begun.

Begun's family has said officials at Chistopol Prison, about 500 miles east of Moscow, told them Begun still was imprisoned there.

Shiites and Druse battle in west Beirut

BEIRUT, Lebanon — Druse gunmen hurling grenades stormed the Commodore Hotel and drove out Shiite militia on Wednesday in one of the fiercest fights of a four-day battle for control of Moslem west Beirut.

Both sides ignored threats by Syria

to send in troops with shoot-to-kill orders unless Shiite and leftist gunmen stop their struggle for domination of the city's Moslem sector. Syria supports all the factions involved.

Pools of blood splattered the lobby of the seven-story Commodore, once the headquarters of foreign correspondents. Rockets punched huge holes in its walls before the assault, and many

air conditioners were blown away.

Police said at least 25 fighters were killed and 80 wounded in street battles around the Commodore and the American University of Beirut just off Hamra, the Moslem sector's main commercial street. That raised the toll since fighting began Sunday to at least 65 killed and 280 wounded.

The fight for west Beirut pits the


Shiite militia Amal, led by Nabin Berri, against an alliance of Walid Jumblatt's Druse fighters and gunmen of the Moscow-oriented Lebanese Communist Party.

Wednesday's fighting broke a ceasefire arranged by Syria that was called at 6:30 p.m. Tuesday but did not take hold until midnight.

Correction

In the story "Committee kills vote for UNL students," Daily Nebraskan, February 18, Chris Scudder was incorrectly identified as a former UNL student regent. Scudder is the current UNL student regent. The Daily Nebraskan regrets the error.

A cutline under the front page photo, Daily Nebraskan, February 18, incorrectly spelled a student's name as Phillip Wall. The correct spelling is Phillip Woll.



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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. 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. ALL MATERIAL COPYRIGHT 1987 DAILY NEBRASKAN

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