

# News Digest

By The Associated Press

## Baker: Tower commission damaged Reagan, Gates' support

WASHINGTON — Newly installed White House Chief of Staff Howard Baker insisted Monday that President Reagan was not "a hands-off" leader or "an AWOL president" but acknowledged he was damaged by the tough criticism of the Tower commission.

At a news conference his first day on the job, Baker announced that Reagan had approved a request by the embattled Robert Gates to withdraw his nomination to head the CIA.

With Gates' nomination losing support in the Senate, Reagan said that confirmation hearings now "would not be in the interest of the CIA or of the nation." There was no immediate announcement of a new nominee, but Baker said it was "an urgent item on the president's

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—Baker

agenda.

In a letter to Reagan, made public by Baker, Gates told the president "it is apparent that there is strong sentiment in the Senate" to withhold approval of his nomination pending completion of the investigation into the Iran-Contra affair.

Reagan asked Gates to stay on the CIA in his



former job as deputy director, the spy agency's No. 2 job.

Led by Baker, the White House went to extraordinary lengths to counter the portrayal of Reagan in the Tower commission report, and by its members, as a detached leader who delegates too much authority to his staff and can't stay on top of details.

"I've never seen Ronald Reagan more energetic, more engaged," Baker said. "He's never been better."

To answer the findings of the Tower panel, Reagan will deliver a nationally broadcast speech from the Oval Office at 8 p.m. Wednesday, Baker, saying he had reviewed drafts of the speech, said, "I think it's a marvelous speech and I think it will have a profound effect."

However, Baker said that during the Iran-Contra affair, "there were many, many things that the president did not know and that under better circumstances, perhaps, he should have known. That is for the president to say."

Baker called the publication of the Tower board's report "a turning point."

## Arms control negotiators discuss Soviet proposal; Soviet, American officials agree to extend talks

GENEVA — American and Soviet arms control negotiators met in special session Monday, and the Soviets presented Mikhail S. Gorbachev's new proposal to eliminate medium-range missiles in Europe.

Searching for a breakthrough in the negotiations, the two sides agreed to extend the talks indefinitely. U.S. officials in Washington said the American side would respond by presenting a draft treaty to remove intermediate-range missiles now aimed at Soviet and European targets.

Soviet officials said Gorbachev made his new offer on Saturday in an attempt to break the Geneva deadlock. The proposal dropped a Soviet demand that the United States restrict its "Star Wars" program before an arms control package could be agreed on.

European governments generally reacted favorably to the Soviet initiative but cautioned that they would want to examine it closely before moving toward banning Soviet SS-20 missiles and NATO's U.S.-made Pershing 2 and cruise missiles that are now being deployed.

The missiles that would be scrapped under an agreement include 316 U.S.-made cruise and Pershing 2 missiles already deployed in western Europe. In all, 572 are to be deployed.



On the Soviet side, Western officials estimate that 441 medium-range SS-20s have been deployed in the Soviet Union. Gen. Sergei F. Akhromeyev, Soviet chief of staff, said on Monday that 243 of the SS-20 missiles were aimed at Europe.

The Soviet proposal would eliminate medium-range missiles based in Europe over the next five years, with the Soviet Union keeping 100 missiles on its Asian territory and the United States maintaining 100 on its territory.

In Washington, the White House welcomed the Soviet move.

## IRS offers revised tax withholding form

WASHINGTON — The Internal Revenue Service, apologizing for its confusing four-page tax-withholding form, offered a slimmed-down version Monday that will allow half of all taxpayers to complete the chore in 15 minutes.

"The Internal Revenue Service has heard the reactions to the long form — from members of Congress, from the media and from individual taxpayers," IRS Commissioner Lawrence B. Gibbs told a news conference. "We have not ignored what we have heard."

What the agency heard was that the four-page W-4 released last November was incomprehensible. The IRS defended the form as meeting Congress' requirement for a W-4 that allowed taxpayers to accurately match their withholding with actual tax liability.

If the White House Office of Management and Budget goes along, the

W-4A will be available to taxpayers in mid-April, Gibbs said.

Gibbs estimated that about half the nation's wage-earners will be able to calculate their withholding by using only the front page of the W-4A: six short paragraphs of instructions, a seven-line worksheet and the seven-line form itself, which is given to the employer.

But the W-4A is less precise than the long form. For example, it instructs taxpayers to use a round figure of \$2,000 in calculating their withholding allowances, even though each allowance is worth only \$1,900 this year.

Perhaps more significant, the short form eliminates the intimidating, full-page, 24-column table of figures used by two-earner couples and two-job workers in filing the long version.

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## Weather Service mistaken; reports tornado destroyed town

CHICAGO — A National Weather Service bulletin that erroneously said the city of Rockford had been demolished by a tornado was sent to hundreds of Midwest radio and television stations Monday and read on the air by some announcers.

One broadcaster whose station used the bulletin said "that's very upsetting to find out you may have panicked thousands of people needlessly."

The bulletin, sent on the weather service's wire at 4:55 a.m., said:

"At 4:35 a.m. CST a tornado hit the Rockford, Ill., weather office. This storm was moving southeast at 50 mph. This is a dangerous storm. Take cover immediately."

"The entire town of Rockford has been demolished. If you are in the path of this tornado, you should go to a basement shelter if available. Abandon cars and mobile homes."

Five minutes later, a disclaimer was sent explaining that the bulletin was transmitted by mistake, said meteorologist Steve Kahn at the service's Chicago office.

The bulletin was part of a test being



conducted to prepare for the upcoming tornado season, and was designed only for weather service personnel, Kahn said.

He blamed a change in computer software at the service's Chicago office for letting the bulletin get out.

"It went out all over the weather wire, probably throughout much of the Midwest," he said. "We had a lot of calls. They were all asking, 'This is a test, isn't it?'"

Rockford, 86 miles northwest of Chicago, has a population of about 140,000.

Kahn said a new check in the system now codes all tests to say "test" and will prevent such mistakes from happening again.

## In Brief

### Reagan withdraws Gates' CIA nomination

WASHINGTON — President Reagan on Monday withdrew his nomination of acting CIA Director Robert M. Gates to head the spy agency, saying confirmation hearings at this time "would not be in the interest of the CIA or of the nation."

In a statement read to reporters by his new chief of staff, Howard H. Baker Jr., Reagan said he withdrew the nomination at Gates' request.

Baker also read to reporters a letter from Gates to the president, saying, "It is apparent that there is strong sentiment in the Senate to await completion, at minimum, of the work of the Senate Select Committee on Iran before acting on my nomination."

"I believe a prolonged period of uncertainty would be harmful to the Central Intelligence Agency, the intelligence community and potentially to our national security," he said.

### Orr signs mail-order sales tax bill

LINCOLN — Saying that an important message was involved, Gov. Kay Orr has signed a bill intended to extend the state sales tax to mail order purchases.

Orr said she signed LB304, sponsored by Sen. Elroy Hefner of Coleridge. Opponents of the measure, led by Sen. Loran Schmit of Bellwood, have argued that the measure is unenforceable, constitutionally suspect and could cost more than it will raise to enforce.

Orr addressed those arguments: "In addition to the impact upon Nebraska, the signing of this bill sends a message nationally to support the federal legislation... which authorizes state sales tax collections on interstate sales," she said in a prepared statement.

## Summer Jobs

National Company has summer positions available in the Lincoln-Omaha area.

**\$2400 GUARANTEED.** Information available on Tues., March 3 at 11 a.m., 1 or 3 pm OR Wed., March 4th at 10 am, 12, 2 or 4 pm.

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