

News Digest

By The Associated Press

In Brief

Senate refuses to block \$40 million for Contra

WASHINGTON — The Senate refused today to block a \$40 million installment in aid to the Nicaraguan Contra rebels.

The vote was 52-48. The Senate action means that the \$40 million, the second installment in the \$100 million in aid approved by Congress last year, will begin flowing to the Contra rebels.

The House last week voted to withhold the \$40 million. And even if the Senate had gone along with the House vote, both Democratic and Republican leaders had acknowledged that President Reagan probably would get the \$40 million to the Contras by vetoing the legislation disapproving it.

Reputed crime boss dies at 72

TAMPA, Fla. — Santo Trafficante Jr., one of the last of the old-time reputed Mafia dons, died last Tuesday at the Texas Heart Institute in Houston. He was 72.

Trafficante is survived by his wife of 46 years, Josephine, two daughters and four grandchildren.

Trafficante's Sicilian-born father allegedly presided over what federal authorities call Tampa's "era of blood," when rival crime families fought for control of lucrative Florida gambling from 1937 to 1945. When his father died in 1954, Trafficante took over the family business, according to testimony before a U.S. Senate committee in 1963.

Grand jury indicts Deaver perjury

WASHINGTON — Michael K. Deaver, the former aide to President Reagan who left his White House job to become a lobbyist, was indicted for perjury today.

Deaver, the first person ever indicted under a Watergate-inspired law authorizing independent investigations of top government officials, was charged with lying to Congress and to the federal grand jury that indicted him.

The 18-page indictment charges Deaver with five counts of perjury when responding to allegations that he used his White House connections to promote his lobbying business, a potential violation of federal ethics laws.

Earlier today, Chief Justice William H. Rehnquist rejected an emergency request aimed at blocking any indictment while Deaver pursues his challenge of the federal law that created an independent counsel, or special prosecutor.

The indictment charges that Deaver twice lied while testifying before a congressional subcommittee and perjured himself three times while testifying before the grand jury.

Deaver, who for four years served as Reagan's deputy chief of staff, was indicted after an investigation by independent counsel Whitney North Seymour Jr.

In part, the indictment said Deaver "did unlawfully, willfully and knowingly, and contrary to his oath, make false material declarations" to the grand jury.

Seymour announced Feb. 25 he was ready to seek a vote on four perjury counts against Deaver. But he'd been

blocked from doing so by emergency orders, first by U.S. District Judge Thomas Penfield Jackson and then by an appellate panel.

FAA head resigns

WASHINGTON — Donald Engen, who stewarded the federal Aviation Administration through three years of rebuilding the air traffic control system and dramatic changes in the airline industry, announced his resignation Wednesday.

Engen gave no reason for resigning, effective in July, except to say in a letter to the White House that he made the decision public at this time "to allow an orderly succession."

However, aviation and government sources said Engen had become increasingly frustrated over his dealings on aviation issues with the parent Transportation Department as well as with administration budget planners.

The resignation caught FAA officials as well as senior Transportation Department officials by surprise, said one source, who requested anonymity.

Engen, 62, informed President Reagan of his plans in a letter last Friday in which he said he looked forward "to working in the best interest of aviation" outside of government after four decades of government services.

Researcher gives self AIDS vaccine in first reported human experiment

NEW YORK — A French researcher has given himself an experimental AIDS vaccine, and some volunteers also have received it in the first reported test of an AIDS vaccine in humans.

Daniel Zagury of the Pierre and Marie Curie University in Paris reports in Thursday's issue of the British journal Nature that the vaccine spurred his

immune system to create defenses against two varieties of the AIDS virus.

American scientists said Wednesday the results are interesting but do not prove that the vaccine works.

The letter gives no indication that Zagury or the volunteers were later exposed to the AIDS virus to see if the vaccine prevented infection.

The letter says he suffered no significant side effects from the vaccine. Initial human tests of vaccines and medicines are generally designed to look for side effects rather than effectiveness.

The new work is "an important first step," said Dr. Robert Gallo, noted AIDS researcher at the National Cancer Institute.

Gallo said the major question now is whether the overall immune response from the vaccine is strong enough to prevent infection by the AIDS virus, and whether it can work against all variants.

The experimental vaccine was designed to stimulate a second kind of immune system defense, in addition to the body's own antibodies, called cell-mediated response, in which special blood cells also fight invading microorganisms.

The hope is that this defense would protect against more than one virus strain, and kill cells already infected by the virus, researchers wrote.

The experiment used a genetically altered "vaccinia" virus. Unaltered vaccinia is used as a smallpox vaccine.

House passes 65 mph legislation

WASHINGTON — The House on Wednesday approved and sent to the Senate legislation that would let states raise speed limits to 65 mph on stretches of rural interstate highway.

The 217-206 vote came shortly after the lawmakers approved a long-awaited \$88.6 billion highway and mass transit aid package that states have said they need for delayed construction projects.

The vote on the highway bill, to which the speed limit question was a separate amendment, was 407-17. But the entire measure is in doubt because administration officials have said they will recommend that President Reagan veto the bill because of excessive spending.

The proposal to let states abandon the 55 mph speed limit, which was instituted in 1974 at the height of the energy shortage, was the most controversial issue in the highway bill. It caused such a deep dispute that its opponents agreed to a separate vote on the 65 mph question so the rest of the highway measure would not be delayed.

Lawmakers who rose to debate the question Wednesday used the full gamut of arguments. Supporters of the faster speed said states should be able to choose their own driving speeds, and argued the current limit is obsolete and forces police to spend time enforcing an unenforceable law. Opponents have insisted that 55 mph driving saves lives and fuel.

Rep. James Howard, D-N.J., chief supporter of the 55 mph limit, said the faster speed would let the average motorist save one minute daily.

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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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