

News Digest

By The Associated Press

Mines block channel; Iranians suspected

MANAMA, Bahrain — Mines blocked a key shipping channel in the southern Persian Gulf on Monday, and sources said the U.S. Navy suspected Iran was avenging the Navy attack on an Iranian minelayer.

A Pentagon official said in Washington that the Navy might attack any vessel it determined to be carrying mines, even if it was not caught laying the explosives in international waters.

White House spokesman Marlin Fitzwater said the rules of engagement had not changed, and a senior administration official said the rules did not include pre-emptive strikes.

But a Pentagon source said the rules already were fairly broad.

"The key is finding hard evidence, conclusive evidence, that mines are aboard the ship," he said. "If we have it pinned down that a ship is in international waters and carrying mines, then we might move in."

Another well-informed source said the Navy was "looking at options" on dealing with "intensified" Iranian activities in the area.

One U.S. military source said the mine threat was putting a serious burden on the Navy.



"We are tracking a whole lot of vessels to see if they are minelayers," he said. "Our resources are being stretched out to the limit."

The sources spoke on condition of

anonymity.

The commander of naval forces for Iran's Revolutionary Guards, Mohsen Rezaie, said Iran would attack a U.S. frigate to retaliate for last Monday's capture of the Iran Ajr, which the Navy said it caught in the act of laying mines.

His comment was reported by Iran's official Islamic Republic News Agency, which gave no direct quotes.

The agency, monitored in Cyprus, quoted Iranian navy chief Rear Adm. Mohammad Jussein Malekzadegan as saying, "Moslem combatants are

ready to teach American Marines a lesson they will never forget."

As many as six mines were spotted about 20 miles off the busy United Arab Emirates port of Dubai, said gulf-based shipping and salvage executives.

But U.S. military sources said the destroyer USS Kidd reported "possible" sighting of only three such mines.

The London-based Lloyd's Shipping Intelligence Unit issued a notice pinpointing an area several miles square that it said should be "considered mined."

Iran-Contra testimony: U.S. missed opportunity

WASHINGTON — U.S. officials passed up a chance in 1985 to talk directly to a high Iranian official eager to improve relations, instead strengthening the hand of Iranian radicals through arms sales, a former White House consultant contended in Iran-Contra testimony released Monday.

Michael Ledeen, a former consultant on terrorism who took part in early discussions with Israel about the Iran arms sales, said the Iranian official "believed it possible to, in essence, change the nature of the Iranian regime through peaceful, parliamentary methods."

In this testimony, given privately in March, June and September to House and Senate investigators, Ledeen said the official believed the changes could lead to Iran's abandonment of terrorism and to better relations with the west.

The official, who is not named, is said to have been eager to coop-

erate with the United States, asking only for small arms to protect himself and his allies inside Iran and for secure communications equipment to stay privately in touch with the United States, Ledeen said.

He said the official strongly opposed large-scale sales of U.S.-made weapons to Iran because that strengthened his powerful opponents who were resisting any tendency towards moderation.

Ledeen said that after talking to the official he briefed then-National Security Adviser Robert C. McFarlane and later William Casey.

But he said the government never followed up on what Ledeen regarded as important.

At one point, he said, he urged Casey to tell President Reagan "that pursuing the hostages was backwards and it was permitting the tail to wag the dog and that we should instead pursue the political matter."

Newest bomber crashes after 'bird ingestion'

LA JUNTA, Colo. — A B-1B bomber with six people aboard crashed Monday in a ball of orange flame in the Colorado prairie after birds were sucked into the engines, but three crew members parachuted to safety, authorities said.

The fate of the other crew members was not immediately known. The Air Force said they were listed as missing. It was the first crash of a regular production model of the B-1B, the nation's newest long-range strategic bomber.

The bomber, left Dyess Air Force Base in Abilene, Texas, early Monday for the Strategic Training Range Complex near La Junta, 60 miles southeast of Pueblo, the Strategic Air Command said.

Bob Buckhorn, a spokesman for the Federal Aviation Administration in Washington, said the pilot radioed air-traffic controllers that he had run into birds during a low-level practice bombing run. He began climbing but reported that the two engines on the right side had caught fire because of "bird ingestion."

In Brief

Ohio girl attacked, killed by two dogs

COLUMBUS, Ohio — Two dogs, a pit bull and a German cattle dog, mauled and killed a 2-year-old girl outside an apartment building Sunday, and police charged their owner with involuntary manslaughter.

"We're not sure what happened exactly, but she was mauled," said Robin Hutchinson, a spokeswoman for Mount Carmel East Hospital where the girl was pronounced dead. "She basically bled to death."

Phone service resumed after disruption

GREAT FALLS, Mont. — Mountain Bell crews restored telephone service Monday after a major computer failure that cut off 33,000 customers, including police, fire and hospitals.

Ken Lay, foreman at the central office here, said about 80 percent of the phones in this city of 56,000 were in operation by Monday morning, 24 hours after the outage occurred.

Air Force developing burrowing warheads

OMAHA — The Air Force is moving to develop new nuclear warheads that could blast their way underground to destroy bunkers built to shelter top Soviet civilian and military leaders, the Omaha World-Herald has reported.

A tentative plan has been devised under which MX missiles would be armed with the burrowing bombs, perhaps as early as the mid-1990s, said a military officer who spoke on the condition of anonymity.

Gas prices drop nearly a penny nationwide

LOS ANGELES — The average price of gasoline dropped eight-tenths of a cent over the past two weeks, the Lundberg Survey has reported.

A poll of 13,000 gas stations across the United States found the average price of gasoline during the past two weeks was \$101.34 a gallon, said oil industry analyst Trilby Lundberg. The price includes all grades and taxes.

At least 120 killed in Colombian mudslide

MEDELLIN, Colombia — Weary workers dug into 20 feet of red mud Monday morning after a landslide crashed into Colombia's second-largest city and killed at least 120 people, including 43 children.

Some residents estimated as many as 500 people were missing after tons of mud and rocks entombed the Villa Tina slum district on Sunday.

Schroeder says she won't run

DENVER — A tearful Rep. Patricia Schroeder announced Monday she will not enter the race for the 1988 Democratic presidential nomination, saying "I could not figure out how to run and not be separated from those I served."

Mrs. Schroeder, a veteran of 15 years in Congress, had spent nearly four months testing her potential political and financial support, and her announcement stunned supporters who gathered at noon in the outdoor Greek Theater in Denver's Civic Park.

"I learned a lot about America and

I learned a lot about Pat Schroeder (this summer). That's why I will not be a candidate for president," she said.

For a few moments, she was overcome with emotion and could not speak. Her husband, Jim, who stood beside her at the podium, urged her to "take a minute, take a minute" to compose herself before continuing her statement.

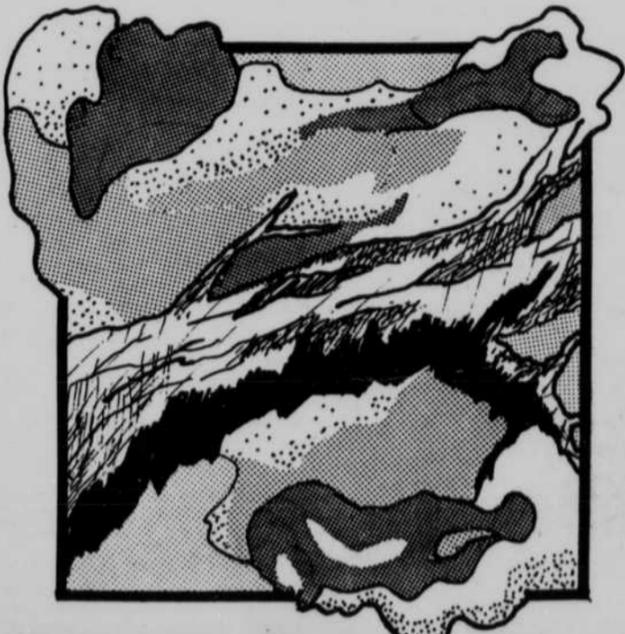
After wiping her face with a handkerchief, she continued, "I could not figure out how to run and not be separated from those I served. There must be a way, but I haven't figured it out yet."

"I could not bear to turn every human contact into a photo opportunity."

Irene Natividad, chairwoman of National Women's Political Caucus, said Schroeder had made "a smart, pragmatic political decision. I think it was the right thing to do."

"I think we're too mature as a movement to just go (into a campaign) for symbolic reasons," she added. "I'm grateful she went out there and kind of broke the door down as far as women being considered as serious presidential candidates."

Fires' effects may smolder for years



Christina Geiger/Daily Nebraskan

It will be months before specialists finish assessing the damage to wildlife, watersheds and timber caused by one of the nation's worst forest fire seasons, and the economic damage to some small towns that depend on timbering for jobs will last for years.

Fires still burned out of control this week in national forests in northern California and southwestern Oregon with thousands of people fighting them, four weeks after swarms of lightning storms began setting fire to the woods across the West. Smaller fires burned last weekend in Montana, Utah and Wyoming.

"In terms of timber burned, 1987 is probably the worst year since 1910," said Skip Scott of the Boise Interagency Fire Center in Idaho, the nation's command post for fighting forest fires. "There are a number of years that are benchmarks for fires. 1987 will be one of them."

"From August 30th to Septem-

ber 12th we burned 726,000 acres (1,134 square miles — larger than the area of Rhode Island). We had 1,905 fires," Scott said. The acreage has continued to grow since, and California alone has some 600,000 acres of charred forest.

Thousands were briefly evacuated when fires threatened populated areas in California and Oregon, at least 38 homes and acres of other buildings were destroyed and at least seven firefighters were killed in accidents.

At the peak, the federal government had 2,500 firefighters at work, plus more than 600 Army soldiers.

At that point, at a cost of \$200 a day per firefighter, the government was spending \$4.5 million daily just on manpower, Scott said. Food, equipment, transportation and aerial support at \$4,000 to \$5,000 for each retardant drop sent the cost well over \$5 million a day, pushing the total pricetag toward the \$100 million mark,

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