

News Digest

By The Associated Press

Reagan blasts Sandinistas

\$270 million in aid needed as insurance for peace, he says

WASHINGTON — President Reagan, warning he won't be fooled by Sandinista "facades of freedom," asked Congress on Wednesday to approve \$270 million in Contra aid as an insurance policy for peace in Nicaragua.

Reagan, in a toughly-worded address to the Organization of American States, lauded recent steps taken toward peace under a regional accord.

But he also said the pact is "only a beginning" and described a series of steps the leftist Sandinista government in Managua must take in order to assure that U.S. military aid to the Contra rebels ends.

"Full, free and fair elections and the open society that alone can make them possible, including full human rights and expulsion of all Soviet and Cuban forces — these must be the bedrock of conditions upon which any further agreement with the

Sandinistas is built," Reagan said.

Although House Speaker Jim Wright, D-Texas, had said Reagan has little chance of obtaining renewed military aid, the president lectured Congress against abandoning the Contras after supporting them in the past.

"It cannot just walk away," he said. "I have made a personal commitment to them — and I will not walk away."

Reagan termed the aid package "the essential guarantee that the Sandinistas will live up to the democratic conditions of the Guatemala Accord," the peace pact signed in

August by five Central American nations, including Nicaragua.

The president said he would "request and fight for" the \$270 million, 18-month aid package, which administration officials have said would go forward before the Nov. 7 case-fire date called for under the regional peace accord.

"Once a cease-fire is fully in effect, only that support necessary to maintain the freedom fighters (Contras) as a viable force will be delivered," Reagan pledged. "Then we, and they, will be watching to see how genuine the democratic reforms in Nicaragua are."

Air Force grounds B-1B fleet to check crew escape system

WASHINGTON — The Air Force on Wednesday grounded its fleet of 68 new B-1B bombers for a brief inspection of the planes' crew ejection system following a recent crash in which only three of six crewmen on the aircraft were able to escape.

In a statement, the service's Strategic Air Command said "this precautionary inspection is an outgrowth of the Sept. 28 accident" at a training range in eastern Colorado.

The inspections will require only about two hours per plane and are beginning immediately, meaning the planes will be returned to service quickly, SAC said.

"The Strategic Air Command is performing a precautionary, one-time inspection of each B-1B aircraft's emergency escape system prior to the aircraft's next flight," the statement said.

"Air Force maintenance personnel are performing the inspections... and each aircraft will be returned to flying status upon completion of the inspection."

The Associated Press reported last week that the Air Force, in investigating the crash, had begun trying to determine why only three of the six crewmen on the plane ejected from the crippled aircraft.

Sources said at the time the Air Force was concerned because, based on initial reports, it appeared that at least four and possibly all six of the crewmen should have been able to bail out safely.

The three who ejected escaped with minor injuries, but the other three went down with the plane and were killed.

The B-1B, is manufactured by Rockwell International in El Segundo, Calif.

In Brief

Major banks raise prime lending rate

New York — Several major U.S. banks raised their prime lending rates to 9.25 percent from 8.75 percent Wednesday, about a month after the banking industry lifted the day rate a half percentage point.

The new level is the highest in more than a year and a half. Major banks have raised their prime rates four times so far this year in response to an increase in market rates, which have increased the banks' cost of borrowing money and paying interest on deposit accounts.

Monkey complicates Soviet space mission

MOSCOW — Yerasha the space monkey has freed a paw and started doing his own experiments aboard a Soviet spacecraft, causing scientists to consider cutting short the 12-day mission.

"Our bright one, as it turns out, freed his left front paw from the restraint on the chair, and with its help began joyfully investigating everything around," said a Tass report carried by the newspaper Sovetskaya Rossiya. The flight is aimed at testing the effects of weightlessness on animals.

Syrian diplomat shot and killed at his home

BRUSSELS, Belgium — Syrian Second Secretary Antanios Hanna was shot and killed around 3:30 p.m. Wednesday in front of his home in Brussels, police reported.

Shortly after the shooting, an anonymous caller to the Belgian News Agency Belga claimed responsibility for the "murder of a Syrian secret agent" on behalf of Syrian "mujahedeen" (holy warriors).

Summit date will be set this month, official says

WASHINGTON — A date for a summit meeting between President Reagan and Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev will be set while Secretary of State George P. Shultz is in Moscow for meetings Oct. 22-23, said Viktor P. Nikonov, a visiting member of the Soviet Politburo.

Nikonov is in charge of Gorbachev's drive to rejuvenate Soviet agriculture. He is generally considered a Gorbachev protege.

Wild animals should be food, not attraction

HARARE, Zimbabwe — A United Nations expert Wednesday urged African governments to use wild animals for food instead of reserving them for foreign tourists to see.

"All forms of wild animals have potential as sources of meat from frogs to rodents to large animals and birds," said Emmanuel Asibey, a Ghanaian representative of the Food and Agriculture Organization.

He spoke at a conference designed to encourage governments to promote greater wildlife conservation at a time when many species of animals are threatened with extinction.

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The Daily Nebraskan (USPS 144-080) is published by the UNL Publications Board weekdays during academic year (except holidays); weekly during the summer session. Subscription price is \$35 for one year. Postmaster: Send address changes to the Daily Nebraskan, Nebraska Union 34, 1400 P St., Lincoln, Neb. 68588-0448. Second-class postage paid at Lincoln, NE.

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Shark herd attacks refugees; rescuers fail to save money

SANTO DOMINGO, Dominican Republic — Doomed refugees from a sinking boat thrashed wildly in the bloody water to fend off more than 40 frenzied sharks, but officials flying above them could do nothing to save them, authorities said Wednesday.

Estimates of the number of people killed Tuesday when the overloaded boat capsized ranged from 70 to more than 100. Officials said some of the missing may have made it to shore and fled; many bodies were expected to surface later.

Survivor Eddy Ventura said 168 Dominicans crowded onto the old 50-foot wooden boat about 4 a.m. Tuesday that was to smuggle them to Puerto Rico, the more prosperous U.S. commonwealth 100 miles across the shark-infested Mona Channel, at a cost of \$300 to \$500 each.

"Most of those who made the trip were women, and hardly anyone knew how to swim," said Ventura, 39. He said he floated 3 1/2

miles to shore clutching an empty gasoline tank.

Eugenio Cabral, civil defense director of the Dominican Republic, said scores of bodies probably would surface and float to shore.

"That takes about 48 hours," he said. "I expect that between today and tomorrow, bodies will begin appearing in large quantities."

By Wednesday afternoon, 32 people had been rescued, said hospital officials in Nagua and Caprera on the northeast coast of this Caribbean nation, which shares the island of Hispaniola with Haiti.

Four bodies had been brought to shore, Cabral said, and he thought two others had been recovered. He put the number of passengers at 100-150 and said about 30 people probably made it to shore but fled to avoid arrest.

"We would have... about 70 missing," he said. "I would not say there is no hope. I have faith that there are still people alive."

Tired pilots sleep in flight

LONDON — British airline pilots on long-haul flights say their entire crews have fallen asleep at the controls because of strenuous work schedules, researchers report.

Under a 5-year-old confidential reporting program, one-third of almost 800 British pilots who disclosed problems affecting their performance mentioned a demanding work schedule and the fatigue it caused, said Roger Green and Roy Skinner of the Royal Air Force Institute of Aviation Medicine.

The researchers quoted a range of pilots — either flying alone or with a large crew, in helicopters, freight or passenger aircraft — who said they had nodded off while the automatic pilot did the flying.

Green, an aviation psychologist, and Skinner, a retired military pilot, said pilots on long-distance night flights complained most often about difficulty in staying awake.

Some specified being unable to sleep in noisy hotels between night flights, enduring long stopovers at congested airports, or

becoming complacent in cockpits that are highly automated and where key chores become "unavoidably soporific."

Writing in the October issue of The Log, the British Airline Pilots Association monthly journal, the researchers quoted one pilot on a long-haul aircraft who said he and his crew were delayed unexpectedly for 12 hours at an airport.

"During the subsequent flight, because of the delay, all of us were extremely tired," the pilot wrote.

"During the cruise we all fell asleep, only to be woken by the Mach (speed) warning bell," he added. "At the constant power setting, the aircraft had slowly accelerated, causing the bell to ring. I estimated we were all asleep for about 20 minutes. Fortunately, we were between reporting points."

The researchers remove identifying details of such cases, including the kind of airplane involved and size of crew from their published reports.