

News Digest

By The Associated Press

Reagan assures Europe of security

WASHINGTON — President Reagan vowed Wednesday that a nuclear arms treaty with the Soviet Union will not undercut the U.S. commitment to the security of Europe, saying the stationing of 300,000 American troops abroad and "our steadfast nuclear guarantee underscore this pledge."

Reagan also said it was "totally unacceptable" for the Soviet Union to try to link reductions in globe-girdling strategic nuclear weapons to restrictions on his "Star Wars" missile defense plan, also known as the Strategic

Defense Initiative, SDI.

"We won't bargain away SDI," Reagan said in a speech a month before Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev arrives in Washington for a superpower summit. The two leaders are expected to sign a treaty banning intermediate-range nuclear forces in Europe and to discuss other arms differences.

Last Friday, Reagan said Gorbachev was not making SDI concessions a condition for cutbacks in strategic arms. In his speech Wednesday, however, Reagan complained about

"the Soviet tactic of holding these offensive reductions hostage to measures that would cripple" SDI.

Reagan's remarks, taped at the White House on Tuesday, were broadcast to Europe on Wednesday by satellite channels of the United States Information Agency's "Worldnet" and the Voice of America.

In part, the speech attempted to calm fears that the removal of U.S. medium- and shorter-range missiles in Europe would weaken the Western alliance and leave Europe vulnerable to the Warsaw Pact's conventional

forces, which greatly outnumber those in the West.

The address also challenged the authenticity of Gorbachev's campaign of openness, or "glasnost," and underscored to the Soviet Communist Party general secretary that Reagan is adamant about moving ahead with his Star Wars program.

Urging the Kremlin to withdraw its forces from Afghanistan, Reagan said, "The Soviet occupation of Afghanistan is most certainly a dreadful quagmire." He called it "a no-win situation" for Moscow.

In Brief

Agents dismantle massive drug ring

MIAMI — Federal agents have smashed the nation's largest, most sophisticated drug transport ring, which used spotter planes, infrared beacons and decoy plane passengers called "cover girls" to avoid detection, authorities said Wednesday.

Soviets publish activist's interview

MOSCOW — Once branded a criminal by the state-run press, Soviet human rights activist Andrei D. Sakharov has appeared in print in his native country with an impassioned call for truth.

"It's a proof of the openness that's taking place," Sakharov, 66, said in a telephone interview.

Defector returns after 7 months

FRANKFURT, West Germany — A U.S. Army private who defected to the Soviet Union seven months ago returned to the West on Wednesday and said he would surrender to American authorities.

Wade Roberts, 22, said he did not want to return to the Soviet Union but did not know if he would be going to the United States.

North invokes 5th before grand jury

WASHINGTON — Lt. Col. Oliver L. North appeared briefly Wednesday before a special federal grand jury investigating his role in the Iran-Contra affair but refused to answer questions.

The former National Security Council aide emerged from the grand jury room several times to consult with his defense lawyers about material in a black loose-leaf notebook he was holding.

Democrats hail elections as good omen for 1988

Democrats on Wednesday hailed their victories in off-year governors' elections in Kentucky and Mississippi as a "good preview for 1988," while GOP challenger Frank Rizzo defiantly refused to concede defeat to incumbent W. Wilson Goode in Philadelphia's bitter mayoral race.

Republicans seized on a smaller-than-normal defeat in Mississippi and scattered victories in legislative races around the country to claim a "bittersweet success."

But the high profile winners were all Democrats, and Govs.-elect Wallace Wilkinson in Kentucky and Ray Mabus in Mississippi began planning their new administrations.

Peace deadline arrives

WASHINGTON — The deadline for implementing the Central American peace plan is today, but with warfare continuing in Nicaragua and elsewhere, U.S. officials see the 90 days allowed for compliance more as a beginning than an end of a process.

The signing of the agreement last August by five Central American presidents produced near-panic in the Reagan administration because officials saw the accord as a virtually cost-free way for Nicaragua's leftist government to win an end to American aid to the Contra rebels.

Now, however, those fears appear somewhat exaggerated, the officials say, adding that the Sandinista government is finding itself increasingly on the defensive and faces some extraordinarily difficult choices in the weeks ahead.

The peace agreement was primarily aimed at ending Central America's insurgencies through cease-fires and a process of national reconciliation. But fighting continues in each of the three war-plagued countries — Nicaragua, El Salvador and Guatemala — with little sign of an early settlement in any of them.

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The Daily Nebraskan (USPS 144-080) is published by the UNL Publications Board, Nebraska Union 34, 1400 R St., Lincoln, Neb. 68588-0448, 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 R St., Lincoln, Neb. 68588-0448. Second-class postage paid at Lincoln, NE. ALL MATERIAL COPYRIGHT 1987 DAILY NEBRASKAN

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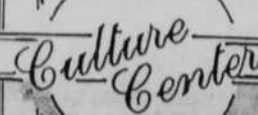
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