

Official: plan aimed at Contra defeat

WASHINGTON — The Nicaraguan government's cease-fire proposal is little more than a disguised attempt to help the Sandinista army achieve victory over the U.S.-backed Contras, a top State Department official said Tuesday.

The official said the proposal, unveiled here last week by Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega, "is the type of thing a conquering commander would issue as terms of surrender to a defeated foe."

The official spoke to a group of reporters on the condition that he not be identified.

Later Tuesday, House Speaker Jim Wright and Secretary of State George P. Shultz made an unusual

appearance before television cameras to try to settle what Shultz called "a little Tiff" over the speaker's embroilment in the Central American peace process.

"The important thing is to look ahead and focus on things we agree on, insofar as our Central American policy is concerned," said Shultz, after coming to Capitol Hill for a hastily arranged meeting with Wright.

Sharp difference over U.S. policy and tactics in Central America remained between Wright and the administration, but the meeting appeared designed to quiet the public clash that officials feared was distracting attention from substantive

peace talks in Central America.

Under Ortega's proposal, any Contras who lay down their arms and accept a government offer of amnesty may rejoin the political life of the nation "with full enjoyment of rights."

The government asked rebels to move to any of three cease-fire zones where their safety would be guaranteed once the 30-day truce goes into effect on Dec. 5. Humanitarian aid could be sent to the Contras, but military resupply would be forbidden.

Ortega has made clear he sees his offer as a proposal and not an ultimatum.

Iran claims Iraq attacked nuke plant

MANAMA, Bahrain — Iran said Iraqi warplanes bombed an unfinished nuclear power plant in southern Iran Tuesday, killing 11 workers including a West German engineer. An Iranian nuclear official claimed the attack could lead to another Chernobyl.

Iran's official Islamic Republic News Agency, monitored in Cyprus,


quoted energy official Reza Amrollahi as saying the plant contained nuclear material.

He said the raid might lead to "the same transfrontier radioactive release and radiological consequences as the Chernobyl nuclear accident," IRNA said.

Iraq did not announce that it had bombed the plant and there was no

independent confirmation of the attack. Iraq has raided the plant at least five times since 1984.

Amrollahi, president of Iran's Atomic Energy Organization, sent an "urgent protest note" to Hans Blix, director general of the International Atomic Energy Agency in Vienna, Austria, IRNA reported.



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Bright Briefs

Lonely guards find hope in seedlings

JUNEAU, Alaska — "On Attu there's a woman behind every tree," is an old saw in the Coast Guard, which keeps 24 men on "remote duty" at the westernmost island of the 1,100-mile Aleutian chain.

The catch: there wasn't a single tree on the island.

But now there's a glimmer of hope, with some 200 seedlings taking tenuous root in the tundra.

"Can women be far behind?" asks Lt. Kyle Moore.

A small forest planted by American soldiers in the 1940s has died, except for a few specimens he says are too small to call trees. Still, he's keeping faith.

"The three I planted in my office are doing really well," Moore said. "I'm one of those waiting to have the last laugh."

Americans lavish Raisa with keys

MOSCOW — Raisa Gorbachev says Americans are anxious for her and her husband, Soviet leader Mikhail S. Gorbachev, to visit them during their trip to the United States next month.

"Every day we get an enormous amount of letters from the Americans," she said at an opening of an art exhibition in Moscow. "People of all ages, of all walks of life write to us."

In a brief but rare question-and-answer session, she told ABC News, "many Americans ask us to visit their towns, cities and states, their farms, their homes. Some of them even send their keys to their houses in the envelopes."

Scientists heed cry of dog-like frog

WILMINGTON, Del. — An "endearing, weird little frog" has been discovered in Delaware. How weird? It barks.

Nature experts say the lime-green frogs are common to swamps along the southern East Coast, but were not previously known this far north. The frog is formally known as *Hyla gratiosa*.

Jim White, naturalist for the Delaware Nature Education Society at Ashland Nature Center, said guide books call the frog's sound "a single, explosive doonk or toonk." But "I just think it sounds like barking dogs," he said.

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