

Ice crystal may have caused crash

OMAHA — An ice crystal in the hydraulic system of a medical helicopter may have caused it to crash while taking off from the University of Nebraska Medical Center, a spokesman for the company that owns the chopper said Thursday.

Federal Aviation Administration and National Transportation Safety Board officials are investigating the crash, which occurred just after 5 p.m. Wednesday. Pilot John Oldham, 41, and flight nurse Pete Labosky, 32, received minor injuries in the fiery

crash. Both were released from the Medical Center Thursday, said hospital spokesman Tom O'Connor.

There were no passengers aboard the SkyMed helicopter when the crash occurred. The SkyMed chopper was being moved to nearby Clarkson Hospital to allow another medical helicopter to land with a patient.

The helicopter's control stick thrust backward as the craft reached an altitude of about 25 feet, said Russ Spray, vice president of Rocky Moun-

tain Helicopters Inc. of Provo, Utah. Rocky Mountain owns the helicopter and leases it to a group of Nebraska hospitals.

When the stick moved backwards, the helicopter nosed upward and rolled, then touched down on its tail and burst into flames, Spray said.

"It was not pilot error," Spray said. "It was like losing the power steering on your car. It may have been one of those rare occurrences when an ice crystal forms in the hydraulic system."

Reagan to ask for \$50 million

WASHINGTON — President Reagan will ask Congress next week to approve close to \$50 million for the Nicaraguan Contras, a senior administration official said Thursday.

The request is expected to be sent to Capitol Hill Tuesday; the House will vote on it Feb. 3 under an agreement between the White House and the Congress last month.

To increase the prospects for congressional approval, Reagan said Wednesday that less than half of the request will be for military equip-

ment. "The majority of the aid that I will be requesting from Congress is for non-lethal assistance to keep the freedom fighters a viable force until democracy is irreversible in Nicaragua," Reagan told a group of backers at the White House.

Supporters and opponents agree that the vote is likely to be extremely close, with the outcome hinging on about 50 House members who could decide either way.

Iraqi warplanes strike Iran

NICOSIA, Cyprus — Iraq said its warplanes flew 500 miles to bomb key Iranian oil installations in the Persian Gulf on Wednesday in the first long-range air raid this year.

Iran said its forces crushed four Iraqi attempts to retake captured terri-

tory in mountainous Kurdistan and killed or wounded 500 Iraqis.

The official Iraqi News Agency said "columns of black smoke" covered Lavan Island after the air strike at 12:20 p.m.

In Brief

Hart denies allegations of illegal contributions

WASHINGTON — Gary Hart denied Thursday allegations of possibly illegal campaign contributions, while his Democratic rivals sharpened their rhetoric on the budget and taxes.

Hart, in New Hampshire, spent most of Wednesday answering questions about a newspaper report that his campaign had accepted aid that skirted federal limits on contributions. Asked Thursday about further details provided by former staffers, he said, "No, no, it's not true."

In Iowa, meanwhile, on the day after the Democrats' second debate in a week, Rep. Richard Gephardt of Missouri continued the sharp rhetoric that has marked recent Democratic discourse.

Woman charged in connection with suicide

FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla. — A woman believed to be the only mother ever charged in connection with her child's suicide was sentenced Thursday to a year in jail, two years of community control and three years of probation.

"Taking your daughter to a naked bar and watching her dance is not a proper thing to do — or acceptable," Broward Circuit Judge Arthur Franza said before he sentenced Theresa Jackson, 41.

Miss Mancini put her mother's .357 Magnum in her mouth and pulled the trigger in March 1986, three months after she started work as a nude dancer.

Israel eases curfews on Gaza Strip refugee camps

JERUSALEM — Israel eased curfews on some Gaza Strip refugee camps so Palestinians could go to work Thursday, and assigned more police to an Israeli highway where Arabs threw firebombs at a school bus.

The bombs missed the bus and did not explode. A visiting Red Cross official said there appeared to be no critical food shortages in refugee camps under curfew, which supported the Israeli position. U.N. officials who administer the camps in the occupied territories challenged his statement.

Defense Minister Yitnak Rabin's decision to have soldiers beat protesters instead of firing on them brought this comment from the State Department: "We are disturbed by the adoption of a policy by the government of Israel that calls for beatings as a means to restore or maintain order."

Millions in USSR to be laid off in next 12 years

MOSCOW — About 16 million Soviets will be laid off by the year 2000 under Mikhail S. Gorbachev's reform drive, and some people are already worrying about a return of mass unemployment, Pravda said Thursday.

The account in the Communist Party daily gave more hints of the widespread concerns raised by Gorbachev's drive for "perestrioka," or the wholesale revamping of the Soviet economy and society.

Along with a more effective use of the labor force, the Soviet Communist Party general secretary has said an increase in retail prices is needed to pay the real cost of producing milk, bread and other food staples and reduce the \$97 billion the government pays in annual subsidies.

Daily Nebraskan

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