

House votes down bill, ends Contra aid

WASHINGTON — A bitterly divided House voted Wednesday to cut off U.S. military support for Nicaragua's Contra rebels, rejecting President Reagan's aid request in the hope of spurring peace prospects in Central America.

The 219-211 vote, culminating six years of overt and covert military support for the rebels fighting the leftist Sandinista government, killed Reagan's request for \$36.2 million in new aid to keep the Contras alive as a fighting force through June.

It was a serious defeat for the president, who had lobbied hard on the issue for two weeks and put the Contras among the top foreign policy priorities for his final year in office. Only a day

earlier, Reagan had argued that failure to extend aid would strengthen communist influence in the hemisphere.

"Today's vote is the end of a chapter," said House Majority Whip Tony Coelho, D-Calif. "Contra policy is the past. Now we can deploy America's greatest strengths, from aid and trade to diplomacy, to stoke the flames of liberty and secure the future for Central America."

But Republicans bitterly warned that the action would relieve part of the pressure on Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega that has forced him into recent concessions, and that Managua would slip backwards into renewed repression.

"The issue of Nicaragua and Central America will not go away," said House Republican Leader Robert Michel of Illinois.

"If you vote this package down, you'd better be prepared to bear the consequences," Michel said. "And who among you is smart enough to predict the path on which (Nicaraguan President) Daniel Ortega will take you?"

Current aid to the rebels expires Feb. 29, and Democrats pledged to hold another vote before the month is out on an alternative package of purely humanitarian aid to the rebels, and follow that up with a new emphasis on economic development aid for countries in the region which abide by terms of a five-nation peace accord.

"We recognize that we cannot morally walk away and leave them abandoned in the jungle," said Rep. David Obey, D-Wis.

The most controversial part of the defeated package was \$3.6 million earmarked for weapons and ammunition, which Reagan had said he would withhold until March 31 to see how cease-fire talks go between the rebels and the Managua government. Those talks are scheduled to resume Feb. 10.

The United States has funneled more than \$200 million to the rebels since their guerrilla war began in 1981. Stockpiled weapons and other supplies continue to be airdropped to the Contras by the CIA, operating from Honduran bases.

Kennedy is confirmed to Court

97-0 vote ends seven months of political battle

WASHINGTON — The Senate on Wednesday swiftly and unanimously confirmed Anthony M. Kennedy to the Supreme Court, ending a ferocious political battle that began seven months ago.

Kennedy, a federal appeals court judge who was President Reagan's third choice to succeed retired Justice Lewis F. Powell, was approved by 97-0 with Democrats and Republicans alike praising him as a moderate, open-minded conservative.

Reagan, in a statement, said he is "extremely pleased" and declared Kennedy "will make an outstanding addition to the Supreme Court. . . . The Senate has not only restored to the nation a full nine-member Supreme Court, it has reaffirmed this country's commitment to the philosophy of judicial restraint."

In Sacramento, Calif., Kennedy issued a statement saying he could serve on the Supreme Court, and

adding he is committed to the American constitutional system.

Kennedy, 51, will be sworn into office Feb. 18, becoming the 104th justice in the history of the nation's highest court.

He is expected to play a pivotal role on the sharply divided court, particularly on such issues as abortion, affirmative action and separation of church and state.

His confirmation, after a pro forma one-hour debate, was in marked contrast to the stormy fight touched off by the nomination last July of Robert H. Bork.

Bork, Reagan's first choice to fill the vacancy created by Powell's June 26 retirement, was denounced as a rigid right-wing ideologue who threatened individual freedom and civil rights progress. The Senate rejected him by 58-42 on Oct. 23.

Reagan, calling Bork the victim of a lynch mob, then picked Douglas H.

Ginsburg, who withdrew from consideration after admitting he had smoked marijuana while a Harvard law school professor.

Kennedy was extolled Wednesday by Sen. Edward M. Kennedy, D-Mass., as a man of "integrity, intelligence, courage and craftsmanship" embracing a "judicial philosophy that places him within the mainstream of constitutional interpretation."

The liberal senator, who is not related to the nominee, was pinching for Sen. Joseph R. Biden Jr., D-Del., in leading the placid Senate debate.

Biden, chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee that recommended Kennedy's confirmation by a 14-0 vote, missed Wednesday's debate because of illness.

Also absent were two presidential candidates, Sens. Albert Gore Jr., D-Tenn., and Paul Simon, D-Ill.

Rumor of nuclear accident sweeps Europe

STOCKHOLM, Sweden — Rumors of another Soviet nuclear accident swept across Western Europe on Wednesday, triggering speculation in grain and dollars on financial markets before being squelched by Soviet and Swedish officials.

The false reports may have been fallout from a test of an early warning system begun by an international nuclear energy watchdog agency in the wake of the 1986 Chernobyl disaster in the Soviet Union.

Wednesday's rumors apparently began in Sweden, as did the first reports of the accident at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant in the

Soviet Ukraine.

The national news agency Tidningarnas Telegrambyrå, citing Sweden's national Radiation Protection agency, reported "an atomic power plant accident apparently occurred in the Soviet Union."

The report spread quickly, even though officials at the radiation agency said they had made no such statement and the Soviet Minister of Nuclear Energy denied an accident had occurred.

The dollar, a traditional money shelter in troubled times, rose slightly on some European markets as the rumor spread. "Everyone started

buying dollars like crazy," said a trader at a large U.S. bank in Frankfurt.

The Swedish radiation agency said no increased levels of radiation were reported from anywhere in Sweden. The U.S. State Department also said it had received no reports of increased radiation.

The Soviet Union came under international criticism when it delayed reporting the Chernobyl accident for several days as a cloud of radioactivity spread across Europe and eventually around the world. That accident, the worst in the history of nuclear power, caused 31 deaths.

In Brief

Six Palestinians shot; Arabs injure Israelis

BETHLEHEM, Occupied West Bank — Israeli soldiers shot and wounded six Palestinians and Arabs with slingshots, stones and marbles injured five Israelis in battles Wednesday in the West Bank, witnesses and officials said.

Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir rebuffed a call from Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak for a six-month freeze on Jewish settlements in the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip as a prelude to peace talks.

During a visit to a West Bank settlement, Shamir told Jewish settlers he hoped their communities "will grow and prosper."

Asked what advice he would give to Jewish settlers to deal with the unrest, Shamir said "Be strong." Asked what he would advise Palestinians, Shamir said: "Be quiet."

Soldiers on military plane caught with cocaine

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico — Three American soldiers and a Panamanian were arrested after 77 pounds of cocaine were found in a U.S. military plane flew from Panama, a customs official said Wednesday.

The four, all wearing U.S. Army uniforms, were detained at Roosevelt Roads Naval Station after the drug was found Saturday during routine customs check, said Mamie Pollock, U.S. Customs regional director.

Customs agents, assisted by drug-sniffing dogs, seized about 77 pounds of cocaine with a value of \$350,000 to \$420,000, DEA Special Agent Arthur Barnes said in a telephone interview Wednesday.

General affairs committee advances liquor bills

LINCOLN — Proposals that would require kegged beer to carry an additional identification, and allow operation of so-called brewpubs have been sent to the full Legislature by the Government Affairs Committee.

The committee advanced LB944, sponsored by Sen. Rex Haberman of Imperial, requiring all kegged beer to be marked with an identification number inscribed with a black-light marker. The number would be invisible to a purchaser.

Haberman said he wanted to stop so-called "kegger parties" because of evidence that teen-agers have often been drawn to them.

Mecham says he may have asked for probe cover-up

PHOENIX, Ariz. — Gov. Evan Mecham acknowledged Wednesday before a House impeachment committee that he may have told Arizona's top police officer not to cooperate with an investigation of an alleged death threat.

Mecham's statement came only hours after he said he gave no such order to Department of Public Safety Director Ralph Milstead.

Speaker Joe Lane said the House could decide by the end of the week whether to impeach Mecham, who also faces a recall election and a criminal trial.

Two men held on \$8.4 million bond in hostage case

TUSCALOOSA, Ala. — Staff at a private school prayed Wednesday for two jobless men, one lured from an unemployment line, being held under \$8.4 million bond each for a schoolhouse siege in which 80 youngsters were taken captive.

Police said the men — James L. Harvey and John Rhodes Jr., both 42, unemployed and largely strangers to each other — were charged with 84 counts of kidnapping each in the day-long siege at West End Christian School.

Assistant Police Chief Ken Swindle said the counts were for the 80 children and four teachers

taken hostage when two armed men, wearing ski masks, burst into the schoolhouse Tuesday morning.

Harvey, who police said lured Rhodes from an unemployment line and masterminded the takeover, was transferred to a state mental ward Wednesday for a psychiatric examination, while Rhodes remained in jail.

"We thank you Lord that nobody was hurt, and we pray that you will work within Mr. Rhodes and Mr. Harvey to change their hearts," Headmaster Dan Carden said in prayer with staff members at

the mostly-empty school. The 350 children at the school, founded by a Baptist church, were given the day off Wednesday.

Carden found a battered door to one classroom but otherwise little damage to the building. Parents fought with fears during the 12-hour takeover, but many hostage children fought mostly with boredom.

"It was so boring for the children and they got so tired," said Mary Alice Blanton, the last teacher freed. "Imagine third-graders having to sit in a classroom 12 hours."

Court awards father custody of Baby M

TRENTON, N.J. — New Jersey's highest court Wednesday awarded custody of the child once known as Baby M to her father and his wife, but ruled that the surrogate parenting contract under which she was born was invalid.

The New Jersey Supreme Court also said that Mary Beth Whitehead-Gould, who gave birth to the child under the contract, maintains her rights as a parent and must be permitted to visit her daughter.

"Our law prohibits paying or accepting money in connection with any placement of a child for adoption," the court said. "Baby selling potentially results in the exploitation of all

parties involved."

The case began when Whitehead-Gould, then known as Mary Beth Whitehead, reneged on a \$10,000 contract in which she agreed to be artificially inseminated with William Stern's sperm and turn the baby over to him.

The dispute sparked a worldwide debate over surrogate motherhood and new reproductive technologies.

Last March 31, Judge Harvey Sorkow upheld the contract, severed Whitehead-Gould's parental rights and granted custody to the Sterns. Sorkow said the Sterns would provide the most stable home and condemned

Whitehead-Gould as an impulsive and manipulative woman.

The state supreme court ruled that the contract was invalid, but upheld Sorkow's decision on parental fitness and added that a surrogate contract that did not involve payment would have been legal.

The court restored Whitehead-Gould's parental rights and invalidated the adoption of the baby by Stern's wife, Elizabeth. The justices said the only issue remaining in the case is the extent of visitation by Whitehead-Gould, which will be decided by the lower court.

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