

# American troops in Honduras

PALMEROLA AIR BASE, Honduras — Planeloads of U.S. soldiers began arriving here Thursday in a show of strength ordered by President Reagan to counter what he called an invasion by Nicaraguan forces.

Two battalions from the renowned 82nd Airborne Division of Fort Bragg, N.C., and two battalions from the 7th Light Infantry Division of Fort Ord, Calif., were combined into a task force of 3,000 troops.

A Honduran official said his government had given the Sandinistas 24 hours to get out.

President Daniel Ortega of Nicaragua responded that his army was "ready to combat and liquidate the famous forces of the 82nd Airborne Division."

Maj. Gen. Carl W. Stiner, commander of the 82nd Airborne, said he knew of no plan to have U.S. troops enter into the battle between the Sandinistas and the U.S.-backed Contras.

"We have not been told to do so," he said before leaving Fort Bragg. He said the force was capable of that, if needed.

The American troops were to engage in joint exercises with the Hondurans.

Stiner also said there was no plan to use the troops if more trouble broke out in nearby Panama.

The American forces began streaming into Palmerola at 10:15 a.m. as part of what the Pentagon

called operation code-named "Golden Pheasant," carried by 26 military transport planes.

The C-141s landed in the intense heat at 30-minute intervals at this air base, headquarters of U.S. military operations in Honduras, 40 miles northwest of Tegucigalpa.

The deployment was about 125 miles west of the area where Reagan administration officials say the Nicaraguan Sandinista army has chased rebel Contra forces over the border into Honduras.

Col. Manuel Suarez Benavides, Honduran armed forces spokesman, said the deadline for the Sandinistas to leave was final.

He said 2,000 Nicaraguan soldiers had crossed the border and penetrated about six miles in pursuit of Contra rebels. A military intelligence source said earlier the Nicaraguans were surrounded by about 4,000 Honduran troops.

Suarez Benavides would not comment on Pentagon reports on new Nicaraguan attacks inside Honduras.

The Sandinista movements did not appear to be a full-fledged invasion, Stiner said adding that he saw the U.S. operation as a deterrent.

Lt. Gen. John W. Foss, commander of the 18th Airborne corps, said it was "playing with words" to argue what constitutes an invasion. He said it was useful to send a signal.

Ortega would not say whether his soldiers had crossed the border in

pursuit of the U.S.-supported rebels.

"Here the question is not if army troops penetrated Honduran territory or not, but that we have dozens of camps of mercenary forces in Honduran territory, in view of and tolerated by the Honduran government," he said at a news conference in Managua.

He said Nicaraguan soldiers would not withdraw from the border area. Ortega called the U.S. troop deployment "a dangerous act" and said it was "another escalation of the war against Nicaragua." He demanded a meeting of the U.N. Security Council.

A spokesman for the Nicaraguan Foreign Ministry said before the news conference that Nicaragua had begun pulling its troops back from the frontier region after driving about 2,000 Contra rebels back into Honduras. The Defense and Foreign ministries denied that Nicaraguan troops entered Honduras.

Heavy fighting was reported Wednesday in the Olancho border province about 125 miles east of Palmerola.

Included in the American forces are two battalions from the 82nd Airborne and two from a new division organized for quick movement around the world. The 82nd Airborne and 7th Light Infantry are part of different corps within the Army and are based at opposite ends of the country.

## In Brief

### New date set by court for Joubert execution

The Nebraska Supreme Court has set an April 26 execution date for John J. Joubert, although attorneys for the state and for Joubert don't expect the date to be final.

An execution date set last July was canceled by continuing appeals. Mel Kamelohr, Nebraska assistant attorney general, said he expects the same thing to happen to the April 26 date.

"He still has open to him what we call a post-conviction action back in the Sarpy County District court," Kamelohr said Wednesday.

"Then (there are) the federal courts. He can go through the federal district court, the U.S. Court of Appeals and try to get back to the U.S. Supreme Court that way. He has a lot of opportunities yet."

Joubert faces the death penalty for the 1983 slayings of two Sarpy County youths, Danny Joe Eberly and Christopher Walden.

Joubert's attorney Joseph McQuillan confirmed Wednesday that he is going to ask for a stay of execution and said he expects to get it.

The last person executed in Nebraska was mass-murderer Charles Starkweather in January 1958.

### Plane with 136 passengers crashes in Colombia

CUCUTA, Colombia — A Boeing 727 jetliner carrying 136 passengers on a domestic flight crashed Thursday in northern Colombia, local police said.

Police in the town of Zulia said they had been told by three witnesses that the plane crashed into trees and later slammed into the earth. The witnesses said the plane burst into flames and no survivors were apparent, the police said.

There was no immediate confirmation from Avianca Airlines or the Civil Aeronautics Agency.

### Study links cholesterol to heart attack deaths

SANTA FE, N.M. — A 25-year study of 1,969 men has shown a direct link between increased cholesterol in the diet and an increased risk of a fatal heart attack, researchers said Thursday.

Many previous studies have shown that too much cholesterol in the blood raises the risk of dying from a heart attack, but this is the first study to show convincingly that cholesterol in the diet can raise blood cholesterol and in turn increase the likelihood of death from heart attacks, researchers said.

Furthermore, the study may explain why the incidence of heart disease is falling in the United States, said the study's author, Richard Shekelle of the University of Texas School of Public Health in Houston.

The men Shekelle studied, workers at a Western Electric Co. plant in Chicago, had a median intake of 737 milligrams of cholesterol per day — roughly the amount in three eggs — when the study began.

### Mecham takes stand in his impeachment trial

PHOENIX, Ariz. — Gov. Evan Mecham testified Thursday that he never ordered anyone to hamper an investigation into an aide's alleged death threat, but said he told Arizona's top police officer not to cooperate with the probe.

Mecham, fighting for his political life, insisted he was kept in the dark about details of a death threat allegedly made by one of his staffers. When he did hear about it, he indicated, he didn't consider it a serious threat.

"Two somewhat excitable people had a verbal exchange and somewhere along the line there were those who determined they would make something out of it," he said. "It's a total manufactured thing."

Mecham acknowledged in his second day of testimony, however, that he ordered the state's top lawyer not to cooperate with an attorney general's investigation of the alleged threat.

# Panama government seizes utilities

PANAMA CITY, Panama — The government on Thursday took over major public services crippled by strikes, and heavily armed soldiers patrolled the capital to keep order after an attempted coup against Gen. Manuel Antonio Noriega.

Leaders of the National Civic Crusade, an anti-government coalition, had planned demonstrations Thursday, but the sight of hundreds of soldiers carrying automatic rifles and tear gas canisters apparently discouraged them.

A day earlier, opposition activists and public employees furious about not being paid poured into the streets in the biggest protest yet of Noriega's military rule.

In the face of widespread walk-outs by public employees, Noriega's Defense Forces took control Thursday of all major utilities, most government ministries, railroads, ports, airports and the post office.

The employees were striking because the cash-starved government, under economic pressure by the United States, was unable to pay them.

Shops and stores in the central business district gradually reopened Thursday and electricity was restored to most of the nation after an 18-hour outage caused by an electrical workers' strike. Taxis and buses that had deserted the capital's streets began running again.

Banks, which shut their doors March 4, remained closed.

"Nobody is buying anything," said a lottery vendor, displaying a fistful of unsold tickets.

The United States, seeking Noriega's ouster, has applied economic pressure including a freeze on Panamanian government accounts in U.S. banks and the withholding of Panama Canal revenues. This has dried up the supply of U.S. dollars, Panama's national currency.

There were differing opinions Thursday on how the coup attempt by a group of officers had affected Noriega, chief of the 15,000-member Defense Forces and the power behind Panama's civilian government.

## Correction

In "Non-smokers respond" (DN March 17) the story refers to a clean indoor air policy. The policy was passed by the University of Nebraska Board of Regents in 1935. The Legislature passed its Nebraska Clean Indoor Act in 1980.

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# IRA man buried on somber St. Patrick's Day

BELFAST, Northern Ireland — The Irish Republican Army buried a guerrilla Thursday alongside the trampled graves and tumbled tombstones where a Protestant gunman killed three people and wounded 68 at an IRA funeral a day earlier.

Wearing shamrocks and green or black armbands on a somber St. Patrick's Day, 3,000 mourners gathered in the Roman Catholic Milltown cemetery to bury Kevin McCracken yards from where the gunman opened fire and hurled grenades on Wednesday.

At St. Patrick's Day services, Catholic leaders appealed for calm amid fears the cemetery killings will herald new and prolonged sectarian clashes. For the second day, police reported sporadic rioting and car burning in Belfast's Catholic districts

Thursday.

Police kept a discreet distance while funeral speakers, standing amid tombstones knocked over in Wednesday's pandemonium, renewed charges that British authorities and Northern Ireland's mainly Protestant police force colluded in the attack.

"Britain attacked us yesterday . . . Let Britain take a lesson from our presence here today. You can never defeat us," declared Jim McAllister, a leading member of the outlawed IRA's political wing, Sinn Fein.

A British army patrol shot McCracken, 33, on Monday night in Belfast after he fired on them, the army said.

Before his funeral, three hooded IRA gunmen fired three volleys — the movement's traditional

salute to its dead — in a side street near his home. They fired over a makeshift shrine of his photograph surrounded by wreaths.

Firing the volleys in a side street avoided attracting police action at the funeral. Britain has banned paramilitary displays by both Catholic and Protestant groups in the province.

Black flags fluttered from the windows of row houses in West Belfast's cramped streets as McCracken's coffin, topped with the Irish tricolor flag and his guerrilla insignia of a black beret and gloves, was driven to Milltown.

Gerry Adams, president of the outlawed IRA's legal political wing, Sinn Fein, said the Royal Ulster Constabulary's denial of complicity in Wednesday's attack "rings hollow." He claimed some police officers were also members of Protestant paramilitary groups.

# State Republicans support Reagan's decision

The Republican members of Nebraska's congressional delegation said Thursday they backed President Reagan's decision to send 3,200 American troops to Honduras.

Democratic Sen. J. James Exon said he was disappointed that the United States was sending troops to Honduras, but he said it "probably was the best and most measured course of action the United States could take at this time."

However, he said he was concerned about the implications of sending the troops to Honduras.

"It's not unlike how we got involved in Vietnam and elsewhere," he said.

The White House described the movement as "an emergency deployment readiness exer-

cise" triggered by what it called the invasion of Honduras by 1,500 to 2,000 Nicaraguan forces pursuing Contra rebels.

But the Nicaraguan government said again Thursday that its troops had not crossed the border and called on the United Nations and the Organization of American States to "establish what the facts are."

"I think it's an appropriate response," said Rep. Doug Bereuter, R-1st District.

"It is clear the Sandinistas have violated air and ground space of Hondurans in pursuit," Bereuter said, calling it a violation of the Central American peace plan.

Rep. Hal Daub, R-2nd District, said Reagan had to make a difficult decision, "but I think a

necessary one in light of the . . . unlawful actions of the Nicaraguan government."

"The violation of that border was a serious matter and if not dealt with in a forthright manner will clearly occur again," Daub said.

Both Bereuter and Daub said they believe the events in Central America could change the way congress votes on future Contra aid.

"I think it will sober the thinking of the more liberal members of Congress that perhaps they will not be so naive when it comes to understanding communist and Marxist intentions," Daub said.

Rep. Virginia Smith said she has supported sending assistance to the Contra forces in Nicaragua.