

Gorbachev says Afghan peace process complete

MOSCOW — The Soviet Union and Afghanistan said Thursday agreement is at hand on ending the Afghan civil war and urged that a formal accord be signed in Geneva so the Kremlin can begin withdrawing its troops May 15.

The target date is two weeks before Soviet Communist Party General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev and President Reagan begin their summit in the Soviet capital. Agreement on Afghanistan would resolve an issue that has troubled relations for nearly a decade, prompting a U.S. grain embargo and keeping Americans home

from the 1980 Olympics in Moscow. Gorbachev and Afghan leader Najib issued a joint statement after meeting in the Soviet Central Asian city of Tashkent.

"There is certain to be a signed agreement on political normalization," Tass quoted Gorbachev as saying while he toured a collective farm near Tashkent after the meeting, and that we and the Americans will agree to be guarantors."

The joint communique, distributed by the Tass news agency, published on the front page of the government newspaper Izvestia and read

during the nightly news program "Vremya." It omitted the usual criticism of positions taken by Pakistan and the United States at the Geneva peace talks. This omission could mean some behind-the-scenes compromise has been forged.

President Mohammed Zia ul-Had said the Geneva accords were ready for signing, but U.N. mediator Diego Cordovez indicated problems remained.

"There are very difficult decisions and the only good thing — I think that is important — is that the political will is obviously there to take them,"

he told reporters in Geneva.

Gulpaddin Hexmatyar, head of the seven-party Afghan guerrilla alliance, said in Islamabad, Pakistan, that it was the "first step toward victory" and a "defeat for the Russians." He said the guerrillas "will try to intensify" the war.

Draft documents in Geneva call for an end to outside aid for the rebels and U.S. officials have pressed for "symmetry," a simultaneous end of Soviet military aid to Najib's government.

Zia, quoted by Pakistan's official news agency, said: "According to

unofficial reports, the two superpowers have agreed on the symmetry under which both would be able to provide continued assistance to their respective allies in Afghanistan." No details of the alleged agreement were given.

Sources in Washington called the Gorbachev-Najib statement a positive sign of accommodation on the symmetry question but the State Department's public comment was limited to: "We have not yet received a response from the Soviet government on the proposal. Until it's received, we must reserve judgment."

Jet refueled after hijackers threatened to take off

NICOSIA, Cyprus — Workers refueled a Kuwaiti jetliner Thursday after its Arab hijackers fired at security guards and threatened to force the pilot to take off with little fuel, Iran reported.

The official Islamic Republic News Agency quoted the hijackers as saying they would take off at midnight (4:30 p.m. EDT) with about 50 hostages, but did not give a destination. The hour passed with no indication whether the plane had left.

When it reported the development only two

minutes before the announced departure time, IRNA said "there are still obstacles on the runway," placed there earlier by airport officials to keep the jet from taking off.

As the drama at Mashhad Airport in northeastern Iran stretched into its third day, the hijackers said they placed explosives throughout the Kuwait Airways jumbo jet, which still had 55 passengers and crew aboard, IRNA reported.

The situation at the airport was "out of control," according to the news agency, moni-

tored in Nicosia.

The hijackers, said to number between five and seven, are demanding that Kuwait release from its prisons 17 pro-Iranian extremist who were convicted of bombing the U.S. and French embassies in Kuwait in 1983.

Among the hostages on the Boeing 747 are three members of Kuwait's royal family. One of them appealed to Iranian authorities to provide jet fuel, IRNA said.

"We're very tired and our brothers (the hijackers) are very serious in their threat to

blow up the plane," Fadel Khaled Al-Sabah told the control tower by radio, IRNA reported.

Early Thursday, the hijackers released 32 people, IRNA said. On Tuesday and Wednesday, 25 passengers were freed.

The hijackers fired several shots out of the plane Thursday after repeating their demand for fuel, IRNA said. It did not mention casualties.

The plane has been at Mashhad since Tuesday, when it landed after being commandeered en route to Kuwait from Bangkok with 112 people aboard.

Jewish activists against Jackson

WASHINGTON — Jewish activists who consider Jesse Jackson anti-Semitic, anti-Israel or both are mobilizing to turn voters against his Democratic presidential bid in the crucial New York primary.

Even though his efforts to make peace with Jews appear to have diminished the degree of antipathy toward him since 1984, lingering suspicion has set the stage for what may become the most negative response to his 1988 campaign.

New York Mayor Ed Koch's assessment of the situation was summarized in a New York Post headline last weekend — "Koch to Jews: 'You've got to be crazy to vote for Jesse.'"

"I'm getting dozens of letters every week with expressions of concern about the Jackson campaign," said Rabbi Abraham Cooper of the Simon Wiesenthal Center For Holocaust Studies in Los Angeles.

"We will absolutely not support a Jackson candidacy . . . because he is

not a friend of the state of Israel."

In Indianapolis on Wednesday, Jackson was asked how he expected to fare among New York's Jewish voters.

"You'll never get all of any one group," he said. "All you can do is reach out. I've reached out and I'm glad to see people are responding."

The New York Post reported Thursday that Jackson campaign advisers have suggested tackling the problem directly.

Smuggler admits gun-running for Contras

WASHINGTON — A convicted drug smuggler told Congress Thursday he flew weapons into Costa Rica for the Contra guerrillas battling the government of Nicaragua and returned to the United States with drugs.

Gary Betzner said George Morales, the man for whom he was working, "told me he had made a deal with the CIA to supply them (the Contras). He wanted me to fly guns and ammunition to the Contras and bring some contraband back."

Twice in July 1984, Betzner told a

Senate Foreign Relations subcommittee, he flew plane loads of small arms, including M-16 rifles, mines and explosives, to a small airstrip in northern Costa Rica.

He said he landed near a ranch owned by John Hull, an American who has reportedly been involved in CIA efforts to aid the Contras operating from northern Costa Rica into neighboring Nicaragua.

"I was sympathetic to the Contras," Betzner told the subcommittee on drugs and terrorism, which has

been investigating links between illegal drug trafficking and Latin American governments.

Morales is serving a 16-year federal prison sentence in Miami for cocaine trafficking.

Earlier, Betzner testified that he was paid up to \$200,000 per load for flying illegal drugs into the United States and, on one occasion, flying weapons into El Salvador.

The weapons included grenade launchers and anti-ship mines and were flown from Florida to the Ilopango Air Base in El Salvador in May 1983, according to Gary Betzner.

In Brief

Gore told to tone down attacks on leaders

Albert Gore Jr. got a message from two Democratic Party heavyweights on Thursday to tone down his criticism of presidential front-runners Michael Dukakis and Jesse Jackson, while Sen. Paul Simon put his campaign on hold but kept his delegates in pocket.

New York Gov. Mario Cuomo, one of the Gore critics, implied he might withhold his sought-after endorsement and said, "Who cares what . . . Mario Cuomo says?"

Cuomo said he told Gore that his negative campaigning "wasn't helping him" in New York ahead of that state's April 19 primary.

Democratic National Chairman Paul G. Kirk Jr. endorsed Cuomo's appeal to the Tennessee senator. "The admonitions that have been addressed to Sen. Gore by Gov. Cuomo just help to make sure we can continue to talk about the issues in a positive way," Kirk said in Washington, D.C.

Noriega continues to play hardball

PANAMA CITY, Panama — A major rift appeared Thursday in the opposition to Gen. Manuel Antonio Noriega, who is getting tough with critics in defiance of the U.S. economic squeeze and a buildup of American forces in Panama.

Two parties split from the opposition alliance to form their own anti-government movement. Their leaders argued that the economic sanctions are hurting Panama's people more than they are damaging Noriega and the civilian government he controls.

Roberto Arosemena and Mauro Zuniga, leaders of the Popular Action Party, announced formation of the Popular Civic Movement in a break with the alliance National Civic Crusade.

McCracken is suspect in other bank robberies

A suspect arrested for the robbery of First Tier Bank also is a suspect in the robbery of two banks in Portland, Ore., the FBI in Lincoln said.

James McCracken, 32, had just bought a bus ticket for Portland at the Greyhound Bus Depot at about 1:30 p.m. Wednesday when Lincoln Police Detective Ron Kahler and Officer Charley Daniels arrested him without incident.

Bill allowing video depositions passes

A bill designed to protect child victims and witnesses from the trauma of testifying in a courtroom received final approval from state senators Thursday.

The sponsor of the bill, Sen. Sandra Scofield of Chadron, has said that some children are too petrified to testify in a courtroom. The end result, she says, is that many cases don't go to trial.

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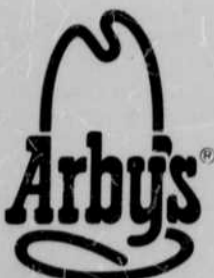


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