

North finishes six-day testimony

WASHINGTON -- Oliver North concluded his defense Thursday after six grueling days on the witness stand, testifying he felt he had become the fall guy in the Iran-Contra affair when he heard himself described at a White House news conference as "the only one who knew what was going on."

Attorney Brendan Sullivan announced soon after North left the stand, "That concludes the defense," signaling that the 11-week-old trial was nearing an end. U.S. District Judge Gerhard A. Gesell said he hoped to have closing arguments on Monday. Instructions to the jurors and their deliberations would follow.

During four days of tough cross-examination, North denied prosecution contentions that he lied about his Iran-Contra efforts and personally profited from some of them. He said he had explicit authorization from his superiors -- and, he assumed, from President Reagan -- for his actions and didn't take a dime he wasn't entitled to.

He testified Thursday that two days before the Nov. 25, 1986, press conference, in which Reagan and Attorney General Edwin Meese III took part, North had been interviewed for four hours by Meese and aides.

He is accused of lying during that interview. But he testified he told them readily about "the secret within the secret" -- that profits from arms sales to Iran had been funneled to the guerrillas fighting the leftist government of Nicaragua. Therefore, he

said, he was shocked to learn that he might be the target of a criminal investigation.

What he heard as he watched the press conference on television, North said, "was inconsistent with what I told the attorney general two days before." Meese said North's boss, John Poindexter, had known of the money diversion but hadn't approved it -- when, in fact, he had.

North testified, "It was very clear to me that this was part of pointing the finger at Ollie North. He was 'the only one who knew what was going on' -- which, I must say, is the way it was supposed to be." North's firing and Poindexter's resignation as Reagan's national security adviser were announced by Meese that day.

Both at the trial, which began Jan. 31, and at congressional hearings nearly two years ago, North said he had assumed while he was directing covert aid to the Contras that he would have to take the rap if word got out about the help, which was being provided at a time that official U.S. aid was banned.

Prosecutor John Kecker's final questioning of North concerned two letters he wrote in December 1986 to a contractor who had installed a \$13,800 security system at North's home. The letters were backdated to make it appear North had intended to pay for the system, which had been paid for by retired Maj. Gen. Richard Secord, whom North had recruited to run the Contra supply effort. The letters are the basis for one charge, that North accepted an illegal gratuity.

North was still in the Marine Corps, he said, and didn't want to fabricate the letters at work because he didn't want the Marines involved in "that type of cover-up." Therefore, he testified, he went to a catalog store to write the letters on display typewriters.

Another of the 12 charges against North is that he obstructed a presidential inquiry by lying to Meese and by altering, destroying, concealing and removing documents from the National Security Council office where he worked.

Relying on notes taken at the Nov. 23, 1986 meeting by Meese chief of staff John Richardson, Kecker led North through facts that appeared to have been omitted by him in the Meese meeting. North said that the prosecutor was basing his questions on a "very cryptic description of four hours of conversation."

He said he could not remember details of the interview. But he also said, "I did the very best I could in telling the truth and answering their questions. . . . I have told you when I didn't tell the truth."

A day before the Meese interview, a search of North's office had uncovered a memorandum that spelled out the money trail from Iran to Nicaragua.

"By golly, when it was raised I told them the truth," North testified. "When I got back to the White House I called to Admiral Poindexter to tell him the secret within the secret was now known to four other men."

House votes in favor of Contra aid package

WASHINGTON -- The House voted overwhelmingly Thursday to approve a \$49.7 million package of non-military aid for the Nicaraguan Contras, giving President Bush a chance to forge a bipartisan policy on Central America.

The vote in the Democratic-controlled chamber was 309 to 110.

The action represents a bid to declare a truce in the bitter, years-old fight between the White House and Congress over aid to the Contras and bring pressure on Nicaragua's leftist Sandinista government to keep its promises to allow democratic reform.

"This bill tries to set in motion a united, single-voice policy," said House Speaker Jim Wright of Texas moments before the chamber voted.

"It ends military involvement and covert efforts to overthrow

governments in our hemisphere," Wright said.

At the same time, he added, "It says to Nicaragua that we are very earnest about you fulfilling these commitments that you made to internal democratization."

The Senate also opened debate on the proposal Thursday. Republican and Democratic leaders alike pleaded in vain with Contra supporters not to push amendments, which they said would scuttle Bush's attempt to foster an era of bipartisan cooperation between the executive and legislative branches of government.

"If this accord is circumvented or exploited, it would be an enormous blow to the chances for bipartisan cooperation in a broad range of areas," said Sen. Patrick Leahy, D-Vt., Democratic floor manager of the Contra-aid package.

Abbie Hoffman dead at age 52

NEW YORK -- Abbie Hoffman, the Yippie who clung to his '60s ideals amid an onslaught of '80s yuppieism, was remembered Thursday as a radical and a joker who could provoke a laugh even as he outraged and informed.

"It's like a hallucination," Jerry Rubin said of Hoffman's death. "I

still don't believe it, frankly. I still think it's an Abbie media event."

Hoffman, 52 years old and still anti-establishment as ever, died peacefully in his bed Wednesday, according to Michael Waldron, his landlord in New Hope, Pa. An autopsy was scheduled to determine the cause of death.

Thirteenth human sacrifice found on ranch

MATAMOROS, Mexico -- One of the suspects in a cult of human sacrifice pointed out the grave of a 13th body on Thursday and police ordered him to dig it up.

"You'll do it with your hands if you have to," one officer told Sergio Martinez after the suspect was handed a pick and shovel.

Martinez had been taken back to a ranch near Matamoros, where a dozen bodies were unearthed Tuesday. He and other suspects have told authorities there were 14 bodies buried on the ranch.

In a dramatic public confession Wednesday, some of the five suspects in custody said victims were put to death in rituals that were intended to provide a "magical shield" for members of a drug-smuggling ring.

Under the gaze of police on Thursday, Martinez went to work digging up the new grave and quickly revealed the body of a man in his 30s. Martinez said the man had been buried about four months ago.

So far, the only victim to be identified was Mark Kilroy, a 21-year-old

University of Texas pre-medical student who was kidnapped on the streets of Matamoros last month during spring break.

The suspects have said they killed at the demand of Adolfo de Jesus Constanzo, whom they called "godfather." They said Constanzo, 26, and Sara Maria Aldrete, 24, called the "witch," believed human sacrifices gave the members of the cult protection from harm.

Cameron County Sheriff's Lt. George Gavito said that Constanzo, a Cuban who has contacts in Miami, was last seen Tuesday over the border in Brownsville, Texas.

A warning that Constanzo and Ms. Aldrete might be heading for Miami was read to police officers there at roll calls Thursday, but "at this time we're not taking any active stance on it," said Detective Marie Chaney.

Constanzo's family was known to live in a middle-class neighborhood in the Miami area from the late 1970s to 1984, authorities said.

Meanwhile, new details emerged about the cult leaders, who are said to

have driven luxury cars and worn expensive clothes bought with drug profits.

"They had a wealthy lifestyle, buying '89 Mercedes, cash and all kinds of luxury cars and telephones and clothing," Gavito said.

'We're shocked and astounded that this could go on, that a student here could be involved in something like this.'

—Gonzalez

That description may fit the profile of a successful drug smuggler, but details about Ms. Aldrete's life fit no such pattern.

"Apparently, Sara was leading a double life: as a witch in Mexico and

as a dean's honor roll student at Texas Southmost College," said Sheriff's Deputy Carlos Tapia.

Texas Southmost College is a two-year college in Brownsville with an enrollment of 6,500.

Ms. Aldrete, a resident alien from Mexico, was a physical education major and was one of 33 students listed in the college's "Who's Who" directory in 1987-88. "Who's Who" members are nominated by faculty, have a grade point average of at least 3.0 and are active in campus organizations.

She was also president of the college's soccer booster club that year and recipient of the "Outstanding Physical Education Student" award. During the current session, Ms. Aldrete was enrolled in 13 hours of courses, including government, psychology, physical education, Spanish and first aid.

"We're shocked and astounded that this could go on, that a student here could be involved in something like this," said Mike Gonzalez, a spokesman for the school.

A search of Ms. Aldrete's home in Matamoros revealed an altar and blood-spatters, but no bones or bodies, Gavito said.

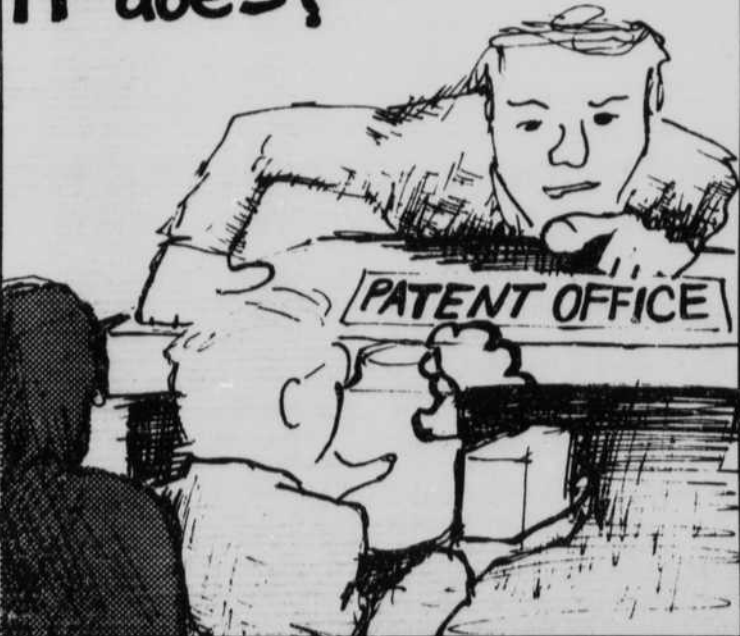
Five suspects have been arrested and four talked to reporters Wednesday, two of them saying that Constanzo committed most of the slayings.

One of the suspects in custody, Serafin M. Hernandez of Brownsville, was a law enforcement major at the community college. He was enrolled in two courses, "Criminal Investigation" and "Introduction to Sociology," according to school records.

In Matamoros, the bodies of the victims were at funeral homes waiting to be identified through dental records, according to Oran Neck, a Brownsville-based U.S. Customs Service agent.

Neck said U.S. federal drug agents will be assigned to the case. He said authorities have learned the group was importing more than a ton of marijuana into the United States each week.

What did you say it does?



Andy Manhart/Daily Nebraskan

Race is on to cash in on cold nuclear fusion

NEW YORK -- Universities are racing to cash in on cold nuclear fusion with a haste that shows how scholarly research often is tinged by big business.

A broad patent on cold nuclear fusion could be worth billions of dollars if the invention ends up providing a new way of producing cheap, clean and abundant energy.

But the lure of money inhibits exploration of cold fusion claims as leading researchers withhold information in order to protect their patent positions, lawyers and scholars said Thursday.

"There is absolutely no doubt in my mind that once you dangle out that pot of gold called a patent it causes people to publish less and disclose less," Donald Chisum, a patent expert at the University of Washington, said this week.

Scientists trying to test the cold

fusion claims announced at a news conference last month have been stymied because the two researchers have withheld important details of their work.

University of Utah scientist B. Stanley Pons and Martin Fleischmann of the University of Southampton in England announced last month they had achieved fusion using ordinary laboratory equipment at room temperature - the so-called cold fusion. They said their device produced four watts of energy for every watt it used.

Widespread skepticism about their findings has continued despite partial confirmation by other researchers. Still, the stakes are so high that virtually every major chemical research laboratory is believed to be looking into it.

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