

# Daily Nebraskan

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## North trial ends with jury's decision, acquitted on 9 counts

WASHINGTON (AP) -- Oliver L. North, the Marine at the center of the Reagan administration's secret effort to arm the Nicaragua Contras, was convicted Thursday of shredding documents and two other charges in the Iran-Contra affair. He was acquitted on nine other counts.

North said he would appeal the jury's decision: "We're absolutely confident of the final outcome. As a Marine I was taught to fight and fight hard for as long as it takes to prevail."

"We will continue this battle... and we will be fully vindicated," he told reporters in a statement at his lawyer's office. He did not take questions.

The former Marine, who faces up to 10 years in prison on the convictions, accepted the verdict without any show of emotion. But a congressional supporter described him as "absolutely elated" at the jury's decision.

After judge and jury had left the room, North walked to a railing separating him from his wife, Betsy, and kissed her lightly on the cheek. Mrs. North had been sitting in the front row with a clergyman.

It was the first trial born of the scandal that marred the last two years of Ronald Reagan's presidency and raised questions about then Vice President George Bush's involvement in the administration's clandestine effort to arm the Contras.

Even as the jury was returning its verdict, Bush told reporters at the White House that he did not participate in any arrangement to expedite aid to other countries in exchange for their support for the Contras. The White House said Bush would have no comment on the verdict.

In Los Angeles, former President Reagan also declined comment. North's defense was that he had

been a good soldier loyally carrying out what he knew his commander-in-chief, the president, wanted.

"The principle that no man is above the law has been vindicated," said prosecutor John Kecker, who refused to answer reporters' questions.

Keker, in a brief statement on the courthouse steps, told reporters, "Some said the system of justice could not deal effectively with this case. Some even said it could not be tried. Col. North has been convicted of three very serious charges. The jury has spoken."

North, 45, was pale and smiling nervously as he entered the courtroom where his trial began with jury selection more than three months ago.

The former Marine lieutenant colonel, twice wounded in the Vietnam war and decorated with the Silver Star for heroism, remained seated while the judge read the verdict.

The nine women and three men on the jury did not look at North as they filed into their seats. The panel found North guilty of three criminal charges - shredding documents, accepting an illegal gratuity and one count of aiding and abetting in an obstruction of Congress.

U.S. District Judge Gerhard A. Gesell set June 23 for sentencing. The illegal gratuity conviction - accepting a \$13,800 security fence for his home - carries a maximum penalty of two years in prison and a \$250,000 fine.

The conviction for destroying documents is punishable by a three year sentence and \$250,000 fine. For obstruction of Congress, the maximum penalty is five years and \$250,000.

Rep. Henry Hyde, R-Ill., who had been one of North's chief de-

fenders in the congressional Iran-Contra hearings two years ago, was in the courtroom for the verdict. Afterward, he walked up to North at the defense table and shook his hand. North smiled broadly.

Rep. Dana Rohrabacher, R-Calif., described North as "absolutely elated."

"We gave each other thumbs up," said Rohrabacher, a former White House aide for whom North campaigned last year. He said the jury found North guilty "of only cutting corners and not breaking the law."

Public disclosure of the affair in November 1986 began the worst crisis of President Reagan's eight-year presidency, a public furor that did not subside until after televised congressional hearings that made North a national figure.

The jury convicted North of falsifying and destroying documents in November 1986 as the affair was about to become public, and of accepting an illegal gratuity - the home security system - from Iran-Contra co-defendant Richard Secord.

North also was convicted of aiding and abetting in obstruction of Congress by falsifying a chronology of events in the affair. The false chronology stated that no one in the U.S. government knew until January 1986 that a CIA-assisted shipment from Israel to Iran in November 1985 contained Hawk missiles.

He was acquitted of five other charges of lying to or obstructing Congress, of two counts of lying to then-Attorney General Edwin Meese III and obstructing Meese's inquiry into the affair, of converting traveler's checks to his own use and of conspiring to defraud the Internal Revenue Service by using a tax-exempt foundation to raise funds for the Contras.

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## Space exploration resumed

# Craft sails into orbit, Magellan close behind

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. (AP) -- Atlantis found a hole in the clouds and thundered into orbit Thursday, sailing 184 miles above Earth where five astronauts prepared to propel NASA's state-of-the-art Magellan probe on a mapmaking journey to Venus.

Scientists hoped the \$550 million project would open a new "golden age" for an American planetary program dormant for a decade.

In a spectacular start, the winged spaceplane vaulted away from its seaside launch pad at 2:47 p.m. EDT, after being delayed a cliff-hanging 59 minutes by shifting clouds and winds that had threatened a second postponement in six days.

The astronauts quickly turned to remotely checking Magellan before its scheduled release later Thursday into an independent orbit.

An hour after that release, a rocket motor was to fire to propel the 7,600-pound Magellan on the start of a 456-day, 806-million-mile trip to Venus, a course that will take it 1 1/2 times around the sun.

Atlantis departed the pad just five minutes before its 64-minute launch window for the day would have expired - a window dictated by a requirement to have the shuttle in the proper position in orbit to dispatch Magellan.

The launch team had advanced the countdown to the 5-minute mark and held there, waiting for a break in the clouds that obscured a runway near the launch pad where Atlantis would land in an emergency.

Chief astronaut Dan Brandenstein, flying a weather scout plane, found a break, signaled the go-ahead, and the count was started and carried down to the blazing liftoff.

"It was another cliff-hanger. I'm glad you stuck with it," acting NASA administrator Dale D. Myers said as he congratulated the launch team.

It was the 60th U.S. man-in-space flight, the 29th for the shuttle and the fourth since the Challenger explosion more than three years ago.

"Four of us are very happy to be back in space, and the fifth one is very happy to be here," radioed astronaut David Walker, mission commander.

Walker, pilot Ron Grabe and mission specialists Mary Cleve and Norman Thagard flew on previous shuttle flights. Mission specialist Mark Lee is a rookie.

"Did somebody win the pool up there?" mission control commentator John Creighton asked the crew. "We had only five minutes left in the window."

"We wouldn't want to push it any closer," replied Walker.

A launch attempt last Friday was halted with just 31 seconds to go because of a short circuit in an engine fuel pump. Technicians worked around the clock over the weekend to replace the pump and a fuel line. NASA had to launch Magellan by May 28 or ground it for two years until Earth and Venus were again in the proper alignment.

Among tens of thousands who watched the rare afternoon liftoff were some of the country's most renowned planetary scientists. They have been waiting to resume solar system exploration since 1978, when Pioneer-Venus was launched on the last U.S. planetary expedition.

Success for Magellan would signal the start of a science-rich three-year period during which five major probes will be rocketed into space.

"The overture, the symphony, begins with Magellan," said NASA science chief Lennard Fisk. "It's going to be a long symphony. It's going to have a lot of crescendos... Nobody is going to question our leadership in planetary science again."

Fisk hailed Magellan's flight as the start of a "second golden age" of space science. The first was the period from the mid-1960s to the late-1970s when unmanned spacecraft for the first time were launched to make closeup examinations of Venus, Mars, Mercury, Jupiter, Saturn and Uranus.

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