

Ortega offers plan to disarm Contras

MANAGUA, Nicaragua -- Nicaragua put forth a plan Wednesday for demobilizing Contra rebels and offered to suspend arms imports in exchange.

The Soviet Union said last May it stopped shipping arms to Nicaragua at the end of 1988, but Paul Wolfowitz, a U.S. Defense Department undersecretary, said last week other Soviet bloc nations and Cuba continued sending weapons.

Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega told a news conference his decision last week to end a cease-fire after 19 months had opened the way to peace between the leftist Sandinista

government and U.S.-supported rebels. He said Nicaragua would forgo arms imports until April 25, 1990, if the 15-point plan was accepted.

President George Bush on Wednesday promised to lift the trade embargo against Nicaragua if the U.S.-backed presidential candidate, Violeta Chamorro, defeats Ortega in elections set for Feb. 25.

His statement came after a Washington meeting in which Chamorro asked Bush for aid to help with economic reconstruction after the election and the two agreed on the need to muster international support for fair elections,

according to U.S. and Nicaraguan participants.

In their proposal Wednesday, the Sandinistas urge that the United States divert to demobilization what remains of \$49 million in non-lethal aid to the Contras authorized by Congress in March. The aid includes such items as boots, tents and uniforms.

The 12,000 rebels, some in Nicaragua and most camped in neighboring Honduras, are to be disbanded by early December under the regional peace agreement signed Aug. 7 by Ortega and the presidents of Honduras, El Salvador, Costa Rica and Guatemala.

"If the Contras don't accept this plan, they

will be voting for war," Ortega said in apparent reference to the cease-fire cancellation and fighting reported since.

He said he would demand a meeting of the Central American presidents to discuss the situation if the Contras rejected his proposals.

Ortega said he had instructed his government's five-member delegation not to leave the two-day meeting with the Contras at U.N. headquarters in New York without a signed agreement.

Cardinal Miguel Obando y Bravo, Roman Catholic archbishop of Managua, will be present at the meeting, which begins Thursday.

Senate approves minimum wage hike to \$4.25

WASHINGTON -- The Senate gave final passage Wednesday to legislation to raise the hourly minimum wage to \$4.25 by April 1991, the first increase in the floor wage since 1981. President George Bush is expected to sign the bill next week.

The 89-8 Senate vote came eight days after Bush and congressional Democrats agreed on the plan to boost the minimum wage by 45 cents next April 1 and another 45 cents a year later.

The measure, passed overwhelmingly by the House last week, also creates a new, subminimum wage that could be paid to teen-agers for their first three months in the work force and up to three months more for those in certified training or education programs.

Bush's signature will not only trigger the first increase in the minimum wage in nearly a decade but also will end a bitter stalemate between congressional Democrats and successive Republican administrations over the politically charged issue.

"The nine-year logjam on the minimum wage is finally broken," said Sen. Edward M. Kennedy, D-Mass., a key architect of the compromise. "The working poor are about to receive an increase, although it is not as much as they deserve."

Kennedy promised to return to the issue and seek another increase as the 1992 presidential election nears. Democrats may try to use the issue against Bush then, but on Wednesday they had praise for the president.

"We all owe a debt of gratitude to the president of the United States, who was willing to stand up and support a minimum wage increase, thereby reversing the policy of the prior administration, which had consistently opposed any increase," said Majority Leader George Mitchell of Maine.

Sen. Orrin Hatch of Utah, one of two Republicans who unsuccessfully sought to amend the measure, credited Democrats and Kennedy with a victory over the White House in the compromise talks.



Andy Manhardt/Daily Nebraskan

Londoners on the lookout for ways to counteract ultrasonic stun gun

LONDON -- A cartoon in the Times of London showed a woman walking up to a betting window and telling the ticket seller: "Ten pounds to win on any horse that's deaf."

The Jockey Club doesn't think it's funny, and that's why Britain's race tracks are on the lookout for the ultrasonic stunner, a sci-fi contraption that may be capable of affecting horse races from the stands.

The Jockey Club, which oversees horse racing in the United Kingdom, told the Racecourse Association on Wednesday to come up with ways of stopping the stun gun, detailed in a London drug-conspiracy trial.

"It is recognized that there is the possibility it could upset horses during a race," a club statement said. Anyone found with such a device at a track will be prosecuted, the club said.

The statement represented a turnaround for the club and the latest development in a week of bizarre events touching both the soul and the wallets of a nation dedicated to fair play and deeply in love with horse racing -- and betting on the races.

The gun, which looks like a pair of binoculars but hides a high-powered ultrasonic transmitter, allegedly was used to stun Ile de Chypre as the horse was racing toward victory in last year's King George V Stakes at Royal Ascot.

E. German leader ousts old guard from Politburo

BERLIN -- Communist Party chief Egon Krenz on Wednesday ousted the old guard from the ruling Politburo and replaced them with reformers in a desperate move to quell widespread unrest and strengthen his 3-week-old leadership.

Thousands of East Germans disillusioned by 40 years of Communist rule and skeptical of promised reforms continued to flood from their homeland, with more than 50,000 reaching West Germany since Saturday. Pro-reform groups pleaded with their countrymen to stay and help "build a real democratic society."

Krenz hurled a stinging attack on his predecessor and long-time political patron Erich Honecker, and Communist authorities took the first steps toward registering New Forum, the nation's largest pro-democracy group.

And in another first, a top Communist held out the possibility of free elections, a major demand of those who have demonstrated for democracy.

"Our country is going through a tense and extremely difficult devel-

opment," Krenz said in a speech to the Central Committee, which unanimously approved his proposal to dissolve the entire 21-member Politburo.

The Central Committee announced the election of a new 11-member Politburo and reaffirmed Krenz, 52, as the party's secretary general. Krenz and six other Politburo members were re-elected.

The committee elevated four new members to the Politburo, the nation's most powerful decision-making body. They included Hans Modrow, the 61-year-old Dresden party chief who is said to be a leading advocate for democratic reforms.

The Central Committee proposed Modrow for the post of premier, which has been empty since Tuesday's resignation of the entire Cabinet.

The presidium of the parliament was to meet today to set a date for convening the full parliament to elect a new Cabinet.

All of the aging Politburo members dropped were closely associated with Honecker, whom Krenz replaced Oct. 18.

Secord pleads guilty to lying; agrees to 'cooperate fully' later

WASHINGTON -- Retired Air Force Maj. Gen. Richard V. Secord pleaded guilty Wednesday to one count of lying to Congress in the Iran-Contra affair, agreeing to "cooperate fully" with prosecutors in later cases.

He thus could become a government witness against John M. Poindexter, national security adviser in the Reagan administration and Oliver North's White House boss. Poindexter, whose criminal trial is to begin Jan. 22, is accused of conspiracy, two counts of obstructing Congress and two counts of making false statements.

Secord, the Iran-Contra middleman enlisted by North, admitted to U.S. District Court Judge Aubrey Robinson that he had made a false statement on June 10, 1987, when he denied to congressional investigators that he gave anything of benefit to North.

Secord paid the bill in 1986 for a security system at North's home, \$7,000 in cash and \$9,000 drawn on a U.S. bank from profits of "the Enter-

prise," the maze of companies and secret Swiss bank accounts Secord and his business partner Albert Hakim used in the Iran-Contra affair.

Prosecutors indicated in court papers they had been examining possible criminal tax violations by Secord and had been prepared to present evidence that he "personally received total profits . . . in excess of \$1.5 million" from the sale of weapons to the Contras and Iran.

Secord has more than \$700,000 in unpaid legal bills, according to a recent fund-raising letter mailed by supporters of a Secord legal defense fund. The fund-raisers estimated a trial would have cost him another \$600,000.

The government will move to dismiss the 11 remaining criminal charges pending against Secord, who was scheduled to go on trial next Monday. Eight of the charges relate to allegations of false testimony to Congress in 1987 focusing on his profits in the Iran-Contra affair. He also is charged with three counts involving gratuities for North.

9 bills introduced in special session

Lawmakers introduced nine bills Wednesday when the Nebraska Legislature convened in the first day of a special session intended to solve some of the problems centering on the state's personal property tax system.

Gov. Kay Orr urged senators to forego the political rhetoric, which she said sometimes plagues such lawmaking efforts, and to support the three pieces of legislation that she has endorsed.

Sen. Ernie Chambers of Omaha said the session is a "sham and a hoax" that won't solve the problem. He said the proposals are poorly drafted and called the special meeting a disgrace to the executive and legislative branches.

The Legislature's Executive Board referred eight of the nine bills to the Revenue Committee for a public hearing on Friday -- a move

that set the stage for a potentially protracted debate today.

Sen. Loran Schmit, sponsor of two of the nine bills, said he would move today to have all the bills sent directly to the first stage of floor consideration without committee hearing.

Schmit's proposals would eliminate the personal property tax, except that levied on motor vehicles, and eliminate all tax exemptions for real estate except for those, such as churches, mandated in the constitution.

Schmit, a member of the Executive Board, said many lawmakers including himself had made plans for the Armistice Day observance and that it would be difficult for them to participate in the hearing.

Orr urged senators to approve three bills: her own plans for redefining real property and to limit refunds, and a measure sponsored by Sen.

Jerome Warner of Waverly to exempt railroad rolling stock from taxation. She said those measures would address the immediate problems facing the personal property tax system.

Chambers got the rhetorical ball rolling just minutes after the session began. He called the special session "a sham and a hoax and a shame on this Legislature" and Orr.

Chambers' remarks came shortly before Orr addressed lawmakers and asked that political rhetoric be forsaken in the current session. He left the legislative chamber before Orr began her speech.

"Special sessions often produce rhetoric which is used to tally political points for one side or another," Orr said.

"But let this be a time when we lay that temptation aside and work together for the greater good of all Nebraskans."

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