

Baker meets with Israeli prime minister

JERUSALEM — Secretary of State James Baker met with Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir on Monday amid tensions over President Bush's refusal to expedite U.S. loan guarantees to house Israel's flood of Soviet immigrants.

Baker, seeking to firm up Israel's support for a Middle East peace conference, spoke with Shamir for about 3 1/2 hours, then departed

Support sought for peace conference

without comment for a meeting with three Palestinians from occupied territories. A second session with Shamir was scheduled for today.

Before arriving in Israel, Baker acknowledged the complications in the U.S.-Israeli relationship because of the dispute over the

timing of the proposed \$10 billion in housing loan guarantees.

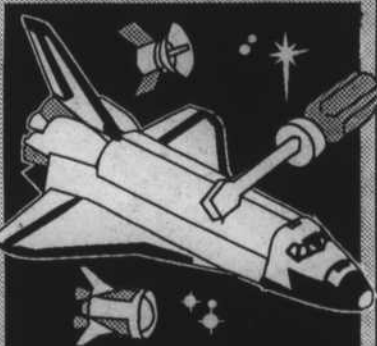
Bush stood firmly behind his call last week for a 120-day delay in the housing legislation, on the grounds that rushing the package through now could disrupt the peace process. Arabs fear that the loans would be used to construct

housing in the Israeli-occupied Arab territories.

Bush said Monday he had no personal quarrel with Israeli leaders, and "The less debate we have now on these contentious issues, the better."

"What I'm proposing is in the best interest of peace," Bush said of his insistence that the loan program be held in abeyance.

Orbital Obstacles



Thousands of operational satellites and bits of trash clutter the space around Earth. Agencies responsible for objects tracked as of Sept. 5, 1991:

Soviet Union	3,272
United States	3,262
European Space Agency	151
Japan	98
China	88
ITSO*	40
France	36
United Kingdom	18
Canada	15
Germany	12
India	9
NATO	6
Other	27
Total	7,034

Total had fallen to 7,014 by Monday.



*International Telecommunications Satellite Operations

Shuttle ducks debris

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. — The Discovery early Monday dodged a chunk of a Soviet rocket, the first such near miss of the shuttle program, before the crew assembled a giant "Erector Set" as practice for the proposed space station.

The five astronauts should not have to worry about any more such encounters during the mission, NASA said.

The shuttle and the debris — about the size of a van — passed within about 10 miles of each other minutes after midnight.

It was the first time in the 10-year-old shuttle program that astronauts had to move their ship to avoid orbiting debris.

"I think we scored a space first," Mission Control's Jan Davis told the crew before they went to sleep for the day. "Good work on everybody's part."

The astronauts have been working at night and sleeping during the day since they reached orbit Thursday, arranging their schedule around the midnight release of an atmospheric observation satellite.

Before going to sleep, the astronauts assembled a structure in the cargo bay for an experiment gauging the effectiveness of components for the space station. The structure was shaken electronically to see how it withstands vibration in microgravity.

Iran-contra charges against North dropped

WASHINGTON — A federal judge dismissed all charges against Oliver North, the central figure in the Iran-contra affair, Monday after the special prosecutor gave up trying to reinstate North's felony convictions.

An exultant North declared himself "totally exonerated. . . I've had my last hearing forever, I hope."

North hugged his attorney, family and friends in the courtroom after U.S. District Court Judge Gerhard Gesell dismissed the charges.

Independent counsel Lawrence Walsh said he had decided it was unlikely he could win reinstatement of North's three convictions — for destroying documents, accepting an illegal gratuity and aiding in obstruction of Congress — which were set aside by a federal appeals court in July 1990.

The appeals court had ordered Gesell to determine whether testimony at North's trial was tainted by use of the defendant's own forced testimony before Congress, given under immunity in 1987. Last week former National Security Adviser Robert McFarlane, North's White House boss for a time during the Reagan administration, dealt a heavy blow to the prosecution by saying in court that his testimony had been influenced by North's statements to Congress.

North was a little-known Marine colonel at the time of the main events of the Iran-contra affair. It involved the resupply at his direction of the Nicaraguan rebels while such aid was illegal and the diversion to the con-



Brian Shellito/DN

tras of money from the sale of U.S. arms to Iran.

Disclosure of the basic facts in late 1986 was the worst blow to the Reagan administration during its eight years.

President Bush, who has referred to North as a hero for his Vietnam exploits, called Monday's action "a good decision."

"It sounds like the system worked very well," Bush said.

However, Walsh said the dismissal should be taken as "a very serious warning that immunity is not to be granted lightly."

"I urged them (Congress) not to grant immunity" when North was called to testify in 1987, Walsh said.

House Speaker Thomas Foley, D-Wash., said he did not believe Congress erred in deciding to hold its own Iran-contra inquiry.

Gates says he judged wrong

WASHINGTON — Robert Gates said Monday at the opening of confirmation hearings on his nomination as CIA director that he made "misjudgments" during the Iran-Contra affair.

The opening day of the hearings was dominated by Iran-contra, the five-year-old affair that unfolded while Gates was No. 2 at the CIA. Now a national security aide at the White House, Gates was nominated last July by President Bush to succeed William Webster at the CIA helm.

Under lengthy questioning, Gates repeatedly denied that he knew of the diversion to the Nicaraguan contras of profits from the sale of U.S. arms to Iran before speculation on such dealing was brought to his attention on Oct. 1, 1986.

The 47-year-old analyst had made the same contention during hearings on his previous nomination to the top CIA post by President Reagan in 1987.

Sweden's minister resigns

STOCKHOLM, Sweden — Prime Minister Ingvar Carlsson resigned Monday after his Social Democratic Party's resounding defeat in parliamentary elections, but the conservative victors were having trouble forming a new government.

Opposition parties on the right of the political spectrum promised tax cuts, less bureaucracy and less spending — thereby winning broad support from voters weary by a tax burden of 60 percent for the average worker.

In balloting Sunday, five non-socialist parties won 195 of the 349 seats in the Riksdag, while socialist parties — the Social Democrats and the Left Party — won a total of 154. However, four of the five non-

socialist parties rejected dealings with the far-right New Democracy party, which won 25 seats in its first parliamentary contest.

"The winds of change . . . have unfortunately been so strong that they blew straight through our party to one further on the right," said Carl Bildt, the Moderate Party leader. His party won 80 seats.

"We cannot continue to govern with such a loss," said Carlsson, 56, who has been prime minister since Olof Palme's assassination in 1986. Carlsson agreed to stay on as a temporary caretaker.

The Social Democrats have governed Sweden since 1932, except for an unstable period from 1976-82.



Navy crash kills 6 in Persian Gulf

MANAMA, Bahrain — A U.S. Navy Sea Dragon helicopter crashed in the Persian Gulf, killing all six men aboard, the Navy said Monday. It was the most U.S. fatalities in a single incident in the region since the Gulf War.

The men, whose bodies were recovered from the gulf about 40 hours after the crash, were all from the HM-15 squadron based at Alameda Naval Air Station in California, said the Naval Command spokesman, Lt. Cmdr. Tim O'Leary.

The crash occurred at 9:05 p.m. Saturday, minutes after the MH-53E helicopter took off from the helicopter assault carrier USS Pelileu 40 miles north of Bahrain. No details on the crash were made public until a U.S. newspaper, the Kalamazoo Gazette, reported on it in Monday's editions.

"It was taking off from the ship, and it crashed shortly thereafter," O'Leary told The Associated Press. "We've just recovered the six bodies."

EC envoy arrives in Yugoslavia amid war

BELGRADE, Yugoslavia — A European Community peace negotiator Monday came to Yugoslavia in an atmosphere of near total war in Croatia for a summit with the republic's president and the leader of rival Serbia.

Federal military units announced an offensive to lift the siege of army garrisons in the major Adriatic coastal cities of Split, Zadar, and Sibenik. A federal air force jet was shot down near the Hungarian border.

Air raid sirens wailed for the second consecutive day in Zagreb, the Croatian capital, and television officials said their transmitter outside the

Federal military units launch offensive; air raid sirens wail in Croatian capital

city was slightly damaged by a missile.

Lord Carrington, the European Community mediator, faced the task of finding common ground between Croatian President Franjo Tudjman and Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic.

What little the two men had in common has all but disappeared in 2 1/2 months of fighting in Croatia that

has killed more than 400 people.

Croatia, despite battlefield losses that have cost it a third of its territory, stiffened both its political and military posture by barricading federal army facilities.

The republic, which declared independence in June, appeared to be adopting the aggressive strategy of neighboring Slovenia that led to withdrawal of federal soldiers there after

brief but fierce fighting.

Croatia accuses Serbia, the largest of Yugoslavia's six republics, of instigating the fighting in an attempt to expand its territory as Yugoslavia disintegrates. Milosevic says Croatia cannot take Serb-dominated areas with it if it secedes from Yugoslavia.

Airport officials in Dubrovnik, on the Croatian coast, said Lord Carrington arrived there Monday afternoon.

Sources in the British Embassy in Belgrade said Lord Carrington would meet Tudjman and Milosevic in neighboring Montenegro, an ally of Serbia.

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Editor Jana Pedersen
472-1766
General Manager Dan Shattil
Chairman Bill Vobejda
436-9993
Professional Adviser Don Walton
473-7301

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