

Noriega found guilty, faces up to 120 years

MIAMI — Manuel Noriega, the dictator who defied a superpower, was convicted of eight of 10 drug and racketeering charges Thursday, two years after the long arm of America plucked him from Panama in a bloody invasion.

The ousted Panamanian leader's conviction included the key counts of racketeering and racketeering conspiracy. The eight counts carry a possible maximum sentence of 120 years. Sentencing was set for July 10.

"We did one heck of a job. We're proud of what we did," said Assistant U.S. Attorney Michael Sullivan.

U.S. Attorney James McAdams said as soon as Noriega is sentenced, he will be taken to Tampa for a trial on marijuana smuggling charges. If convicted in that case, he could be sentenced to 35 years in prison.

The defense said it would appeal the verdict.

President Bush called the conviction "a major victory against the drug lords."

"I hope it sends a lesson to drug lords here and around the world they will pay a price if they continue to poison the lives of our kids in this country or anywhere else," Bush said at a Washington meeting with Nicaraguan President Violetta Chamorro.

Defense attorney Frank Rubino was bitter, and said the appeal would be based on issues including Noriega's prisoner-of-war status and the invasion.

"The United States government in its self-appointed role as world policeman... saw fit to invade a foreign country and seize its leader," he said.

"This, in our opinion, is the modern day version of the Crusades, that the United States will now trample across the entire world, imposing its will upon so-called independent, sovereign nations. Unless the foreign governments are willing to kneel once a day and face Washington and give grace to George Bush, they, too, may be in the same posture as General Noriega."

Noriega was acquitted of cocaine distribution and conspiracy to import cocaine.

There was no visible reaction from Noriega or the jurors as the verdicts were read.

United States vs. Manuel Noriega

Summary of 10 felony charges against the ousted Panamanian leader Manuel Noriega.

Count 1: **GUILTY** Maximum Sentence: 20 years

Racketeering conspiracy

- Helped Medellin cartel set up operations in Panama
- Hid its leaders after assassination of Columbia's justice minister
- Took \$4 million bribe to authorize Panamanian cocaine lab
- Laundered drug profits and supported cocaine importation to the U.S.

Count 2: **GUILTY** Maximum Sentence: 20 years

Racketeering

- Actual charges incorporated in count 1

Count 3: **GUILTY** Maximum Sentence: 15 years

Conspiracy

- To import cocaine into the U.S. between Oct. 1981 and Jan. 1984

Count 4: **GUILTY** Maximum Sentence: 15 years

Distribution of Cocaine

- 400 kilograms in May of 1983

Count 5: **GUILTY** Maximum Sentence: 15 years

Distribution of Cocaine

- 400 kilograms in January of 1984

Count 6: **GUILTY** Maximum Sentence: 15 years

Manufacture of cocaine for U.S. distribution

- Aided Medellin cartel in obtaining chemicals to manufacture cocaine in Colombian drug lab between September 1983 and March 1984

Count 7: **GUILTY** Maximum Sentence: 15 years

Conspiracy to manufacture cocaine

- In Darien, Panama drug lab in 1984

Count 8: **NOT GUILTY** Maximum Sentence: 20 years

Conspiracy to import cocaine

- Aboard the yacht *Krill* between November 1985 and March 1986

Count 9: **NOT GUILTY** Maximum Sentence: 20 years

Distribution of Cocaine

- Mentioned in count 8

Count 10: **GUILTY** Maximum Sentence: 5 years

Causing travel in furtherance of conspiracy

- Aiding in the flight of two drug pilots during criminal activities



Conservatives lead in British election

LONDON — Prime Minister John Major, who waged a come-from-behind campaign to extend 13 years of Conservative Party government, appeared headed for a slight majority in the House of Commons following Thursday's elections.

With results in hand from 362 seats out of the 651 contested, the British Broadcasting Corp. projected that Major's party would win a total of 328 seats, two more than a majority.

Projections by Independent Television News gave the Conservatives 329 seats, Labor 270 and Liberal Democrats 24.

"We were written off at the weekend, but we didn't sink into defeatism," said Home Secretary Kenneth Baker, a former Conservative Party chairman.

"The battle is not yet over," insisted Labor Party leader Neil Kinnock.

The BBC projected that the Conservatives would win 43 percent of the popular vote, matching their share in three landslide victories under Margaret Thatcher.

"This is very, very bad news for Labor," said BBC analyst Peter Kellner. "It is also rotten news for the pollsters... they blew it."

The combined verdict of the last opinion polls this week showed Labor about a point ahead, though the difference was well within the margin of error.

The projections moved steadily toward the Conservatives after the polls closed as Labor failed to win in several battleground districts.

If no party wins a majority, Major would have the first chance to line up enough support from other parties to govern. If he failed, Kinnock would have a try.

The rejuvenated Labor Party campaigned hard on the theme that the Tories have held power too long. But what hurt the Conservatives most was an enduring recession that has pushed the unemployment rate to 9.4 percent.

The other big issues were taxation and the state-run National Health Service.

Officials reported a steady voter turnout in bright sunshine that bathed most of the nation. Usually about 75 percent of the 43.6 million voters in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland cast ballots.

Speculation that the Conservatives would win boosted share prices on the London Stock Exchange. The Financial Times-Stock Exchange 100-share index rose 43.2 points to close at 2,436.4.

Foreign firms pay little tax

WASHINGTON — Foreign-owned businesses operating in the United States may be illegally dodging income taxes worth up to \$30 billion a year, and many pay no tax at all on billions of dollars of sales, a House panel was told Thursday.

The Internal Revenue Service acknowledged there is a compliance problem among many foreign companies, but Commissioner Shirley D. Peterson said there is not nearly enough information available to estimate the loss. She suggested the maximum loss would be about \$3 billion a year.

Seventeen foreign companies that distribute cars in this country paid the United States an average \$4 in tax for each \$1,000 of sales over several years, according to an investigation by the staff of the House Ways and Means oversight subcommittee. One company sold \$3.4 billion worth of cars over two years and paid zero tax.

The panel checked a sample of tax returns filed by foreign-based electronics companies and found that 40 percent paid no U.S. income tax.

One company with \$6.6 billion of U.S. sales paid no tax. In a subsequent year, the same company had sales of \$2.8 billion and paid \$156.

"In our society, a teacher or factory worker can pay more in federal income tax than a major multinational corporation with billions in annual U.S. sales," said Rep. J.J. Pickle, D-Texas, chairman of the subcommittee. "This is what is happening today and it is terribly unfair and wrong."

"We have got to stop chasing our tails around the block and tell these people... this is outright tax evasion and we are not going to take it anymore," said Rep. Paul Kanjorski, D-Pa. He is sponsoring a bill to impose a new minimum tax on foreign companies.

Fed lowers interest rate to help economy recover

WASHINGTON — The Federal Reserve on Thursday unexpectedly lowered a key interest rate in a move apparently aimed at calming jittery financial markets and buying recovery insurance for the U.S. economy.

The Fed added reserves to the nation's money supply shortly before noon in a fashion that economists said clearly signaled a cut in its target for the federal funds rate, the interest that banks charge each other.

Most economists said they believed the Fed had cut the funds rate by a quarter-point, from 4 percent to 3.75 percent. It marked the 16th time the Fed has lowered the funds rate since it stood at 8 percent when the recession began in July 1990.

The move came shortly after the Labor Department reported that wholesale prices edged up only 0.2 percent in March, indicating that inflationary pressures remain in check.

The Fed's move Thursday was taken against a backdrop of these economic developments:

- The 0.2 percent gain in the Labor Department's Producer Price Index, which measures inflation pressures before they reach consumers, matched the small February increase and left wholesale prices rising at an annual rate this year of just 0.7 percent.

- The number of Americans filing first-time claims for unemployment benefits dropped by 24,000 for the last week in March. The improvement left the four-week moving average for claims at 441,750, its lowest since last November.

Police suspect arson in Residence Hall fires

From Staff Reports

Students were evacuated from Harper Residence Hall Thursday night after the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Police Department received reports of two trash-can fires, a police officer said.

Sgt. Bill Manning said the fires in Harper caused minimal damage and were being classified as arson.

Students were evacuated from the hall at about 8:16 p.m., he said.

Five fires also were reported Wednesday and early Thursday morning on the ninth and 10th floors of Cather Residence Hall.

Lt. Mylo Bushing said the fires in Cather also were being classified as arson.

The first fire, Bushing said, was in a restroom trash can on the ninth floor

and was discovered by a resident showering at about 6 p.m. Wednesday.

At about the same time, ninth-floor residents found a paper taped to the wall of the lobby on fire, he said. Smoke in the hallway led them to a third fire in a study room trash can, Bushing said.

At 12:19 a.m. Thursday, UNL police received another report that restroom trash cans on the ninth and 10th floors were on fire. Several individuals reported hearing firecrackers go off prior to these fires, Bushing said.

"We have no suspects as of now," he said.

Residents extinguished all fires, and no damage was reported except to trash cans and paper towel dispensers in the restrooms, he said.

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