

World and Nation

Doctor called aboard hijacked plane

From Associated Press reports

NICOSIA, Cyprus — Masked Arabs wielding grenades and pistols and demanding freedom for pro-Iranian terrorists in Kuwait Wednesday called a doctor aboard a hijacked jet to treat two women believed to be members of Kuwait's royal family. The physician, identified only as Dr. Qassem, was quoted by Iran's Islamic Republic News Agency (IRNA) as describing the condition of one of the women as "not satisfactory." The hijackers reportedly said some passengers were "unwell."

Iran's official media reported the five or six Arabic-speaking hijackers said Tuesday that three members of Kuwait's royal Al-Sabah family on the jet would be in "imminent danger"

unless Kuwait freed 17 convicted pro-Iranian extremists in 12 hours. Kuwait rejected the demand.

The deadline passed at 10 a.m. (2:30 a.m. EDT), according to Tehran radio. The hijackers then contacted the Mashhad Airport tower in northeastern Iran "to remind that the respite is nearing the end," IRNA said.

The doctor did not identify the women he treated or say what was wrong with them. He said he asked the hijackers to let the women leave the plane, but they refused, IRNA said.

According to a passenger list from the Kuwait Airways Boeing 747, they were the only women among the 87 hostages remaining after the release

today of 24 female passengers and flight attendants.

The Kuwaiti cabinet called the hijackers' demands "blackmail," and it sent a team to Iran to negotiate with the hijackers after meeting in emergency session under Crown Prince Sheikh Saad al-Abdullah Al-Sabah.

The team, made up of an unspecified number of Foreign Ministry officials and some physicians, arrived in Mashhad Wednesday afternoon, IRNA reported.

The U.S. State Department said it believed there were no Americans aboard the jet, which was commandeered Tuesday en route to Kuwait from Bangkok and forced to land in Iran. The hijackers have threatened

to blow up the plane.

One man still aboard the plane has a U.S. and an Egyptian passport.

Twelve Britons were still on board. In London, Foreign Office Minister Lynda Chalker said Britain stood by Kuwait's refusal not to yield to the hijackers' demands.

British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher said, "We do not give in to blackmail because it only leads to further tragedies."

According to the passenger list, the two women from Kuwait's royal family are Ebtessam Khaled Al-Sabah and Anware Khaled Al-Sabah. A male member of the royal family on the jet was identified as Fadel Khaled Al-Sabah.

Noriega debates accepting mediation as U.S. troops arrive

From Associated Press reports

PANAMA CITY, Panama — Giant cargo planes loaded with soldiers, arms and helicopters landed almost hourly Wednesday as the United States completed deployment of 1,300 extra troops to Panama.

The country's Defense Forces chief, Gen. Manuel Noriega, appeared to be seesawing on whether to accept mediation in Panama's political crisis.

Late Tuesday, the government sent a communique to news organizations conditionally accepting a mediation offer by Monsignor Marcos G. McGrath, the Roman Catholic archbishop of Panama.

Within hours, the government's press office withdrew the communique without explanation.

Reagan remark downplayed

SANTA BARBARA, Calif. — White House spokesman Marlin Fitzwater today described as "a throwaway remark" a comment by President Reagan indicating approval of the notion of pardoning indicted former aide Oliver North.

Reagan did not say he would pardon former White House aides or others accused in the Iran-contra affair. But, after hearing a proposal for pardons, he did say, "I like the sound of those words,"

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said one congressman quoted in the Washington Post.

Another congressman quoted Reagan as saying, "I like hearing what you said," after Rep. Henry Hyde suggested the president should pardon North and former national security adviser John Poindexter at the end of Reagan's term.

Hyde, R-Ill., suggested the pardons be signed during ceremonies at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington.

Drug ring laundering described

WASHINGTON — A Colombian cocaine ring made such enormous profits that it created its own courier service to move the cash, a convicted money launderer told Congress Wednesday.

"Basically, there is no effective interdiction for money," Ramon Rodriguez told a Senate foreign relations subcommittee. "The problem the launderer faces is security, not an authority per se."

Rodriguez, a Cuban-born accountant, is serving a 43-year prison term for money laundering. He has admitted serving as a chief U.S. money launderer for the Medellín cartel.

Holiday outing ends in violence on West Bank

From Associated Press reports

BEITA, Occupied West Bank — A holiday hike by Israeli teenagers ended Wednesday in a melee of shooting and stone-throwing in an Arab town. A 14-year-old Israeli girl and two Palestinians were killed.

Hours after the clash, Jewish settlers raided the nearby Arab village of Hawwara, smashing car windshields, beating villagers and breaking into homes, said Jihad Howari, the Israeli-appointed head of the village council.

The youngsters, children of Jewish settlers on the Occupied West Bank,

were on a Passover outing and had stopped for a picnic lunch when the trouble began with stone-throwing. Members of the group said Arabs offering to help them led their party to Beita.

Arabs wrestled two automatic rifles from the group's two Israeli guards but did not fire them, the army reported.

Arab witnesses said the Israelis started the trouble by killing an Arab.

Army spokesmen originally said the girl, Tirza Porat, and several other Israeli teenagers were shot but reported later that she was killed by

a rock.

Eleven of the 18 hikers, the 60-year-old man acting as guide and one of the two Israeli guards were injured, and two Palestinians were wounded by gunfire, the army said.

Tirza Porat's death was the first of an Israeli civilian in the violence that has swept the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip since Dec. 8.

Israelis have been especially sensitive to the possibility of attacks on children, and warnings followed Wednesday's fatal confrontation.

Foreign Minister Shimon Peres said on Israeli radio, "Israel will cut

off the murderers' hands and will not let the evil terror achieve its aim."

According to Israeli witnesses and the army, the hikers stopped for a picnic lunch in a dry riverbed just outside Beita, 10 miles southeast of Nablus. Shmuel Fuchs, 15, said they had just sat down when a group of Arabs started throwing rocks.

The Israelis left the area, but "soon we discovered we were being followed by dozens of Arabs," said Fuchs, whose right arm and chest were bandaged. He spoke from his bed in Jerusalem's Hadassah Hospital.

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Nicaraguan talks, truce continue

From Associated Press reports

MANAGUA, Nicaragua — Contra and Sandinista military representatives agreed Wednesday on seven zones where rebels will gather during their 60-day cease-fire, state radio reported.

The two sides remained far apart, however, on key issues to bring about a permanent peace.

The meeting in the southern border town of Sapoa, the fourth set of talks in less than a month, dealt with the mechanics of pursuing the truce which went into effect Friday.

The Voice of Nicaragua, broadcasting from Sapoa, said boundaries were set for two zones in the north, two in central Nicaragua, two on the remote Caribbean coast and one in the south.

On March 23, the two sides formally agreed to the truce as part of a plan to end the war that killed or wounded an estimated 50,000 people over a span of nearly seven years.

The contras are to gather in the zones during the first 15 days of April.

It was not clear whether the two sides had agreed on security assurances for the contras and how they would receive humanitarian assistance.

Neither the leftist Sandinista government nor the Nicaraguan Resistance, the U.S.-supported contra rebel organization, is satisfied with the other side's compliance with the accord.

MIA remains flown home from Hanoi

From Associated Press reports

HANOI, Vietnam — Vietnam on Wednesday delivered remains said to be those of 27 missing Americans, and it threatened to stop the search if the United States continues accusing it of playing politics with the dead.

In a solemn military ceremony, 27 sets of remains were put on a U.S. Air Force transport jet to be flown to Army laboratories in Honolulu for authentication. It was the largest delivery yet by the Vietnamese.

Hanoi also turned over three sets of remains described as those of ethnic Asians who also may be missing Americans from the long war in Vietnam, which ended with a communist victory in April 1975.

The large delivery had encouraged U.S. officials to anticipate more help from Hanoi, but senior Vietnamese officials had sharp comments about allegations that they warehouse remains and return them gradually for political reasons.

They also said Washington should help finance Vietnam's reconstruction if it wants a full account of the 1,767 Americans still listed as missing in action (MIA).

Foreign Minister Nguyen Co Thach, who met with U.S. Sen. Larry Pressler, R-S.D., on Wednesday, responded "very angrily" to a recent Pentagon statement that Vietnam was returning remains gradually, said an American participant in the talks.

"That is nonsense," Nguyen Can, head of Vietnam's MIA accounting office, said in an interview Tuesday.