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Iran waits for summer to free captives

Bani-Sadr charges America backed out of secret plan

United Press International
TEHRAN, Iran — A powerful member of the Iranian ruling Revolutionary Council today said the 50 American hostages may be freed until midsummer.

A Japanese newspaper said today Iranian President Abolhassan Bani-Sadr charged the United States reneged on a secret plan to have transferred the hostages in Iran from the U.S. Embassy to a hospital. As part of the plan, the shah would have been arrested, Bani-Sadr said.

Mohammad Beheshti, an influential member of the Revolutionary Council and leader of the religious Islamic Republican

Party expected to dominate Iran's new 270-seat parliament, said the legislature would not debate the release of the hostages before "June or July."

Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini has charged the new parliament with deciding the fate of the hostages held for 166 days. But organizational problems and charges of voting fraud in the first stage of the balloting have set back the parliament's election.

Wednesday, Iran's Pars news agency said the Revolutionary Council is considering postponing the second round of the elections one week, from May 2 to May 9. In remarks published today, Beheshti

predicted the 50 hostages would still be in captivity through May.

Asked when the parliament would take up the issue of granting freedom to the hostages, he said: "Perhaps in June or July."

The Asahi Evening News reported that Bani-Sadr told an Asahi Shimbun reporter in Ahvaz in southern Iran that the secret deal involved having the United Nations Inquiry Commission present a secret report to Iran if it found the conditions of the American hostages unsatisfactory.

Bani-Sadr said deposed Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi was to be arrested in

Panama and questioned and the Panamanian government was to consider Iranian demands for the shah's extradition.

But Bani-Sadr contended former U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger encouraged the shah to flee from Panama to Egypt and the United States broke its promise not to obstruct the inquiry into the Shah's activities. The story gave no specifics.

The Moslem militants holding the hostages called for a major anti-American demonstration at the U.S. Embassy today to mark the funeral of an Iranian student killed in the United States.

The militants said they would lead de-

monstrations marking the funeral of Bijan Ashtiani, an Iranian student "martyred" in Lincoln, Neb. The body of the student was being flown into Tehran today.

A militant communique broadcast by the state radio said:

"The successive massacres and genocides of the ruling body of the U.S. in most parts of the world, their crimes and interference and also their savage treatment of the Iranian students have made them so scandalous that there is opportunity for deception and trickery."

(In Lincoln, Neb., authorities said Ashtiani, a student at the University of

Nebraska-Omaha, died of an "epileptic-like seizure." The student had been undergoing court-ordered psychiatric tests in an institution.)

In Washington, White House officials indicated President Carter might impose more sanctions on Iran this week in an effort to increase the pressure on Khomeini's regime to free the captives.

But the White House described as "inaccurate" a Boston Globe report that Carter might order a naval blockade of Iran after the week beginning May 11 if the hostage impasse is not broken by then.



At the top

Anxious spectators watch as Guy Sandel adds the last computer card to his team's entry in the Annual Compture Card Stacking Contest at Texas A&M. Judge, at left, is about to measure the tower, which won the contest

with a height of 16 feet, 3 inches. To find out how the rest of the competition stacked up, see today's Focus.

Staff photo by Lee Roy Leschper Jr.

Carter prepares to ban medicine, food for Iran

United Press International
WASHINGTON — President Carter is preparing to ban the shipment of food and medicine to Iran, White House officials say, twisting the screws a little tighter on Tehran for the retention of the American hostages.

But no decision has been made on a naval blockade that would cut off Iran's oil exports.

Carter exempted food and medicine from the trade sanctions he imposed last April 7 when he broke diplomatic relations with Iran.

The presidential announcement on additional sanctions will come this week, officials said, possibly at a news conference, tentatively set for today.

Press secretary Jody Powell told reporters the new retaliatory steps will be "meaningful and constructive" and indicated they could be better implemented in the context of similar actions by America's allies.

Asked why the additional pressure now, Powell said, "Because our people are not yet free."

"He's not decided on a blockade at all," Powell said, referring to reports the president was thinking of bottling up Iranian shipping.

Powell confirmed the next big step may come in mid-May.

"You are aware that the United States has advised others we feel that mid-May is the time period we feel is sufficient" to impose new major restraints on Iran if it does not respond by then, Powell said.

He said the timetable depends on the

president's best judgment."

Meantime, White House aides indicate that Iran already may be suffering somewhat from the sanctions already imposed. There were reports that the banning of the sale of spare parts to Iran, with some allies following suit, has hampered Iran's military capability.

The president has put the pressure on European allies and Japan to follow suit with economic sanctions against Iran. The Common Market foreign ministers are meeting April 21 in Luxembourg and may decide to provide more support for the United States.

Speaker Thomas O'Neill, who attended a White House breakfast session Wednesday, indicated Carter is looking for a better response from the allies.

"I don't think that he is completely satisfied," O'Neill said.

O'Neill said he would have ordered a naval blockade from the time when the hostages were taken 166 days ago.

"I would have acted a lot tougher from the start, to be perfectly truthful," he said. "I would have put sanctions right in from the start. I would have gone in with a blockade from the start."

O'Neill said he also was dissatisfied with the response of the allies. "We've been pretty good to the world for the past 30 years," he said, and the allies should have shown the United States the "courtesy" of full support.

White House aides, meantime, have ruled out confiscation of the \$8 billion in Iranian assets now frozen in U.S. banks.

Israel, Egypt agree to go to talks

United Press International
WASHINGTON — Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin returns home today with an agreement with Egypt for a new intensive round of negotiations on Palestinian autonomy meant to reach an accord by May 26.

President Carter announced after a third meeting with Begin Wednesday that Egyptian President Anwar Sadat had approved the Israeli proposal for marathon talks to be held for 20 days in Israel and 20 days in Egypt, starting in about 10 days.

Begin told a news conference there also was progress on some other issues, but he refused to give specifics, saying Sadat had to be informed first.

But sources close to the talks said there was vital headway made on several outstanding procedural matters that have stalled the delicate negotiations — such as the issues that a committee — called for in the Camp David framework — would discuss in the period after the autonomy plan for the West Bank and Gaza Strip is instituted.

The sources said matters such as the distribution and use of the limited water facilities in the territories could be put off for that "continuing committee" to consider rather than holding up the broader autonomy talks until such questions are hammered out.

And the committee might also be able to take up issues beyond those specified in the Camp David agreements.

The negotiations that will determine the future of the 1.1 million Palestinians living in the territories controlled by Israel since 1967 have been stalled for months but are targeted to end in less than six weeks.

"We still have a long way to go to reach the May 26 goal," Carter said at the end of his third meeting with Begin. "I believe we have made good progress."

But Begin made it clear the May 26 date is "neither a deadline nor a target date, it is a goal." And while there is "a chance" of an agreement by then, he said the talks would

continue beyond that date if need be.

"We believe we will now have a very concerted effort" on the question of self-rule for the Palestinians, the president said.

Carter called his more than six hours of talks with Begin over two days "very constructive and productive" and the Israeli

leader echoed his feelings.

Begin proposed holding the speeded-up autonomy talks in the Middle East, although Sadat and Carter suggested when they met last week that the discussions should be shifted to Washington. Begin, however, felt the ministers involved should be closer to their capitals and Sadat agreed to the plan.

Carter said it would be a "tragedy" if the talks fail, adding there were still "difficult issues" to be solved.

Begin said Carter did not ask for a freeze of Israeli settlement activity in the remaining weeks of the autonomy talks and the prime minister emphasized the importance of the outposts as Israel's "wall of defense" against terrorist attacks.

National Archives wants to release 31 unedited Watergate tapes

United Press International
WASHINGTON — If the National Archives has its way, Americans would be allowed as early as next month to listen to the tapes of Richard Nixon used in the Watergate cover-up trial — including the one with the 18½-minute erasure.

Archives officials said Wednesday they plan to make public 31 unedited tapes of conversations involving Nixon and his aides at a listening center in the main archives building in Washington beginning May 26.

But the proposal for release of the tapes, to be published in Monday's Federal Register, is expected to draw challenges from some of the 15 officials whose voices were recorded, often while they used profanity. Any such legal battle could cause lengthy delays in the archives' plans.

Nixon's lawyer, R. Stan Mortenson, said

he is undecided about whether to challenge the plan. He noted he was less concerned about the release of the Watergate tapes than other Nixon tapes because they already have been made public.

Lawyers for two other key characters on the tapes — former Attorney General John Mitchell and former White House chief of staff H.R. Haldeman — could not be reached for comment Wednesday.

Officials said that if there are no protests to the plan within 30 days, the 12½ hours of tapes would be made available on a first-come, first-served basis in an archives research room containing 24 listening posts.

The tapes would be played on a continuous schedule, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., over a four-day period until completed and then repeated. Listeners could not record

the tapes but could take notes and would have access to a transcript.

The tapes have been grouped into 15 segments, consisting of one to five conversations and ranging from 45 to 111 minutes. After each segment, the listening area would be cleared, with readmission on a first-come, first-served basis.

After the anticipated initial crush of interest, the archives plans to allow researchers to listen to specific tapes and replay sections.

It would mark the first time the public — except those who attended the Watergate cover-up trial — could hear Nixon's secret Oval Office conversations and judge firsthand his role in the Watergate scandal.

The General Services Administration last month cleared the way for release of the

tapes by adopting revised regulations for implementing the 1974 Presidential Recordings and Materials Preservation Act, which provides for public release of such materials.

The 31 tapes include those played at the cover-up trial of former Attorney General John Mitchell, Nixon advisers H.R. Haldeman and John Ehrlichmann, and two campaign aides. There also is one tape from the milk scandal trial of former Treasury Secretary John Connally.

Included is a conversation between Nixon and Haldeman June 20, 1972 — three days after the break-in at Democratic headquarters at the Watergate — that later was found to have an 18½ minute erasure. It never was officially determined who erased the tape.

Bill to ban PCB totals \$20 million

United Press International
WASHINGTON — With threat of PCB contamination of food reaching "alarming proportions," the Agriculture Department will propose a regulation to force meat, poultry and egg processing plants to get rid of PCB in old equipment.

Within two weeks, Deputy Assistant Secretary Sydney Butler said Wednesday, the department will propose a regulation that would force companies to replace equipment with PCB and to flush the highly toxic chemical from electrical transformers and other equipment.

Removal and disposal of PCB would cost industry \$20 million to \$40 million, but cost would be relatively small when matched with costs of PCB contamination accidents, Butler told the House Consumer Protection and Finance Subcommittee.

PCBs, or polychlorinated biphenyls, have been used for industrial uses for more than a half century. Manufacture was prohibited in 1977 because PCB was linked to cancer and other illnesses, but the chemical is still present in old transformer equipment.

"The danger of PCB contamination of the nation's food supply has now assumed rather alarming proportions," Butler said.

He said the problem "poses significant health risks to American consumers and an economic threat to the food industry."