

European trade halt to serve as ultimatum

United Press International
LUXEMBOURG — America's European Common Market allies have rallied behind President Carter's call for action against Iran and given the Tehran regime a blunt ultimatum to free the 50 hostages in the U.S. Embassy by mid-May or face a near-total economic blockade.

The nine member nations of the European Economic Community decided a two-day meeting Tuesday by threatening to slap full economic sanctions on Iran if the hostages are not released by May 17, when the foreign ministers are scheduled to meet again in Naples.

They also imposed a number of immediate measures including a downgrading of diplomatic relations with Iran, a ban on arms sales and a plea to businesses not to sign new contracts with the Iranians.

Diplomatic sources said the threat of an American naval blockade and other military measures to force the release of the hostages was in the

minds of ministers as they worked out their response to Carter's appeal.

The immediate punitive measures, however, were largely cosmetic, since the Community already has minimal diplomatic relations with Iran and already has banned arms shipments.

Responding to accusations that Europe has been slow in backing the United States, British Foreign Secretary Lord Carrington said he hoped the measures would be seen in Washington as "evidence of our support" for President Carter.

Carrington said the decision of the EEC countries to prepare trade sanctions in a matter of weeks, and guarantee to implement them if necessary was "hardly weakness." He added, Carter had been "enormously patient," but the ministers realized that "you can't go on being patient forever."

The ministers decided on full automatic sanctions if the Iranians

have not made "decisive progress" toward releasing the hostages by the May 17 deadline.

They said the seizing of the hostages, now in their sixth month of captivity, was "intolerable from a humanitarian and legal point of view."

The almost one-month period of grace before imposition of sanctions would enable several community members to pass the appropriate legislation through their Parliaments.

The nine countries also said they would not purchase any more Iranian oil at above the official price of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries, and since Iran has already exceeded that price, the action amounts to a ban on such purchases.

Lord Carrington told reporters Britain's reserves of North Sea oil would not be sufficient to cover the gap caused by the Iranian crisis.

Iran, U.S.S.R. begin first-round trade talks

United Press International
TEHRAN, Iran — Iran, slowly being cut off from the Western world for holding the 50 American hostages, said Wednesday it is now holding trade talks with the Soviet Union.

While Iran was apparently taking steps to assure its economic security, it was racked by bloody violence on university campuses and attacks from Kurdish insurgents.

The word of the negotiations with Moscow came one day after the nine-nation European Economic Community announced it would impose a trade embargo against Iran unless the hostages, in their 173rd day of captivity, were freed within a month.

Tehran slapped an oil embargo on Japan, Iran's biggest trading partner, at midnight Monday after Tokyo told

oil importers to turn down Iran's demand for a \$2.50-a-barrel price boost to \$35. Japan imported about 530,000 barrels a day.

A spokesman for the Iranian Finance Ministry said the government has begun high-level discussions with a delegation from the Soviet Union on ways of developing international cooperation in trade.

He said the current talks would be followed by a ministerial-level meeting in Moscow.

The Soviet delegation already has met with officials from the ministries of economy, energy and oil, the spokesman said.

The talks coincided with an apparent warning to the EEC nations from Iranian Oil Minister Ali Akbar Moinfar, who said if "certain countries" joined in the U.S. call for sanctions, they would be banned forever from Iranian oil sources.

The Iranian government, meanwhile, called in the national guard to quell spreading fighting on the nation's university campuses — the most violent clashes since the Islamic revolution toppled the shah.

Wailing relatives of university students besieged private and public hospitals for news of those killed or maimed in the fourth day of rioting.

Five people were reported killed and more than 1,000 injured in a clash Tuesday at the University of Gilan, northwest of Tehran, and one killed and more than 50 injured at the University of Sistan and Baluchistan in Zahidan, southeast of Tehran.

In addition, reports from Kurdistan said tension was running high throughout the area since government forces clashed with Kurdish militants.

Dollar falls as gold rises

United Press International
LONDON — The dollar opened lower on European money exchanges Wednesday and the price of gold started \$4.50-\$7 higher an ounce on the Zurich and London bullion markets.

As the dollar lowered on currency markets gold moved quietly ahead as small speculative buying appeared, a dealer for bullion brokers Mocaata and Goldsmid said.

Gold opened in Zurich \$7 higher at \$509.50 an ounce. In London, gold opened at \$510 an ounce, up from Tuesday's close of \$505.50.

Besides threatening the trade embargo, the EEC nations announced they would downgrade diplomatic ties with Iran and ban arms sales.

In addition, they agreed not to buy Iranian oil above the price set by OPEC. Since Iran's oil is now the highest among OPEC countries, this in effect meant the Common Market countries would not be buying any more Iranian oil.

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