

National / World

Workers want right to strike

Unions protest crackdown

WASHINGTON — Although President Reagan cracked down hard on air traffic controllers who walked off their jobs, militancy mounts among other unions that represent federal workers.

The most immediate display of such sentiment could occur today by 400 delegates to the National Treasury Employees Union convention, which represents about 108,000 federal workers.

Union President Vincent Connelly has asked delegates to the union convention underway in Montreal to approve a resolution for a "concerted action preparedness plan."

While the resolution does not use the word "strike," union spokesman Jerry Klepner said it was intended to include strike action.

The union has contract negotiations coming this winter with the U.S. Customs Agency. It also represents employees of several other agencies, including the Internal Revenue Service, Federal Election Commission, Federal Communications Commission and Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

"There is no reason that federal employees should not have the right to strike," said Klepner, who also is the union's lobbyist. "Every other industrialized nation in the world, except the Soviet Union, has granted public

workers the right to strike." Virtually all of the 2.3 million permanent employees of the executive branch of government must take an oath that he or she will not participate in a strike against the United States.

The walkout by the Professional Air Traffic Controllers Organization is only the second nationwide strike by federal workers.

The first, in 1970 by postal workers, was successful in that they were given amnesty and collective bargaining rights. But the new postal reorganization act, which set up the U.S. Postal Service, also includes a "no strike" clause.

About 13,000 air traffic controllers walked off their jobs on Aug. 3 after contracts talks broke down with the federal government. About 1,000 returned to their jobs under Reagan's work-or-be-fired ultimatum.

But the 12,000 others refused to budge and are being dismissed.

At the same time, the administration is seeking to decertify PATCO as the bargaining agent for the nation's air controllers and permanently bar the union from representing any federal workers.

In 1971, PATCO engaged in a slowdown that brought it a two-month suspension as the collective bargaining agent for the controllers, but was allowed to resume its position with a

promise not to take strike action again. The next battleground could be at the Social Security Administration, where two unions have declared a formal impasse in contract talks.

The American Federation of Government Employees is the largest federal workers union, representing about 700,000 persons in nearly all segments of the government, and is currently bargaining with both the Social Security Administration and Veterans Administration.

AFGE president Kenneth Blaylock, who earlier this year was also chosen as head of the AFL-CIO Public Employees Department, has blasted Reagan's handling of the PATCO walkout and has suggested federal workers refrain from air travel.

"Clearly, if a federal agency deliberately evades its legal responsibilities to bargain in good faith with the union representing a recognized bargaining unit, how can it expect the affected workers to observe some vague responsibility to work while their personal interests are ignored?" Blaylock said.

The other union that has reached an impasse with the Social Security Administration is the National Federation of Federal Employees, which represents 136,000 workers in various departments and agencies.

Nerve gas bombs airlifted safely despite protest

SALT LAKE CITY, Utah — The Army's secrecy shrouded airlift of 888 aging Weteye nerve gas bombs from Colorado to Utah began Wednesday with the safe arrival of 128 of the weapons at Dugway Proving Ground.

Army spokesmen said two C141 cargo jets flew the weapons from the Rocky Mountain Arsenal near Denver to the western Utah military base, about 65 miles southwest of Salt Lake City. The Army says the base holds the largest stockpile of chemical munitions in the non-Communist world.

The controversial move went ahead despite protests from Utah Gov. Scott Matheson, environmental groups and numerous Utah residents. They had claimed the Weteyes were no longer a useful weapon. The critics said an accident during the move would endanger thousands of lives.

The Army delayed the transfer in the late 1970s when leaks were discovered in about a dozen bombs. The leaking bombs were destroyed without incident, and Congress last year ordered the Pentagon to proceed with the move to Utah or detoxify the remaining Weteyes in Colorado.

The bombs, filled with the deadly nerve agent GB, will be moved by truck to Utah's Tooele Army Depot for permanent storage. The Army depot is 25 miles east of Dugway.

As part of the tight security around the operation, Col. Richard Horvath had slapped an embargo on releasing the transfer date and warned that the Army

would cut off all cooperation with any news agency that published the information before the C-141s landed at Dugway's Michael Army Air Field.

The colonel said 15 flights would be required to shuttle all 888 bombs to Utah, plus three 1-ton containers filled with GB.

The bombs and containers will be carried in hermetically sealed trucks to Tooele, Horvath said, where they will be stored in igloo-like buildings at the base.

The nerve gas-laden bombs were made at the Denver arsenal in 1969 and plans were made for their destruction four years later, but the Defense Department decided in 1976 they were needed as a deterrent because the Soviet Union refused to destroy its nerve gas stockpiles.

Colorado officials continued to argue for detoxification. But, when that failed, they demanded the weapons be removed from the arsenal because of its proximity to the Denver metropolitan area and Stapleton International Airport.

The transfer was mandated by Congress in 1980 at the request of Sen. Gary Hart, D-Colo. Hart pushed through legislation ordering the Army to either move the bombs or detoxify them. The Army chose to move them.

Army officials said up to five flights would be made per week from the Denver arsenal to Dugway. Three truck convoys from Dugway to Tooele are planned, with each transporting the contents of five flights.

Companions flee to shore

Shark attacks woman

ORMOND BEACH, Fla. — They survived the night, the two men and their girlfriends, clinging to the one pontoon of their catamaran that still bobbed on the surface of the Atlantic.

But at dawn they decided to leave the hulk and try to swim the 3 miles to the beach. They hadn't gone far when the shark struck.

Christi Wapnarski, 19, was swimming strongly when she screamed and disappeared under the surface chop. She came up screaming and was yanked down again. Her horrified companions saw a large shadow pass silently below them.

She was unconscious when she came up the second time, and her companions could do nothing. In a few moments they could find no pulse, and they left her there, face down in the water.

A spokesman at the Coast Guard's Ponce Inlet station said Tuesday night the search for Wapnarski had been suspended "pending further developments."

Two Coast Guard cutters and a helicopter had searched since Monday night for the Ormond Beach woman, who went out for a short sail Sunday evening with her boyfriend, Randal Cohen, and Daniel Perrin and Tamara Ennis.

Chief Warrant Officer Robert Sullivan, commander of the Ponce Inlet station, said the other three made it safely to the beach.

The foursome had left Ormond Beach without life jackets, Sullivan said, and about 3 miles out, the 16-foot catamaran sprung a leak in one of its pontoons. The four clung to the other pontoon until dawn came Monday, when they decided to swim to shore.

"They should never have left the boat, even if it was leaking," said Coast Guardman James Williamson. "We found the boat immediately."

Williamson said the survivors were separated by strong currents. Ennis was the first to make it to land Monday afternoon. She was spotted 100 yards off the beach, pulled in by a lifeguard and

taken to the Ormond Beach Hospital for treatment of exposure and Portuguese man-of-war stings. Later, a deputy sheriff found Perrin walking on the beach about 5 miles north of the Ormond Beach pier. He did not require medical treatment. Cohen was found 40 minutes later down the beach and was airlifted by helicopter to the Halifax Hospital Medical Center.

Williamson said sharks had been seen in the area but this was the first report of an attack.

Now You Know

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Ship's crew threatened by natives with spears

NEW DELHI, India — An Indian navy rescue vessel fought high seas Wednesday attempting to remove 31 sailors from a grounded freighter that was threatened by spear-carrying natives from the former "Devil's Island" of the Bay of Bengal.

The rescue vessel sped more than 600 miles from Calcutta into the monsoon-swept Bay of Bengal in answer to an SOS from the captain of the 16,000-ton Primrose, which struck a coral reef 10 days ago and went aground off the Indian-ruled Andaman Islands.

"Our ship is alongside it and has attempted to transfer its crew to our vessel, but was unable to because of bad weather," Col. Prithvi Nath, spokesman for India's armed services, said. He said the Primrose's 31-man crew was safe.

An Indian navy spokesman said a larger vessel would be sent "if the situation requires it."


The Primrose was traveling from Bangladesh to

Australia when it grounded on the coral reef off North Sentinel Island in the Andaman chain, which is made up of five large islands and the smaller islets.

The islands, about 600 miles southeast of Calcutta, are inhabited by aborigines and former convicts of a penal colony that was located at Port Blair, the administrative center of the island chain. North Sentinel Island is west of Port Blair.

First word of the drama surfaced Tuesday, when a desperate cable was received by the Regent Shipping Co. in Hong Kong from the ship's captain, Liu Chunglong, saying the crew was threatened by "wild island people carrying spears and arrows."

The captain asked for an urgent airdrop of weapons, saying the crewmen, 21 of whom are Hong Kong Chinese, feared the natives might try to board the stricken freighter using canoes.



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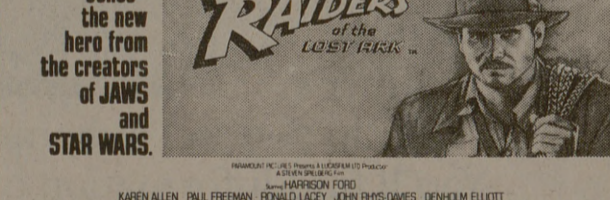


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