

Helicopter in airspace initiates strong protest

United Press International

Nicaragua issued a protest Tuesday to Honduras charging that a camouflaged helicopter from Honduras entered its airspace near where a U.S. helicopter pilot was killed last week, Nicaraguan officials said.

The protest came at a time when relations between the two Central American neighbors have reached a low point following the death last Wednesday of Chief Warrant Officer Jeffery Schwab.

The United States says Schwab was killed by Nicaraguan soldiers after he landed a light observation helicopter some 200 yards inside Honduras.

On Monday, Gen. Daniel Bali Castillo, commander of the Honduran Public Security

Force, warned that relations between Honduras and Nicaragua were approaching "a very dangerous point" because of alleged Sandinista cross-border attacks against farmers and the killing of Schwab.

The Nicaraguan Foreign Ministry sent a letter of protest to Honduras saying another helicopter entered its airspace Monday.

"A camouflaged helicopter of an undetermined type violated Nicaraguan airspace from Honduras near La Quebrada in the Madriz province, returning to Honduras at 1300 hours," the protest said.

The region was near the Honduran border town of Cifuentes, near where Schwab was shot.

In the same protest, the Foreign Ministry also charged

that a Honduran army patrol entered Nicaraguan territory near El Aguacate last Thursday and "set off four mines without causing any damage."

Honduran residents at Las Trojes, some 3 miles from where Schwab was killed, said Americans in civilian clothes made frequent trips in Honduran army helicopters to the zone in December. Two residents said they saw some Americans in uniform.

Rebels of the anti-Sandinista Nicaraguan Democratic Force operate from bases in the tense border area.

In El Salvador, leftist rebels attacked the trestle over the Lempa River for two hours late Monday, firing automatic rifles and machine guns at security posts on both ends of the structure, sources said.

Government war jets Tuesday bombed insurgent posi-

tions around the trestle, which is under a virtual rebel siege, military sources said.

Monday night's attack was the third heavy night assault since last Friday on the trestle, which is one of two major road links to eastern El Salvador, where much of the nation's chief agricultural products are grown.

The mile-long trestle, 20 miles southeast of San Salvador, has been used to carry traffic across the river since guerrillas destroyed the nearby Golden Bridge on Oct. 15, 1981.

Three national guardsmen were wounded in the Monday attack, which started about 10 p.m. and ended at midnight, military sources said.

The guerrilla attacks have been described by military sources as "probes" of government defenses.

Bank buys FDIC loans

United Press International

MIDLAND — RepublicBank First National of Midland bought 8,692 loans worth more than \$250 million from the Federal Deposit Insurance Corp., Thomas Wageman, bank president, said Tuesday.

The FDIC acquired \$1.3 billion in commercial loans when First National of Midland was closed by the federal currency comptroller on Oct. 14. The 93-year-old financial institution was the largest independent bank in Texas.

RepublicBank Corp., based in Dallas, purchased the bank and it was opened under new ownership Oct. 16. The bank holding company has 37 Texas banks and more than \$18 billion in assets, RepublicBank officials have said.

"In this first phase of the repurchase program we have achieved our objective of assuring the uninterrupted availability of credit to as many people in our community as possible," Wageman told reporters at a news conference.

RepublicBank First National was given 90 days to decide which of the loans it wanted to assume from the FDIC. All of the remaining loans will now be put up

for sale through a bidding process, FDIC officials have said.

"Our next task will be to take a second look at the loans remaining with the FDIC for purchase," Wageman said. "Our review process took into consideration the impact on the customer and the community as well as the bank."

Many Midland residents had expressed concern over the ownership change of First National, which had been a leader in organizing charity and civic events. Those concerns prompted FDIC Chairman William Isaac to

attend a breakfast in November to visit with Midland residents.

Midland, located in the oil-rich Permian Basin, holds the third largest per capita income in the nation, Midland Chamber of Commerce officials said.

Some banking spokesmen blamed the oil industry boom-bust of 1981-82 for delinquent loans that led to FNB's woes. Issac said his department had watched the bank for a year expecting a failure.

He estimated it would take up to 45 days before the paperwork associated with the loan transfers was completed.



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Shiite Moslems take blame

Embassy consul kidnapped

United Press International

BEIRUT — Three carloads of gunmen kidnapped the consul of the Saudi Arabian Embassy Tuesday, ambushing his chauffeur-driven car on the crowded streets of west Beirut in a daring daylight attack.

Christian Phalange radio blamed the kidnapping of Hussein Farraj on the Hizbollah, a fundamentalist Lebanese Shiite Moslem group suspected of involvement in attacks against the multinational peacekeepers in Beirut.

No group immediately claimed responsibility, but an official from the Justice Ministry who declined to be identified said a man calling himself a member of Hizbollah had threatened other Saudi diplomats in a telephone call a month ago.

Saudi Arabia is deeply involved in mediating efforts to end the violence in Lebanon, but has made enemies in the Middle East because of its ties to the United States.

Iran's Islamic regime has extra animosity toward it because of Saudi support for Iraq, Iran's adversary in the 40-month-old Gulf war.

Police said three cars without license plates surrounded the green Buick embassy car and 10 men swarmed to the attack, firing submachine guns.

While some of the gunmen roused up the Lebanese driver and the Saudi guard in the front seat, others pulled Farraj, 45, from the back seat and disappeared.

Beirut radio said the driver, Izzat Assaf, drove on to the embassy a mile away with blood running down his face.

Police said Assaf was treated at a hospital for a bullet graze on the head and brought back to the embassy for questioning. But he spent the night under observation in a hospital.

The morning attack occurred in the Rawsheh area of west Beirut, a crowded neighborhood of high-rise apartment buildings near the Mediterranean at the western edge of the capital.

A reinforced guard of uniformed soldiers with rifles and plain-clothes security agents with submachine guns protected the Saudi Embassy against further attack. Farraj was responsible for issuing visas there.

The Lebanese government denounced the attack and Sunni Moslem leader Saeb Salam, who has strong Saudi ties, called on the government to use an "iron hand" to prevent any more kidnappings.

Police said Nabih Berri, the head of the main Shiite Moslem militia Amal, sent a delegation to the Saudi ambassador "denouncing the incident and ex-

pressing readiness to help in gaining the freedom of the diplomat."

The Hizbollah movement, and the related Islamic Amal that broke away from Berri's group, are radical Lebanese Shiite groups based in the Syrian-controlled city of Baalbeck in eastern Lebanon.

The kidnapping of the Saudi diplomat followed two shootings recently of people associated with the French Embassy. In each case a silencer-equipped pistol was used to gun down the victims, although both survived.

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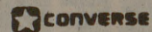
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