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Army, Navy punishments investigated

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Two congressional committees are investigating the discrepancies in punishment of an admiral and lower-ranking seamen who were all accused of bringing Soviet weapons into the United States after the invasion of Grenada, Capitol Hill sources said Tuesday.

The House and Senate Armed Services committees have each released the Navy, Army and Marines for details of how the services handled the cases of Vice Adm. Joseph Metcalf III and seven soldiers and Marines.

Metcalf, commander of the October 1983 invasion, was only court-martialed after U.S. Customs agents found 24 AK-47 automatic rifles on his plane. But the five soldiers and two Marines were convicted, and most of the cases, were sentenced to jail, fined and dismissed from service.

The congressional panels are trying to determine if Metcalf was given preferential treatment, said sources, who would discuss the probes only on condition they be named.

Meantime, one of the soldiers and his dismissal from the Army court-martialed in light of Metcalf's treatment.

Former Staff Sgt. Allen Gaudin said: "I'm more upset at the fact that he got away with it, not that he had them (the rifles). I'm not anti-military, I'm just disappointed in the military's judicial system. The punishment did not fit the crime."

The Navy has defended its handling of the case. Metcalf, the Navy said, was attempting to bring captured Soviet weapons back as souvenirs; was not familiar with regulations on war trophies and thought the rifles could be brought back as long as they were disabled and took full responsibility for the actions.

The two Marines were expelled and warned against bringing back weapons, the Navy said.

The Army also defended its handling of the cases involving the soldiers. Lt. Col. Craig McNamara, service spokesman, said the Army "hasn't done anything peculiar" in handling these cases. These men violated regulations and they were punished.

Following the incident, Metcalf was sent a letter by his superior Adm. Wesley McDonald, Atlantic Fleet commander.

The letter said the "caution" wouldn't become part of Metcalf's permanent record, but that he had committed a "careless" and serious breach of regulations that could embarrass the service.

After the Grenada invasion, Metcalf was elevated to deputy chief of naval operations for surface warfare.

Canadian Minister quits post

Associated Press

OTTAWA — Defense Minister Robert Coates resigned Tuesday from the Canadian Cabinet, the Canadian Press news agency reported after a newspaper said Coates and two aides visited a West German nightclub that featured nude dancers and prostitutes.

According to the Canadian Press account, Coates told the House of Commons the reports were "serious and libelous" in suggesting that a breach of security was involved. He said he had retained an attorney and started legal action against the Ottawa Citizen, which published the report on the incident Tuesday.

The news agency said Coates' voice was breaking with emotion when he said in his resignation speech, "I'm a man of honor who respects Parliament."

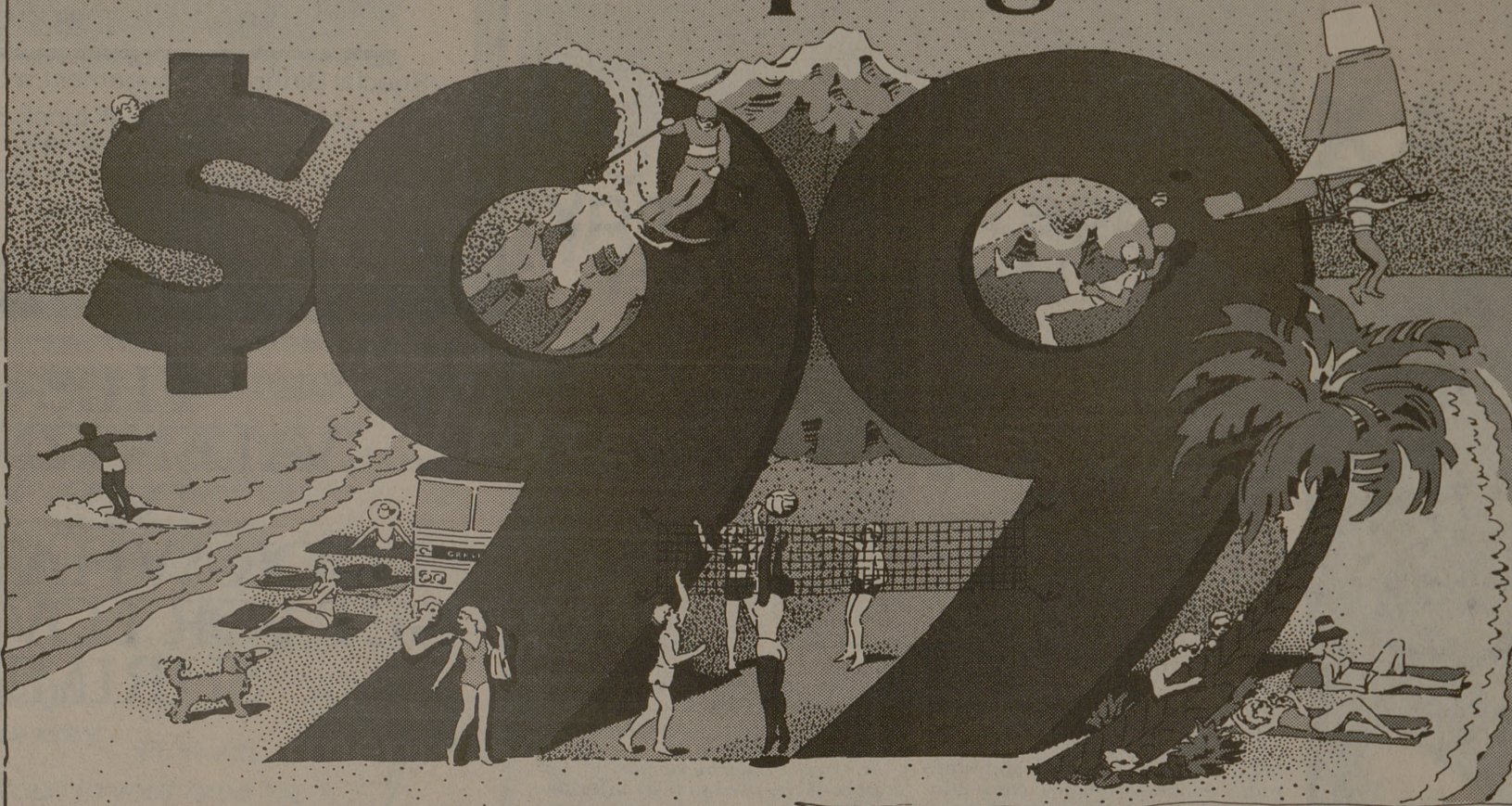
Coates did not offer a direct explanation for resigning but said he had assured Prime Minister Brian Mulroney of his innocence and good conduct, Canadian Press said.

Mulroney said outside the Commons he has accepted the resignation, the news agency said, adding that there was no immediate word on who would succeed Coates.

Sources in Canada and Europe told The Canadian Press the nightclub visit occurred during a four-country NATO trip by the defense minister and his aides.

Canadian Press said a Canadian source told the agency that Coates and his aides were receiving security protection throughout the NATO trip, so it was known quickly in Ottawa that the trio had visited the nightclub.

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