

Battalion Classifieds

WORLD AND NATION

SHOE

by Jeff MacNelly



House decides to halt economic aid to rebels

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The House on Wednesday night killed all U.S. assistance to the Contra rebels in Nicaragua, dramatically rejecting both Republican and Democratic compromises in handing President Reagan a major foreign policy defeat.

Three separate votes on the House floor culminated in a congressional decision to halt the president's three-year campaign to undermine the leftist Sandinista government in Managua.

A Democratic alternative providing aid for Nicaraguan refugees and financial support for a peacekeeping force during a future cease-fire was passed once, then defeated in the final House vote.

Reagan had made significant concessions in his original plan to give the Contras direct military assistance to be funneled through the Central Intelligence Agency. The Senate on Tuesday had gone along with a Republican proposal to give the Contras \$14 million after Reagan pledged to use the money for non-lethal assistance only and to negotiate directly with the Sandinistas.

Nonetheless, he fell two votes short on the Republican House proposal and thus lost the toughest congressional battle of his second term. That killed any prospect of U.S. aid for the rightist rebels, which was suspended by Congress last year, unless the lawmakers change their mind in the future.

While the final vote on the Nicaraguan issue was decided by a wide margin, 303-123, the critical vote on a Republican alternative was decided by only two votes, 215-213.

As the outcome became clear, there was cheering among Democrats on the floor. And House members who had battled the president's Central American policies open hugged on another.

In futile appeal, House Minority Leader Robert Michel, R-Ill., quoted House Speaker Thomas P. O'Neill Jr., D-Mass., as saying Democrats should vote their conscience free of party loyalties.

The president had lobbied heavily for the aid package. Last Saturday, in his weekly radio address to the nation, Reagan said the Democratic proposal that would have eliminated aid to the Contras "is not a compromise; it's a shameful surrender."

"The Soviet terrorist-bloc nations know what is at stake in Nicaragua," Reagan said. "That's why in the seven months since Congress cut off aid to the democratic resistance, they've been pouring in weapons and personnel to their communist allies hoping to wipe out the democratic forces while they're most vulnerable."

The House Republican alternative reluctantly supported by Reagan and drafted by Minority Leader Robert Michel, R-Ill., would have allowed the president to spend \$14 million on non-lethal assistance to the insurgents. The funds would have been administered by the U.S. Agency for International Development, not the Central Intelligence Agency, which has been supporting the rebel army.

The House votes came on the second day of debate on the divisive Nicaraguan issue. On Tuesday, the House rejected Reagan's original plan to provide direct military aid to the Contras seeking to overthrow the leftist Sandinista government.

Official says most farmers will get financing for crops

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — With spring planting season in full swing, all but about 5 percent of the nation's farmers will get financing to put their crops in, the Reagan administration's top farm lending official said Wednesday.

"There is adequate credit available," said Agriculture Department undersecretary Frank Naylor, who testified before the Senate Agriculture Committee and spoke later with reporters.

"The truth is, the lenders in the end went ahead and stayed with many of their farmers," Naylor said. "They're optimists."

Farm economists had estimated that some 14 percent of farmers would fail to get loans to buy seed, fuel and fertilizer to plant their crops. These estimates have recently been revised downward to about 5 percent, said Naylor. But only slightly above the historical turnover rate of 3 to 3 1/2 percent.

Surveys by the department show farmers' intentions to plant are "at high levels everywhere in the country," he said.

But one member of the panel, Sen. Edward Zorinsky, D-Neb., was skeptical of Naylor's comments. "If banks keep going broke out there, there must be some reason," Zorinsky said.

Naylor said in an interview later that while there had been some "posturing" by politicians over the farm credit issue that exaggerated its dimensions, "there's a real problem out there."

He and other witnesses told the committee to expect at least another year or two of serious financial problems in agriculture, including continued credit difficulties.

USDA estimates that at least one in three of U.S. commercial-sized farms is suffering some degree of financial stress because of falling asset values and low crop prices.

But Naylor said with just three weeks left before the informal May 15 end of the spring lending season, bankers, the Farmers Home Administration and state officials have used all available resources to soften the crisis.

He said FmHA has made \$2.55 billion in direct operating loans so far in the year that began last October, and another \$355 million in guaranteed operating loans.

Those figures are nearly double last year's lending levels in the hardest-hit parts of the Midwest, he said, and probably will reach a total of \$3 billion overall.

"I don't know what more we might have done with the programs we have," Naylor said.

Naylor presented figures from the President Reagan's Debt Adjustment Program which was first announced during last year's election campaign.

The figures showed that the program has played a relatively minor role in ensuring farm financing. \$650 million initially earmarked for that program of loan restructuring, 129 applications worth \$19.5 million have been approved, he said.

He defended administration plans to shift FmHA lending away from direct loans and toward guarantees of loans made to farmers by commercial sources.

He said his agency is too hindered by government red tape to do the job adequately.

At the same hearing, representatives of the quasi-government Farm Credit System reported results of a new study.

They said it shows that even under the best of conditions, some 10 percent — about \$4.2 billion — of the nation's farm debt will have to be written off as a loss over the next few years, and farmers will have to be another \$50 billion in assets to float financially.

If farm income levels decline, asset values continue to fall, farms will have to sell off \$165 billion in land and equipment and some \$15 billion — 8.5 percent of farm debt — will have to be written off as lost, Melvin Todd, a board member of the Farm Credit Council.

President still seeks apology from Soviets

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The White House said Tuesday the Soviet Union will face "adverse consequences" if it refuses to deal in a "responsible" manner with U.S. requests for an apology and compensation for the fatal shooting of Maj. Arthur D. Nicholson.

Spokesman Larry Speakes declined to say whether the incident might lead President Reagan to pass up a summit meeting that he has said he wants to have with Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev.

"I will leave it exactly where it is," Speakes told reporters. "Adverse consequences, period."

He said no decision has been made on whether the president will attend the United Nations General Assembly meeting in New York in September, at which Gorbachev reportedly plans to be present.

"I don't know why he wouldn't but there has not been a decision," Speakes said.

An administration official, speaking on condition he not be identified, said the incident was unlikely to interfere with prospects for the summit.

"The fact that this thing has been handled badly throughout by the Soviets should not be linked to the issue of the summit," the official said.

Nicholson was shot while on a reconnaissance mission in East Germany. After a meeting of the top U.S. and Soviet military officers in Pötsdam, East Germany, the State Department announced last Tuesday the Soviets had agreed not to permit "use of force or weapons" against American military liaison personnel.

On Monday, however, the Soviet Embassy disputed the State Department account, denying that it had promised not to shoot intruders on such missions. The embassy statement said the Soviets were "puzzled" by the U.S. version.

Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger, interviewed by CBS television, said, "They're just lying, that's all. Their general, who is their authorized agent, made that pledge to our general."

Israeli forces withdrawing from Bekaa

Associated Press

BEIRUT, Lebanon — Israeli occupation forces have begun pulling back from east Lebanese Bekaa valley, where they faced the Syrian army since Israel's 1982 invasion of Lebanon, state radio Beirut Radio reported.

The radio quoted unnamed Lebanese internal security forces as saying Israeli troops in armored personnel carriers and trucks were retreating southwest from the 31-mile cease-fire line.

Israeli Radio said Israeli troops were poised for a withdrawal from the Bekaa and the English-language Jerusalem Post newspaper said they would retreat to a security zone just north of the Israeli-Lebanese border.

The Israeli withdrawal raised fears of new fighting between Lebanon's Moslems and Maronite Christians.

Israeli warplanes dropped Arabic-language leaflets warning people not to aid Shiite Moslem guerrillas who have been attacking the Israelis for months.

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