

World and Nation

Engineers: Managers OK'd Challenger liftoff

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Morton Thiokol engineers testified Tuesday that company managers overruled their fears that a cold-weather liftoff might doom the Challenger, and sources revealed that investigators have uncovered a pre-launch protest from the manufacturer of the spaceplane.

The protest, from Rocco Petrone, president of the space division of Rockwell International, expressed fears that ice might fall from the space shuttle's external tank and damage Challenger's fragile tiles, the sources said.

Petrone is a former NASA launch director and his involvement was to be disclosed Wednesday or Thursday as the presidential commission summoned Rockwell officials for public questioning. The disclosure provided fresh evidence that NASA's top officials were confronted with multiple objections to a cold-weather launch.

Managers of Morton Thiokol, which makes the rockets that boost the shuttle into space, reversed their company's initial opposition to launch, and skeptical commission members questioned them intensely about their justification for that on Tuesday. The company's own engineers said

they were almost unanimously opposed, one recalling that he warned last summer such a catastrophe could happen.

Testifying before the president's shuttle investigating commission, Roger Boisjoly, a Morton Thiokol engineer who deals in booster rocket structures, said he warned his company on July 31 that the erosion of the rubber-like O-ring safety seals on the shuttle's solid rocket boosters could cause an explosion. He said that, when they were cold, the seals between segments of the booster rockets would not fit properly into their seats.

All seven company witnesses said they felt pressure from NASA officials who questioned Thiokol's initial opposition to the launch.

Joe C. Kilminster, the Morton Thiokol vice president who finally signed the firm's recommendation that the launch proceed, said he did so because he was convinced that there was a sufficient safety factor in the seals.

But earlier, Kilminster's boss, Morton Thiokol vice president Jerry Mason, had acknowledged under intense questioning that the company lacked enough data to estimate the effect of the cold.

Reagan offers peace, safety in U.S. to Marcos

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The United States whisked Ferdinand Marcos out of his palace in a helicopter Tuesday and quickly embraced the fledgling Philippine government of his successor, Corazon Aquino. President Reagan guaranteed Marcos "his peace, his safety and his dignity" in the United States.

In a swiftly unfolding chain of events, Marcos and Aquino both claimed the presidency at separate inaugural ceremonies Tuesday.

However, at the urging of the United States and extraordinary prodding by Reagan's friend, Sen. Paul Laxalt, "to cut and cut cleanly," Marcos threw in the towel by the end of the Manila day and relinquished his 20-year rule.

After an overnight rest at an American military base, Marcos and his family were flown out of the Philippines by a U.S. Air Force jet en route to American soil in Guam, according to U.S. officials.

A Pentagon spokesman said that Marcos was scheduled to leave Guam for Honolulu between 8 p.m. and 11 p.m. Wednesday, local time, (between 5 a.m. and 8 a.m. EST.)

Secretary of State George P. Shultz made the first announcement of Marcos' fall from power.

On Capitol Hill, Sen. Patrick

Leahy, D-Vt., ranking Democrat on the Senate intelligence committee, said, "We came close to botching it by sticking with Marcos for so long. But the way it ended, I think we can work with Mrs. Aquino."

Senior administration officials, speaking privately, said that although Aquino's party contains leftist elements, her initial appointments indicate she will have a centrist government.

Presidential spokesman Larry Speakes said Aquino has indicated she will respect an agreement allowing two huge U.S. military bases in the Philippines.

Emphasizing that Marcos was welcome in the United States, Shultz said, "Throughout this process, we have been in close touch with President Marcos and his family and we want to see them continue on in dignity and honor."

While faulting Marcos for failing to make economic and military reforms, Shultz said, "As we assess the overall picture and we assess his role in the Philippines over a long period of time, he has been a constructive force."

Laxalt, a Nevada Republican who traveled to the Philippines last year as an emissary for Reagan, was called out of a briefing with Shultz and special envoy Philip Habib Monday

afternoon to take a call from Marcos.

Marcos wanted to know if a publicized call by Reagan to resign was legitimate. "I said it was," Laxalt said.

Marcos sought assurances the United States would not punish him if he came here and "I indicated that was no problem," Laxalt said. He promised to convey Marcos' sentiments to Reagan, and drove to the White House where he met with the president, Shultz, White House chief of staff Donald Regan and national security adviser John Poindexter.

In that meeting, Reagan told Laxalt, "We would like to guarantee to President Marcos his peace, his safety and his dignity," according to Speakes.

Laxalt went to Poindexter's office and placed a call to Marcos.

Marcos told Laxalt he wanted to go ahead with Tuesday's inauguration, and asked if Reagan wanted him to stay in office. Laxalt said Reagan could not tell Marcos what to do.

"Then he asked me the gut question, 'Senator, what should I do?'" said Laxalt. "I wasn't bound by diplomatic niceties. I said, 'Cut and cut cleanly. The time has come.'"

"There was the longest pause on the other end of that phone," said Laxalt. "He said 'yes,' and then he said, 'I am so very, very disappointed.'"

Gorbachev rejects U.S. arms control proposal

Associated Press

MOSCOW — Soviet leader Mikhail S. Gorbachev rejected President Reagan's new arms control proposals Tuesday and said timing of the next summit hinges on an "understanding" about banning nuclear tests or eliminating medium-range missiles in Europe.

Convening the 27th Communist Party Congress, Gorbachev sharply criticized Reagan's stand on space weapons, his rejection of a freeze on British and French arsenals, and his call for cuts in the Soviet Union's Asian nuclear forces.

"It is hard to detect in the letter we have

to produce practical results in key areas of limiting and reducing armaments."

"There are at least two matters on which an understanding could be reached: The cessation of nuclear tests and the abolition of U.S. and Soviet intermediate-range missiles" in Europe, he said.

"Then, as a matter of fact, if there is readiness to seek agreement, the question of the time of the meeting would be resolved of itself: We will accept any suggestion on this count," Gorbachev said. "But there is no sense in holding empty talks."

Gorbachev spoke for about 5½ hours at the opening of a gathering that occurs at

least every five years. The last party congress was in 1981.

The party general secretary, who turns 55 on Sunday, broke sharply with the years of the late Leonid I. Brezhnev, which he said were marked by stagnation, corruption, uncontrolled bureaucracy and economic mismanagement.

He also outlined a program to reorganize centralized planning and government, modernize industry and agriculture, make prices more responsive to demand and create incentives for producing higher-quality goods.

Accusing the United States of blocking progress at the Geneva arms talks, Gorbachev

commented for the first time on Reagan's response to Gorbachev's Jan. 15 proposal for a three-stage elimination of nuclear arms by the year 2000.

The plan would begin with eliminating Soviet and U.S. medium-range missiles in Europe and freezing British and French nuclear arsenals, followed by cuts in strategic missiles and a ban on space weapons.

Gorbachev said Reagan's letter "seems to contain some reassuring opinions and theses. However, these positive pronouncements are swamped in various reservations, linkages and conditions which in fact block the solution of radical problems of disarmament."

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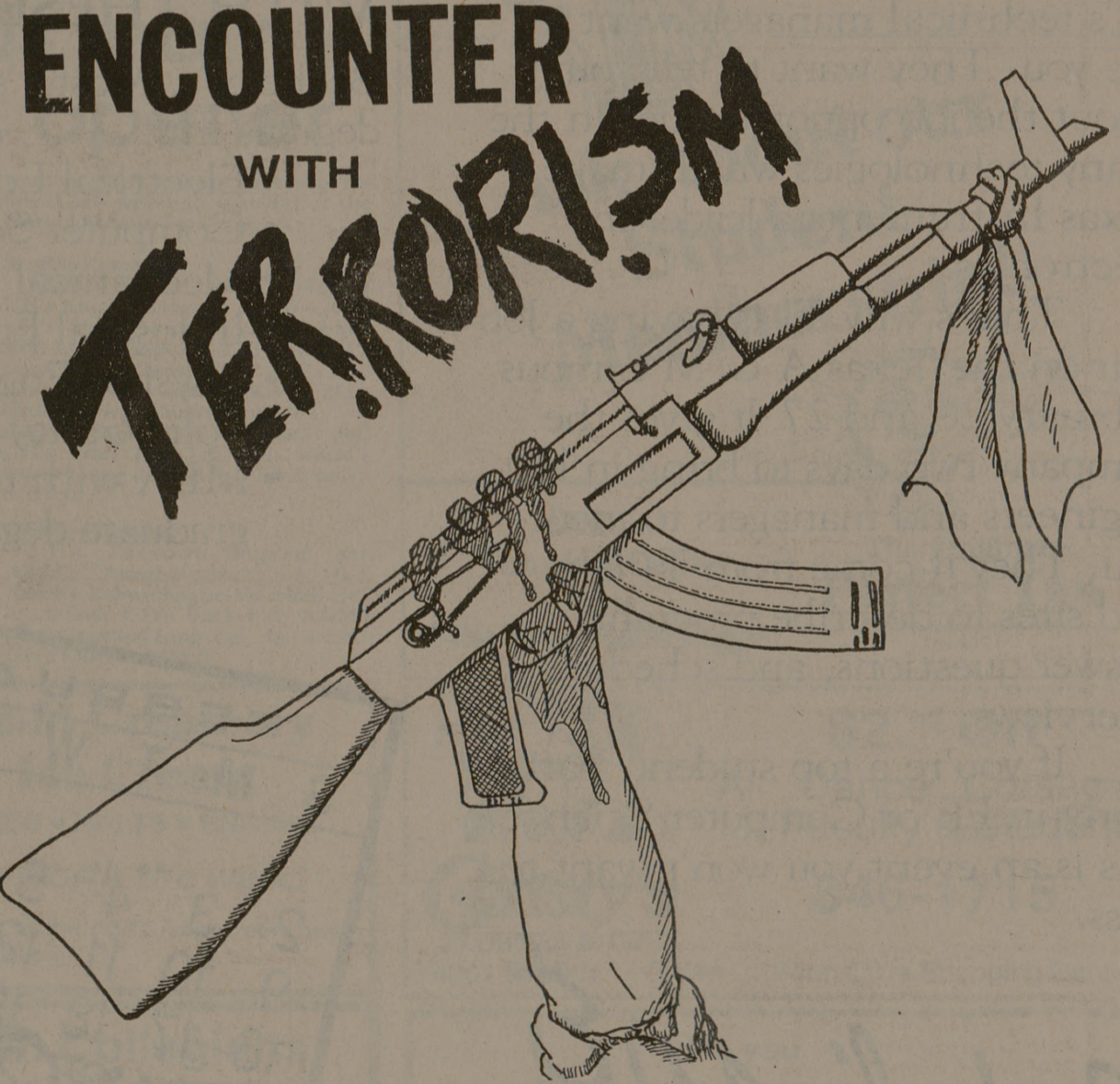
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