

World and Nation

Navy ready if Reagan orders strike on Libya

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Navy has taken steps to assure that President Reagan can call on a two-carrier battle group if he decides to order a military strike against Libya, Pentagon and administration sources said Wednesday.

The preparations include cancellation of the departure by one carrier from the Mediterranean for home and scuttling plans for a liberty call by a second carrier, the sources said.

The U.S. 6th Fleet now has the carrier America under way in the northern Mediterranean off the coast of Italy. The carrier Coral Sea, which had been expecting to sail for home shortly, was in port Wednesday in Malaga, Spain, but sources said it might get under way as early as Thursday.

The officials, speaking on condition of anonymity, stressed the Navy had yet to receive any orders to reform a naval battle group in the central Mediterranean off Libya's coast. But they acknowledged the latest preparations were the clearest indication yet that plans were being studied for a military strike.

"It has become clear over the past 24 hours that we're going to keep our options open for the moment by keeping two carriers over there," one source said.

The disclosure of the Navy actions came as President Reagan was telling newspaper editors the United States is "not going to just sit here and hold still" in the wake of renewed terrorist attacks against Americans in Europe.

He said Libyan leader Moammar Khadafy is "definitely a suspect" in the latest fatal bombings aboard a TWA jetliner over Greece and in a West Berlin nightclub.

The president refused to say what he plans to do other than continue to gather evidence about the incidents and seek the support of European allies.

Shortly before the president's appearance, a senior administration official disclosed that U.S. intelligence agencies had learned that Khadafy

was encouraging his embassies to guide new terrorist attacks against the United States and that Reagan administration officials had agreed there must be retaliation.

Pentagon sources revealed on Tuesday the Coral Sea was preparing to leave port at Malaga, Spain, to conduct some routine operations in the western Mediterranean.

After a brief period of operations, the sources said, the Coral Sea was supposed to set sail for the United States, having completed its normal six-month deployment.

The carrier left its home port of Norfolk, Va., on Oct. 2.

Instead of departing Malaga, however, the Coral Sea was unexpectedly ordered to remain in port and at least temporarily to scrap its plans for a return home.

The carrier America, meantime, left the port of Livorno, Italy, as scheduled Wednesday. But that ship has been told to remain under way at sea instead of heading toward a second port call in France, the sources said.

NRA wins key struggle over handgun sales

WASHINGTON (AP) — Proponents of a bill backed by the National Rifle Association won a crucial test vote in the House on Wednesday when they crushed a move by gun control advocates to maintain the 18-year-old ban on interstate sales of handguns.

The victory suggested the NRA has the votes it needs to win passage of a bill to ease many controls of the 1968 Gun Control Act, passed after the assassinations of Martin Luther King Jr. and Robert F. Kennedy.

The gun lobby's measure, sponsored by Rep. Harold L. Volkmer, D-Mo., is competing with a second firearms bill sponsored by Rep. William J. Hughes, D-N.J., and backed by major police and gun control groups.

A final vote was expected Wednesday night or Thursday.

Hughes, sponsor of the police-backed bill, created the test when he tried to saddle the gun lobby's measure with key provisions of his own bill including keeping the ban on interstate handgun sales.

U.S. oil price policy left in confusion

Bush draws criticism of U.S. senators

MUSCAT, Oman (AP) — Vice President George Bush, finding the road to Oman an unexpectedly bumpy one, has left a trail of confusion over U.S. oil price policy and created a firestorm of political ridicule back in the United States.

Referring to Bush's anxiety over falling oil prices, Senate Minority Leader Robert Byrd, D-W.Va., suggested wryly that perhaps Bush was "trying to make his place in history by saving OPEC."

President Reagan, however, defended his vice president, saying others "must be reading things into" what Bush said. Bush has stumbled through a 10-day trip of four Persian Gulf and the Arabian Peninsula states. Perhaps symbolically, when Bush took off on a ride across the Saudi Arabian desert several days ago, his vehicle got stuck in the sand.

The misuses haven't been limited to oil issues. When Bush was asked about an Iranian attack on a Persian Gulf tanker, he said, "Maybe I slept too late because I didn't realize a tanker had been sunk." At about the same time, Bush's staff was in the back of the room discussing the incident with reporters.

Even the State Department put a cloud over Bush's trip, contradicting the vice president's contention that Assistant Secretary of State Richard Murphy was pursuing a new initiative for peace in the Middle East.

Bush said Wednesday he had not heard any complaints from the State

Department, but he backtracked from his earlier statement.

But on no subject has Bush raised more questions than on oil, a subject dear to the heart of the one-time entrepreneur who made a fortune in the Texas petroleum fields.

Sometimes Bush seems to advocate higher prices. Sometimes he seems to favor low prices.

Over and over, he says he does not know how much oil should cost. But as he tours, Bush has kept coming back to his belief that low oil prices undermine the U.S. energy industry, and that a weakened industry is a threat to U.S. national security.

If it seems strange for a man who wants to be president to be telling Americans, in effect, that they

should pay more for gasoline and heating oil, Bush expresses no concern.

Before he left, Bush said plunging petroleum prices threaten vital U.S. interests and wreak havoc in the domestic oil industry.

As Bush took both sides of the oil price argument, the White House emphasized that low prices are keeping inflation down and strengthening the economy.

In explaining his concern over collapsing prices, Bush said, "What I am doing is reiterating a position that I feel very, very strongly, and that is, that a strong domestic oil industry is in the vital national security interests of the United States."

Report says traditional sex can spread AIDS

BOSTON (AP) — The case of a bisexual man who gave AIDS to his wife, who in turn infected a next-door neighbor, provides additional evidence that the virus can be spread from women to men through traditional sexual intercourse, a new report concludes.

AIDS is largely a disease of homosexual men and needle drug abusers, and some authorities question how readily — or even whether — the disease is transmitted sexually from women to men.

In this case, doctors believe a man almost certainly got AIDS through frequent vaginal intercourse with an infected woman.

Dr. Leonard H. Calabrese of the Cleveland Clinic Foundation said, "We know exactly what they did, and this was the consequence. We have reason to believe that other people who have similar contact should consider themselves at high risk."

A report by Calabrese and Dr. K.V. Gopalakrishna of Cleveland's Fairview General Hospital was published as a letter in Thursday's New England Journal of Medicine. They gave this description of the case: A 37-year-old married bisexual man had homosexual encounters during weekend business trips to New York City. In 1983, he developed AIDS and died.

His wife, a 33-year-old Cleveland woman, said she had vaginal intercourse with her husband twice a month but with no other sexual partners. After he died, the woman seemed to be healthy. But 18 months later, she also got AIDS and died.

However, a few months after her husband's death, she began a relationship with a 26-year-old neighbor. They moved in together and for a year had daily vaginal intercourse. The couple did not engage in anal intercourse, oral sex or sex during menstruation.

"There were no unusual sexual practices going on to separate them from the mainstream of America," Calabrese said.

The man also reported no history of homosexuality, drug abuse or contact with prostitutes.

The neighbor now has a severe case of AIDS-related complex, or ARC. His symptoms include weight loss and fever. Calabrese said there is a 95 percent chance he will develop full-blown AIDS within the next year.

Acquired immune deficiency syndrome is caused by a virus known as HTLV-III or LAV. Other researchers reported recently that the virus can be present in female genital secretions.

In their report, the doctors wrote that the case "appears to represent a well-documented example of sexual transmission of HTLV-III from a man to a woman to a man through frequent but traditional sexual practices. We believe the risk of such transmission is real and that sexually active heterosexual men and women should be aware of these data."

Nearly 19,000 AIDS cases have been reported so far to the Centers for Disease Control. Only 45 of them are men who apparently got the disease through sex with women.

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