

World and Nation

Reagan answers questions on secret arms shipments

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Reagan, silent for weeks on the Iran arms sale scandal, answered "all questions" Monday from an investigative committee about authorizing secret weapon shipments to Tehran, the White House said.

Reagan met for 76 minutes with the three-member committee he named Nov. 26 to probe the actions of the National Security Council following disclosure that profits from secret arms sales to Iran were diverted to Contra rebels in Nicaragua.

It was the first time Reagan had discussed the Iran initiative with any outside group.

"In the course of the meeting the president answered all of the panel's questions," a White House statement said. "The wide-ranging review included the development of policy in relation to Iran, the factual history of the president's role in the Iran initiative and the U.S. foreign policy process in general."

The statement said the group, known formally as the Special Review Board, will meet again with Reagan at his invitation.

It was not known whether the president cleared up confusion resulting from contradictory statements by current and former White House aides about when he first authorized arms shipments to Iran.

Robert C. McFarlane, Reagan's former national security adviser, has told Congress that the president had given prior approval for the first Israeli shipment of U.S. arms to Iran in August 1985.

However, White House chief of staff Donald T. Regan has said Reagan did not approve the shipment in advance, and Attorney General Edwin Meese III said the president approved it only when he learned of it after the fact.

At the Capitol, meanwhile, Sen. Claiborne Pell, D-R.I., chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, said there was a link between the latest kidnappings in Lebanon and Reagan's arms sales with Iran.

"When the administration engaged in exchanging weapons for hostages it started down a very slippery slope indeed," Pell said. "It showed if people took hostages they might get something beneficial to them for doing that."

Reagan has denied that the arms sent to Iran were part of a swap for Americans held hostage in Lebanon. Instead, he has argued that the shipments were intended to help reopen contacts with a strategically important nation and that release of hostages was only a secondary goal.

Reagan has made no public men-

tion of the Iran-Contra affair since before Christmas, and has not answered any questions since a Nov. 19 news conference.

The three-member review board, headed by former Sen. John Tower, R-Texas, did not make a verbatim record of the president's testimony, on grounds that would be beneath the dignity of the office.

Board spokesman Herbert Hetu said the group's report, due Feb. 19, probably would not contain details of Reagan's comments, but instead would report findings, recommendations and conclusions.

Tower's panel, also composed of former Sen. Edmund Muskie, D-Maine, and Brent Scowcroft, the national security adviser in the Ford administration, has interviewed 47 people, including former Presidents Carter, Ford and Nixon.

Four people declined to talk with the panel, after invoking the Fifth Amendment protection against self-incrimination. They are John Pindexter, Oliver North, Richard V. Secord and Albert Hakim.

In preparation for the meeting, Reagan and White House aides "discussed the reconstruction of events," White House spokesman Larry Speakes said. "The president had an opportunity to refresh his recollections on it."

Nicaragua to release imprisoned American

WASHINGTON (AP) — Sam Hall, an American arrested last month in a restricted military area near Managua who later claimed he was on a spy mission, will be released to the custody of his brother, Rep. Tony P. Hall, the Nicaraguan embassy announced Monday.

The decision was made after a medical checkup and clinical reports on the 49-year-old prisoner determined he had a condition that could not be cared for properly in Nicaragua, the embassy spokesman, Sarali Porta, said.

The ailment was not described. Hall, arrested Dec. 12, said at a news conference in Managua 10 days later that he was spying on military installations for three men codenamed Tinker, Evers and Chance.

He also claimed in a CBS-TV interview that he was the only remaining member of the Phoenix battalion, which he described as a counter-terrorist paramilitary organization.

Ambassador Carlos Tunnermann has been instructed to contact Rep. Hall, an Ohio Democrat, and "let him know he can travel to Managua as soon as possible so his brother can

return with him to the United States and receive the needed treatment," Porta said in a statement read to the Associated Press.

The congressman feared his brother would be put on trial and sentenced to more than the 30 years given to Eugene Hasenfus, another American who was pardoned Dec. 18 and released in an act of clemency last Christmas.

Hasenfus, the sole survivor of an Oct. 5 airplane crash in which three men were killed, confessed at a trial that he was smuggling weapons to anti-government Nicaraguan rebels.

Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega turned Hasenfus over to Sen. Christopher J. Dodd, D-Conn., and to Hasenfus' wife, Sally, at a ceremony in Managua.

Ortega said the release was "a Christmas message from the Nicaraguan people to the people of the United States, a very concrete message of peace."

There was no immediate reaction from the State Department to the announcement that Hall could go free.

Stock prices close lower in see-saw day

NEW YORK (AP) — Stock prices finished mostly lower Monday, suggesting that the wild gyrations of the previous session frightened many investors out of the market, at least temporarily.

Wall Street analysts said some profit-taking, weakness in the bond market and fear of higher interest rates also played roles in the price decline.

Behaving meekly, compared with its violent swings and 44.15-point loss Friday, the Dow Jones average of 30 industrial stocks see-sawed in a narrow range and closed 5.76 higher at 2,107.28. But it was the only major indicator to show an advance and did not reflect widespread losses in the broader market.

Losing issues outpaced gainers by a about a 5-3 margin on the New York Stock Exchange, where 968 issues fell, 599 rose and 404 remained unchanged. Volume totaled 138.80 million shares.

Reports of child abuse deaths up

CHICAGO (AP) — Reported deaths of abused and neglected children increased 29 percent last year in 24 states, and the head of a group that compiled the figures said Monday that state agencies were getting too overburdened to cope.

Anne H. Cohn, executive director of the National Committee for Prevention of Child Abuse in Chicago, said child abuse may be on the rise in part because "that pocket of population referred to as 'the underclass' has seen things deteriorate."

"We need to focus more on getting treatment (for problems of child abuse) early so it never gets to the point that things are so bad that par-

ents lash out at their kids," Cohn said.

She said improved reporting of abuse-related deaths, due to greater recognition of the problem, may have contributed to the increase "but we don't believe that explains what is going on."

The group said 498 child abuse or child neglect deaths were reported in 1986 in the 24 states that have reported statistics, compared with 386 reported in the same states in 1985.

Nationally, the non-profit group said it believes 1,300 children died last year due to child abuse or neglect, compared with 925 in 1985.

Cohn said the group found that reports of child abuse to state agencies, which have increased 15 percent to 16 percent annually since 1980, increased again last year, this time by 6 percentage points.

"Caseloads are getting too high," she said. "Some families who might have been helped by treatment didn't get it. Death is one of the outcomes."

Deborah Darro, director of research for the group, agreed.

"We are seeing the results of a child abuse system that has seen a dramatic increase in caseload but no comparable increase in budgets," Darro said.



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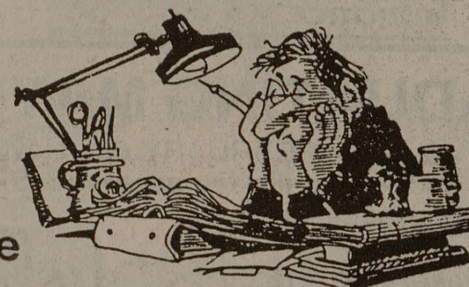
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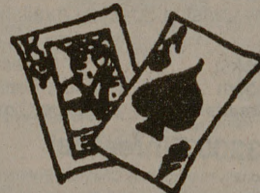
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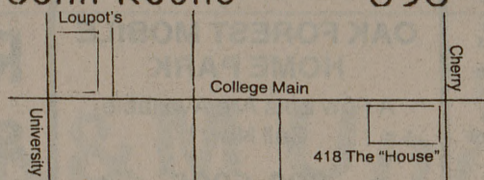
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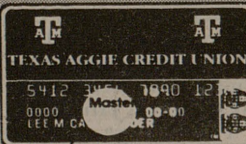
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