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Poindexter: Goal of plan was secrecy

WASHINGTON — Former National Security Adviser John Poindexter testified Thursday that he sent Oliver North a "well done" note after the aide misled Congress about the secret Contra supply program, and he said President Reagan made a mistake in firing North when the affair became public.

"Our objective here all along was to withhold information" from Congress, said Poindexter in a second day of testimony before the congressional Iran-Contra committees. "There's no question about that."

The stocky rear admiral, dressed in civilian clothes, defended again his tearing up of a signed presidential order — known as a "finding" — that authorized sending arms to Iran in the expectation that it would result in release of American hostages held in Lebanon.

"I simply didn't want this document to see the light of day," Poindexter said.

House committee counsel John Nields asked, "Admiral Poindexter, what made you believe that the president of the United States would want you to destroy a finding in order to save him from political embarrassment?"

Poindexter said, "I recognized that it was politically embarrassing. I thought one of my jobs was to protect the president."

Asked whether the purpose was also to protect himself, Poindexter said, "In no way."

Reagan, queried by reporters at the beginning of a Cabinet session on the budget, repeatedly refused to comment on Poindexter's testimony, saying, "I'm going to be making a statement when all these hearings are over, and then I will be ready to talk."

Spokesman Marlin Fitzwater said preparations were under way for a Reagan speech after the hearings.

Poindexter said Wednesday he believed Reagan would have thought the diversion a good idea if he had been told. But Fitzwater said Thursday that Reagan "has said on past occasions that had he been told, he would not have allowed, and he should have been told."

On Capitol Hill, there were again frequent clashes between Richard Beckler, Poindexter's attorney, and a Senate committee counsel, Arthur Liman. Responding to a Liman question, Beckler said:

"If counsel wants to know what the president knew and what he thought of when he signed that document, then perhaps you ought to have the president come down here and answer that because we haven't spoken to the president on this subject."

There were only about three hours of testimony because many on the committee journeyed to Philadelphia to celebrate the 200th anniversary of the constitutional compromise that created a two-house national legislature.



Photo by Sarah Cowan

Help! We're Stuck

Janet Perry, 5, peeks from behind the bars at left, as Grace Smith, 4, Diana Savage, 4, and Nichole Meyers, 4, join in the fun. The blond

boy in the background is Zachary Braswell, 7. The children are playing at A&M Methodist Day School, where they attend classes.

House OKs bill to put A&M System up for review

By Yvonne DeGraw
Reporter

A bill that would put the Texas A&M University System — and most other state university systems — up for regular review has been passed by the Texas House.

Rep. Patricia Hill, vice chairman of the sunset commission, introduced the bill, which would put six university systems up for sunset review every 12 years.

The review would be conducted by the sunset commission, but unlike

most agencies, the systems would not be abolished automatically if the commission fails to give its approval.

"The bill does provide that nothing can be abolished," said Hill, R-Dallas.

Legislators passed the bill in a non-record vote without debate Thursday morning. There was no debate before a preliminary vote Wednesday, either. The bill now goes to the Senate.

Dr. William Mobley, deputy chancellor for academic and resource development, said A&M's administra-

tion is not opposed to the bill.

"I think we would fare very well in a review of our system offices," he said. "We don't view with concern the fact that this might be enacted."

House Bill 2181, the work of the Select Committee on Higher Education, describes the role of university system offices. Mobley said A&M's current system matches what that law lays out.

He speculated that the Legislature might be more interested in looking at the smaller systems the bill includes.

In addition to A&M, the measure

covers the University of Texas System, the Lamar University System, the University System of South Texas, the Texas State University System and the University of Houston System. The community college system is not covered by the bill.

Hill said her bill was originally going to be added to H.B. 2181, but the committee did not want a lot of amendments. Speaker Gib Lewis is co-sponsoring her bill, she said.

"There's nothing wrong with having at least a part of the agencies that spend 22 percent of the state budget looked at periodically," she said.

Until now, she said, higher education was the only state agency that did not come up for review.

The commission — made up of four state representatives, four senators and one member appointed by both the lieutenant governor and the speaker of the House — would first examine the systems in 1993.

Hill said they will look at how well the central offices of each system are managed. This includes looking for top-heavy administration and overlapping curriculum at nearby campuses. They also will examine how

systems and units within a system coordinate their activities.

"I just bet that — with the possible exception of UT and A&M — there is very little sharing of information or coordination among the various university systems," Hill said.

"Anything we can do to spend that money more wisely is advantageous," she said.

Mobley said A&M's administration is small for the University's size.

"We are relatively lean on a national scale, as well as on a state scale, in terms of our operation," he said.

Helicopter crashes in rescue mission; 6 servicemen killed

SAN SALVADOR, El Salvador (AP) — A U.S. military helicopter crashed in a squall and killed six American servicemen on a mission to aid a wounded U.S. military adviser, the U.S. Embassy said Thursday.

One of those killed in the crash Wednesday night was the deputy commander of the U.S. Military Group attached to the U.S. Embassy in San Salvador, according to a Defense Department spokesman in Washington. One of the seven aboard survived.

The crash brings to 12 the number of U.S. servicemen killed in El Salvador since the war between the U.S.-backed government and leftist guerrillas began in 1979.

The Huey UH-1H helicopter went down "because of bad weather" at 10:52 p.m., seven minutes after it left the capital, said Col. Ron Sconyers, director of public affairs for the U.S. Southern Command in Panama.

The servicemen were bound for the Sal-

vadoran military training center in La Union, 113 miles east of the capital, to pick up a U.S. trainer wounded in the neck in a gun accident and transport him to a military hospital in San Miguel, 86 miles east of San Salvador, Sconyers said.

The craft went down along a steep cliff along the side of Ilopango Lake, a volcanic crater filled with water about 10 miles east of San Salvador, he said.

Robert Sims, the Pentagon's chief

spokesman, said the U.S. helicopter was trying to return to the Ilopango Airport at the time of the crash.

"The survivor of the crash climbed a hill and found a Salvadoran national who assisted in his call for help," Sims added. "U.S. and Salvadoran personnel were then dispatched to the crash site."

The crash survivor and the soldier wounded in La Union were in very serious condition at the military hospital in San Sal-

vador, the embassy said.

Among the dead was Air Force Lt. Col. James M. Basile, 43, of Cheshire, Conn., the deputy commander of the U.S. Military Group at the embassy, said Capt. Nancy Lanttas, a Pentagon spokesman.

Witnesses said the bodies were strewn along a grassy incline. U.S. military personnel and Salvadoran soldiers recovered the bodies and put them aboard U.S. helicopters.

Marcos sued by Philippines for \$22 billion

MANILA, Philippines (AP) — The government sued deposed President Ferdinand E. Marcos and his family Thursday for more than \$22 billion, claiming they plundered the treasury, betrayed the public trust and brazenly abused power.

Marcos fled the country he ruled for two decades on Feb. 26, 1986, driven out by a military-civilian uprising that put President Corazon Aquino in power.

Officials also said they refused an offer by a Saudi Arabian businessman to invest \$1 billion in the Philippines if actions against Marcos were dropped.

Criminal charges are to be filed next week against the former president. The officials did not specify the charges, which are expected to cover the same ground as the civil action.

The Presidential Commission on Good Government filed the civil suit in a special anti-graft court. Aquino appointed the commission and gave it the mission of finding the fortune Marcos is accused of stealing.

AUSTIN (AP) — Gov. Bill Clements, whose no-new-taxes campaign promise melted under the heat of political reality, drew mixed reviews from fellow Republicans Thursday over his endorsement of a \$38.3 billion state budget.

Rep. Chip Staniswalis, R-Amarillo, said, "I think we ought to have a shredding party of our own, Texas-sized, and put that bill in it."

Rep. Sam Johnson, R-Plano, said, "I think that he has gone back on what the people of the state of Texas want. He is not listening. I think had he stuck by his guns, we would have come back and done some real budget reductions."

Rep. John Willy R-Angleton, said, "I'm disappointed that we haven't addressed some of the cuts that could be made."

But Clements, who said the budget is larger than he would have preferred, charged that House members had their shot at cutting state spending and misfired.

"They had their opportunity over about a four-day period over in the House to see what they could do with the budget," Clements said. "And I would remind all of you they reduced it, what, \$17 million? I've reduced it about \$300 million."

Clements agreed Wednesday to the \$38.3 billion 1988-89 state budget — about a 4-percent increase

Clements admits to changing his thoughts about replacing State Board of Education with old-style 27-member elected body

AUSTIN (AP) — Gov. Bill Clements, acknowledging he has reversed his thinking, Thursday said he favors keeping the State Board of Education as an appointed body. He blamed a judge's ruling for his change of heart.

Later in the day, the Senate gave approval to a bill that would allow the appointed system to continue if voters agree.

"I haven't, uh, I haven't, uh, what shall I say about it? I have changed my mind," Clements told a news conference. "I have changed my mind after lengthy discussions with Speaker (Lewis) and Lt. Gov. (Bill) Hobby."

Clements said the reason for his

shift was the decision by State District Judge Harley Clark, who ruled that the state's current system of funding for 1,100 local school districts discriminates against property-poor districts.

Clark's decision, which state officials are appealing, ordered Texas to come up with a new way of funding that doesn't discriminate.

"I think we're in jeopardy," Clements said of Clark's ruling. "I think that would be disturbing to the whole situation."

The Legislature, in passing the sweeping school reform law known as House Bill 72 in 1984, eliminated the old, 27-member elected State Board of Education. The law re-

placed that board with a 15-member panel appointed by the governor.

But the law also called for elections to resume in 1988, with the elected board taking over in 1989.

Clements, who throughout his 1986 campaign pledged to make certain the board would be elected again, Thursday said Clark's ruling means it would be difficult to change formats.

"I certainly do not want to restructure public education in the state of Texas during the next two years," Clements said. "I think a big factor in that that will be helpful for continuity of purpose would be to retain ... an appointed board vs. an elected board."

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The House voted to raise the state sales tax from the current 5 1/4 percent to 6 percent and apply it to insurance premiums, in addition to keeping the motor fuels tax at 15 cents per gallon instead of letting it revert to 10 cents Sept. 1.

The Senate earlier this week passed a smorgasbord tax plan that would set a 6-percent sales tax rate and make a variety of other changes. On Thursday, senators also OK'd the fuels tax hike, which would raise about \$669 million. That bill was returned to the House for action on minor amendments.

Lewis said he planned a Monday vote on whatever compromise tax plan is written by a conference committee. The current special session ends Tuesday.

Asked about the no-new-taxes promise that some observers say was a key in his 1986 defeat of incumbent Democratic Gov. Mark White, Clements said, "I sure did not see the deficit being carried over to the extent that it had been."

In January, Clements proposed a \$36.9 billion budget he said could be balanced by keeping the 15-cent fuel tax and 5 1/4 percent sales tax.

"I certainly did not anticipate another \$700 million hickey from Mr. Bullock," he said, referring to State Comptroller Bob Bullock's series of reduced revenue forecasts.

Some House Republicans were sympathetic to Clements' plight. "I think he has looked at it and made a decision based on what he feels is best for the state of Texas," said Rep. Ed Kuempel, R-Seguin.