

World and Nation

Ortega offers to discuss possible cease-fire plan

MANAGUA, Nicaragua (AP) — President Daniel Ortega on Wednesday offered to discuss with the U.S. government a peace plan announced in Washington that calls for a cease-fire between Sandinista troops and Contra rebels.

"The government of Nicaragua invites the government of the United States to immediately initiate negotiations in Washington, Managua or in a third country to have an unconditional dialogue to discuss the said initiative," Ortega said.

He also said the meeting would be a time to discuss as well "Nicaraguan initia-

tives with the purpose of developing a negotiating process that would conclude with a signing of a just and verifiable accord that would guarantee the legitimate interests of Nicaragua and the United States."

President Reagan said Wednesday in Washington he would hold off on seeking further military aid for Contra rebels if Nicaragua's leftist government agrees to a cease-fire and democratic reforms.

The \$100 million in U.S. aid for the Contra rebels approved last year expires Sept. 30. The Contras have been fighting the leftist Sandinista government here for the past 5½ years.

Ortega said a refusal by the United States to meet with Nicaraguan officials would show the the proposal from Washington is only a maneuver to appease the U.S. Congress.

"The rejection of this dialogue would show that the Reagan administration, with its initiative, wants to boycott (other) peace efforts of the region . . . to obtain a bipartisan consensus of Congress for the approval of more funds for the mercenaries and the strengthening of its current interventionist escalation which the administration insists on continuing," Ortega said.

The president read the brief statement

to journalists invited to the government headquarters.

He announced before reading the statement that he would accept questions at some other time.

Ortega is scheduled to attend a summit of Central American presidents Thursday and Friday in Guatemala City, where Foreign Minister Miguel D'Escoto earlier said Reagan "is becoming more and more convinced that it's going to be difficult to obtain more funding for the Contras."

"He's trying to create the impression that he is not a warlike president, that he is open to peace," D'Escoto said Tuesday

night. "But he is a true 'bandolero,' a man who operates totally outside the law."

The Sandinista newspaper *Barro* here Wednesday called the Reagan proposal "a maneuver against the summit," the pro-government newspaper *Nuevo Mundo* termed it "unacceptable."

The summit is intended to discuss a plan for peace first proposed by Costa Rican President Oscar Arias in February.

The Contadora Group of Mexico, Panama, Venezuela and Colombia has been trying since January 1983 to draft a treaty for Central America.

California lawmaker proposes penalties for highway shooters

LOS ANGELES (AP) — A law that would imprison highway gun-slingers for at least three years was proposed Wednesday as violence spread from the freeways to the sky, where one pilot reported another one drew a gun on him.

"Maybe next time they can do it in rocket ships," said a spokesman for the Marines Corps, which volunteered the use of a helicopter in an unsuccessful attempt to catch the airborne gunman.

The spate of motorist-to-motorist violence, which started in mid-June, has left four people dead and 15 injured on southern California free-

ways. Eighteen people have been arrested, although one was released for lack of evidence. More than 40 shootings, rock-throwings and other attacks have been recorded.

Most of those arrested so far have been booked for investigation of attempted murder. A first-degree attempted murder conviction carries a prison sentence of 25 years to life.

It appeared the highway violence had moved to the crowded sky over the region Tuesday when the pilot of a Cessna 150 reported that the pilot of a Citabria brandished a gun at him as the two planes flew off the coast of Oceanside, 70 miles south-

east of downtown Los Angeles, Federal Aviation Administration spokeswoman Elly Bekke said. No shots were fired.

The Marine Corps Air Station in El Toro volunteered a CH-46 Sea Knight helicopter in an unsuccessful attempt to find the gun-wielding pilot, said Maj. Hank Polacke.

"I guess this is a new twist to the freeway shootings," Polacke said Wednesday. "Maybe next time they can do it in rocket ships."

FAA spokeswoman Barbara Abels said Wednesday that investigators had located the Citabria pilot and said he denied drawing a gun.

She said the pilots each accused the other of traveling too close to the other.

State Assemblyman Paul Zeltner announced Wednesday that he will propose urgency legislation later this month to crack down on freeway shooters.

His bill would permanently revoke the driver's license of anyone convicted of shooting from one car at another, require a minimum prison sentence of three years for anyone convicted of such a crime, and require a minimum state prison sentence of up to seven years if a death occurs during such a crime.

U.S. chief of protocol: Diplomatic immunity is necessary policy

WASHINGTON (AP) — The State Department's chief of protocol on Wednesday defended a treaty that guarantees diplomatic immunity, despite testimony from victims who told tales of rapes and assaults gone unpunished.

"We are an honorable nation — we are not an Iran," Selwa Roosevelt told a Senate panel.

Roosevelt said she feels compassion for victims of diplomatic crime, but she said legislation to limit diplomatic immunity here would ultimately hurt U.S. envoys abroad.

"We have set our signature on a treaty," she said. "If the United States unilaterally alters its treaty obligation, we surely will invite more harmful reciprocal action."

The department has estimated that about 27,000 foreigners and their families are covered by diplomatic immunity, although the American Federation of Police put the number closer to 40,000. Under the 1961 Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations, these people can't be tried on criminal charges here unless the

home country waives immunity.

But Roosevelt, whose husband is a scion of the family of Theodore Roosevelt, acknowledged that rarely happens.

Instead, diplomatic crimes generally go unpunished, witnesses told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

Kenny Skeen, of Silver Spring, Md., was working as a night bouncer in 1982 when he was shot by a young man later identified by police as the son of a Brazilian ambassador. Skeen said he was just coming out of work when he was told that the man had been released.

"When I heard the news that this man was a diplomat, his name would be cut free, that blew my mind," Skeen said. "I'm an American. He's over here on my property, my country. He shoots and he gets away scot-free."

Years later, Skeen discovered that the ambassador's son had been arrested another time "on assaultive conduct" and sent on diplomatic-immunity grounds. The son went back to Brazil a few days after Skeen was shot.

Witnesses tell of death, destruction in Mecca

MECCA, Saudi Arabia (AP) — Friday began in peace, as befits a day of the annual Moslem pilgrimage to holy Mecca, but there were whispers during early afternoon prayers at the Grand Mosque. Then the trouble began.

This account of the protests and riots, in which hundreds of people were killed, was assembled from interviews with witnesses:

Two million Moslems from all over the world had come to Mecca on the annual hajj, or pilgrimage.

Many observers in the sea of white, seamless

robes noticed clusters of Iranians forming in the vast yard and outside the prayer compound. The pious scene around the Grand Mosque quickly became one of violence, panic and death.

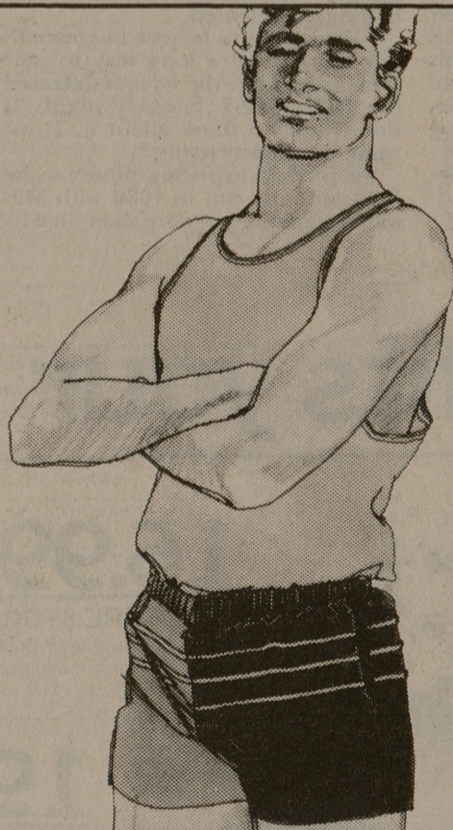
Groups of Iranians moved in tight formations, in a brisk half-step march despite the temperature of 115 degrees, with large numbers of chanting women in the front.

Shouting and sounds of confusion came from the rear of the huge crowd. Hajjis, or pilgrims, from other countries were squabbling with the

Iranians, who had blocked several streets. A car was overturned and began to burn.

Some in the front fought police, grabbing officers and striking them with pieces of wood or metal. Police retreated behind water cannons, whose jets knocked over protesters and started more stampedes.

Saudi authorities say the toll was 402 dead: 275 Iranian pilgrims, 42 other hajjis and 85 police officers. They said the police did not fire on the protesters, and the deaths and hundreds of injuries were caused by trampling and riots.



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