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U.S. to ask Congress to send Contras aid

WASHINGTON (AP) — Secretary of State George P. Shultz, arguing that the alternative is a "communist victory" in Nicaragua, said Thursday the administration will ask Congress for \$270 million in aid to

the Contra rebels for an 18-month period.

Testifying before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Shultz said additional aid to the Contras is the best insurance that Nicaragua

will comply with the terms of the Central American peace agreement it signed last month in Guatemala.

The announcement drew immediate criticism from a number of congressional Democrats and is certain to produce another round of heated debate on Capitol Hill over the administration's Central America policy.

Shultz said, "If the Guatemalan agreement is to be implemented in a way that secures a negotiated cease-fire, a democratic opening in Nicaragua, and accommodation of basic national security interests . . . the United States must continue to furnish their support to the freedom fighters."

Poindexter testifies confession about Iran produced sympathy

WASHINGTON (AP) — After National Security Adviser John M. Poindexter confessed to President Reagan last Nov. 25 of his involvement in the most damaging incident in Reagan's political career, there was no scolding or reprimand, just sympathy from the president and those around him.

According to documents and transcripts released Thursday by the congressional Iran-Contra committees, Poindexter said he was merely told by the president and his men they were sorry he had to resign.

In private testimony taken in four separate sessions last May, June and July in preparation for Poindexter's televised testimony in mid-July, the Navy rear admiral also said he was never particularly bothered by the idea of swapping arms to Iran for Americans held hostage in Lebanon.

Although Reagan has said repeatedly he never intended to approve such a swap, Poindexter told the committees: "I frankly don't find that distasteful."

"I think that we live in a very imperfect world, a very dangerous world, and sometimes you don't have the best options or the ideal option and you've got to do what's necessary," Poindexter said.

Two months before he testified in public, Poindexter was telling the congressional investigators he had deliberately decided not to inform the president that he had adopted a proposal made by Lt. Col. Oliver L. North to divert money from the

arms sales to Iran and use it to benefit the Contra rebels in Nicaragua.

He said he kept the president uninformed because the plan was obviously controversial and "would cause a ruckus if it were exposed."

But when the diversion was exposed and the decision had been made to accept his resignation, Poindexter said there was little recrimination aimed at him.

He said he told Donald Regan, then the White House chief of staff, that he had "general knowledge" of the diversion and was going to resign.

Later that day, he repeated his intention to the president and other advisers in the Oval Office.

Poindexter was asked: "Did anyone say to you . . . 'why did you do such a stupid thing as letting this happen?'"

After his lawyer objected and the question was rephrased, Poindexter replied: "That sort of expression was never made."

Q. "Did they scold you in any way?"

A. "None whatsoever."

Q. "There was no sense of reprimand?"

A. "None."

Q. "Did they express sympathy for your situation?"

A. "Yes, they did."

Poindexter said that he decided to authorize the diversion of arms-sale money to the Contras within minutes after North proposed it.

He said he simultaneously decided not to tell Reagan.

White House spokesman Marlin Fitzwater told reporters the aid request will "keep pressure on the Sandinistas as we go through the peace process and let them know the president is serious in his commitment not to desert the resistance."

The Guatemala agreement, among other steps, calls on the Sandinista government to arrange a cease-fire and to implement democratic reform measures by Nov. 7.

These measures would occur about five weeks after the current Contra aid allotment expires.

It also calls on the United States to cease funding the Contras.

House Speaker Jim Wright, D-Texas, who has played an increasingly influential role in the Central America issue, said it was inappropriate for the administration to make a request for more Contra money while the peace process was under way.

"Such a request would anticipate the failure of the peace process," he said. "I don't anticipate the failure of the peace process."

"I anticipate success."

Sen. Christopher Dodd, D-Conn., an outspoken critic of the administration policy in Central America, told Shultz during Thursday's hearing that a Contra aid request at this time "is the worst possible signal you could send."

Dodd said the administration may be embarked on a "significant, profound, historical mistake."



Photo by Perry A. Liston II

Antonio Torar was injured Thursday at 4:06 p.m. when his motorcycle struck a car pulling onto Bizzell Street, said Bob Wiatt, campus director of security and traffic. The driver's view apparently was blocked by a bus, he said. The motorcycle

then bounced into a parked car, sending Torar over its hood. He was taken to St. Joseph Hospital and released after treatment of facial cuts. The car's driver, a female A&M student, was charged with failure to yield the right of way, Wiatt said.

Winds damage pope's altar, topple twin towers

SAN ANTONIO (AP) — Lashing winds damaged the altar Thursday night that was built for Pope John Paul II's upcoming appearance, toppling twin 12-story metal towers minutes after workers scrambled to safety, authorities said.

No injuries were reported after the windstorm swept through south and central Texas and crumpled the 150-foot towers

just after 6 p.m. CDT, Bexar County Sheriff Harlon Copeland said.

Workers fled from the area when a volunteer firefighter who heard radio reports of the fast-approaching storm warned them with his bullhorn, Copeland said. Minutes later, the towers came crashing down in winds estimated at between 70 and 80 mph.

The altar platform itself is about 90 percent salvageable, and workers were to labor

throughout the night to repair the damage so the Mass can go on as scheduled Sunday, archdiocese spokesman Richard Hemberger said.

"The towers, however, will not go back up," he said. "Everything else will be on schedule. The helium-filled cloud (that was to hover over the pope during the Mass) was damaged also and will not be used."

"This was just one of those freak winds

that came out of nowhere," Hemberger said.

The towers were scattered near the stage, as were pieces of about a dozen of the 16 smaller towers representing each of Texas' dioceses.

Copeland blamed the collapse in part on corrugated plastic shields used as part of the stage's backdrop and said it isn't clear if

the damage can be repaired in time for Sunday's Mass.

"The corrugated plastic shields and fiberglass started blowing and this is because of the wind," he said. "They acted like a sail, and it just blew them (the towers) over."

Workers had labored throughout the afternoon to put up banners, scaffolding and other finishing touches on the outdoor site two miles outside the city limits.

Scientists call new test for AIDS virus superior to existing virus check

WASHINGTON (AP) — Researchers said Thursday they have developed an AIDS diagnostic test that readily can be tailored to detect new strains of the disease virus and is easier, cheaper and more accurate than existing tests.

Scientists at the Research Institute of Scripps Clinic in La Jolla,

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Calif., and the federal Centers for Disease Control in Atlanta said that the test appears to be superior to the so-called Western Blot test widely used to confirm infection by the AIDS virus.

Health authorities typically screen blood and test people for AIDS infections using what is called an ELISA test, which detects antibodies developed against proteins coating human immunodeficiency virus or HIV.

Because current ELISA tests can give false positive readings — sometimes indicating an infection when none is present — scientists verify positive findings with the Western Blot, a more time-consuming and difficult-to-perform test to detect core proteins of the virus.

In a report to be published Friday in the journal *Science*, scientists say they have developed a very specific type of ELISA test that does not produce the false positives or false negatives sometimes seen in the other two tests.

In addition, they say, the new test can be modified easily to detect other strains of the HIV virus. This means that if new disease-causing strains of HIV are discovered, tests for them can be produced quickly, they added.

"The test is pretty much 100 percent in detecting different strains of HIV," Dr. Jay A. Nelson of Scripps said in a telephone interview.

The test was developed by Drs. John W. Gnann Jr., Michael B.A. Oldstone and Nelson at Scripps and Drs. Joseph B. McCormick and Sheila Mitchell of the CDC.

Nelson said researchers at the CDC, as well as at some AIDS research centers in the United States and Africa, are running comparisons between the new assay and the Western Blot. These results must be submitted to the Food and Drug Administration and accepted by the agency before the new test can be approved for general use, he said.

Number of psychology majors grows to greatest in College of Liberal Arts

By Cindy Milton
Staff Writer

Texas A&M's growth and a more business-oriented society has caused the number of psychology majors to skyrocket, says Dr. Stephen Worchel, head of the psychology department.

"We're the largest major in the College of Liberal Arts by far," Worchel says. The psychology department alone has almost 1,200 students and it continues to grow. Worchel's efforts to increase the department have been effective — the number of undergraduates has increased by almost 821 students since his arrival.

"When I came to A&M, the department was really small and it looked like a challenge," Worchel says. "It didn't have much of an identity then and I thought it would be interesting to see the department develop."

Worchel feels the department now is "one of the better-kept secrets in the country." He commended the faculty of the department, which has increased by 11 members this year, and includes several winners of national teaching awards.

Worchel attributes the increase in psychology majors to a more business and human-related society. "The department is attracting more

majors because psychology is the one field of liberal arts that has a little bit to offer everyone," he says.

One psychology course, the Survey of Industrial/Organizational Psychology, has increased in popularity among students, he says. The class stresses theories and practices in or-

ganizations, something that is important to anyone interested in business.

Dr. John Sawyer, one of the department's new professors, currently teaching the class, says, "Texas A&M has always been an applied and practical place and industrial/organizational psychology is very applied and

practical. The class fits in with a practical view of the world."

Worchel says there are more people graduating with a psychology degree than ever before. The benefits, he says, are that learning psychology teaches people to think more critically, ask questions and get answers.

There are concerns, however, that the department is growing too fast. Worchel says, "We're having to deal with the numbers. We don't want to run people through like a factory."

Dr. Ludy Benjamin, who has been teaching introductory psychology at A&M for eight years, says bigger classes pose problems for everyone, and the quality of education the students are getting may be worse.

"The large classes hurt the options of the teachers," Benjamin says. "We're forced to use multiple-choice exams because there isn't enough time to grade 250 essays. In the long run, it's a disadvantage to the students because they aren't able to use practical applications of what they're learning."

But Worchel says the department is doing everything it possibly can to maintain a high-quality department.

"We've recently added a bachelor of arts program in addition to the bachelor of science program," he says. Within the next few years, he hopes to add honors courses to the curriculum.

