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WORLD & NATION

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Tuesday, October 31, 1989

Supreme Court enters dispute over federal pension protection

WASHINGTON (AP) — Federal protection for 30 million American workers' pensions could be at stake in a dispute the Supreme Court agreed to resolve Monday.

The justices said they will decide what authority the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation, a federal agency, has to order employers to revive scrapped pension plans.

A federal appeals court limited such authority by setting aside the agency's order that LTV Corp. and its subsidiary, LTV Steel Co., restore three pension plans with unfunded liabilities of \$2.3 billion.

James B. Lockhart, executive director of the PBGC, told reporters Monday that the lower courts "misunderstood and misapplied" the agency's arguments in finding for

LTV. By pursuing the matter, he said, PBGC is trying to "prevent future losses from companies that might want to copycat the LTV type approach."

LTV said it was disappointed that the court had agreed to hear the case because it will delay the company's reorganization. But a statement from the company said LTV is "confident the outcome in the Supreme Court will validate the lower court decisions."

Government lawyers say the ruling, if not overturned, could make the agency "an open-ended source of industry bailouts."

The justices' decision is expected by July.

In other matters Monday, the court:

- Let stand rulings that blocked a Nebraska agency from imposing mandatory blood testing for AIDS of employees who come into direct contact with the mentally retarded people the agency serves.

- Turned down an appeal by James Earl Ray, serving a 99-year prison sentence for the 1968 assassination of the Rev. Martin Luther King in Memphis, Tenn.

- Rejected, in a Virginia case, arguments that states must not favor the clergy over secular humanists in licensing people to perform weddings.

- Barred a lawsuit against the Christian Science church by a Michigan couple whose 15-month-old boy died after they, as church members,

were counseled to rely on faith healing and avoid seeking medical help.

- Left intact rulings that may let Urbana, Ohio, ban as obscene five nationally distributed "adult" magazines generally not considered hard-core pornography.

- Agreed to decide whether the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, and perhaps other multi-state agencies as well, may be sued in federal courts.

U.S. warplane accidentally bombs Navy ship

WASHINGTON (AP) — A U.S. warplane accidentally dropped a 500-pound bomb on the Navy guided-missile cruiser USS Reeves during maneuvers in the Indian Ocean Monday, slightly injuring five sailors and leaving a five-foot hole in the ship's main deck, the Navy said.

The bomb, which detonated upon impact, set off a small fire that was quickly extinguished, Lt. Bruce Cole, a Navy spokesman at the Pentagon said. The incident occurred at 9:06 p.m. local time (10:36 a.m. EST.)

The five sailors received minor injuries that did not require outside medical assistance, Cole said.

The cruiser was located about 32 miles from Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean.

Although the bomb left a five-foot hole in the deck near the bow, it did no damage to the outer hull, Cole said.

The aircraft, a single-seat F-4B Hornet, had been dispatched from the carrier USS Midway.

Poll says Americans favor peace with Iran to free U.S. hostages

NEW YORK (AP) — Most Americans favor rapprochement with Iran in exchange for the release of the U.S. hostages in Lebanon, even though they see the Islamic republic as a sponsor of world terrorism, a national poll has found.

Ten years after the Iran hostage crisis poisoned U.S.-Iran relations, 61 percent in the Media General-Associated Press poll said Washington should offer to resume normal ties if Iran got the Americans in Lebanon freed.

Support was somewhat lower for releasing Iranian assets locked in U.S. banks in trade for the hostages' freedom, with 50 percent in favor. And respondents overwhelmingly rejected paying ransom directly to the captors, with 85 percent opposed.

Respondents divided evenly on the idea of direct negotiations with the hostage takers, while most favored indirect negotiations. A majority favored military action, but that fell to a minority if the hostages might be killed in the effort.

Eighteen Westerners, including eight Americans, are

held in Lebanon, most by groups believed loyal to Iran. Iran has offered to help free the captives if its assets held in U.S. banks were released.

It is unclear to what extent Iran controls the captors, if at all. In the poll, though, 72 percent said they believed Iran does control the hostage takers, and 79 percent said Iran supports international terrorism.

Iran and the United States have been estranged since Nov. 4, 1979, when Iranian students, apparently with official support, seized the U.S. embassy in Tehran and took 52 Americans hostage.

They were held for 444 days, crippling President Carter's administration and contributing to his defeat in the 1980 election. A rescue attempt failed, killing eight servicemen, and the prisoners were freed only on Jan. 20, 1981, the day of Ronald Reagan's inauguration.

Reagan and now President Bush have labored with another hostage crisis, the Americans captive in Lebanon. Longest held is Terry A. Anderson, chief Middle East correspondent for the Associated Press, kidnapped in March 1985.

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