

Monday, March 5, 1990

U.S. soldier dies; sixteen wounded

Disco visited by Americans in Panama site of grenade attack

PANAMA CITY, Panama (AP) — An American soldier has died of injuries suffered in a grenade attack on a discotheque, and 13 U.S. servicemen remained hospitalized Sunday, the U.S. military said.

Panama since the Dec. 20 invasion that ousted dictator Manuel Antonio Noriega. "We are saddened by the death of Army Specialist Anthony B. Ward and convey our heartfelt condolences to his family," said a White House statement from Press Secretary Marlin Fitzwater.

Officials said 12 Panamanians had been injured and that three were in intensive care, but in stable condition. Southern Command officials and the head of Panama's Judicial Technical Police met Saturday to discuss the case.

Iran, Syria meet to discuss hostages' plight

DAMASCUS, Syria (AP) — A senior Iranian envoy discussed efforts to free Western hostages held in Lebanon when he met Sunday with Syria's foreign minister, an informed source said.

The source, who refused to be identified further, said the meeting between Mahmoud Hashemi of Iran and Farouk al-Sharaa of Syria "appears to be to coordinate efforts between the governments of Syria and Iran to gain the release of all the hostages" held by pro-Iranian Shiite Moslem militants in Lebanon.

He said Hashemi, the brother of Iranian President Hashemi Rafsanjani, delivered "a very cordial message" to Sharaa from Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati, including an invitation for him to visit Tehran to meet with Rafsanjani and Iran's spiritual leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

The source said Hashemi arrived in Damascus, the Syrian capital, earlier after a visit to Beirut, where he met with senior Shiite Moslem figures on the hostage issue.

The source gave no other details of Hashemi's trip to Lebanon or the one-hour meeting with Sharaa. But another source noted: "This appears to be a serious effort, the first in some time, to end the hostage ordeal ... But I don't think we'll see anyone out tomorrow."

"Nobody can be precise about how long the process will take. There appears to be a genuine desire by the Iranian President to end this ordeal. But there are still difficulties," said the source.

Earlier, the official Syrian Arab News Agency reported that Hashemi's talks with Sharaa, attended by Iranian Ambassador Hasan Akhbari, centered on "bilateral relations and issues of common interest."

Hashemi is director of the Tehran Foreign Ministry's Third Department, which handles Iran's relations with Syria, Lebanon and some other Arab states.

W. German chancellor refuses to accept Polish-German border

WEST BERLIN (AP) — Chancellor Helmut Kohl of West Germany is embroiled in controversy over his refusal to categorically accept the Polish-German border set at the end of World War II.

It has become a political issue; recognition of the boundary could cost Kohl votes in the December West German election. But his failure to renounce any future attempt to regain former territories lost in the war could delay German reunification.

Kohl has come under attack from Poland, from the World War II Allies and from the opposition in West Germany and even in his own Cabinet for failing to give an unequivocal promise on the border.

There have been demonstrations in Poland in support of Polish demands to take part in talks on reunification.

But the chancellor faces considerable political risk if he declares the current border inviolable. Kohl's Christian Democratic Union is running only a couple of

percentage points ahead of the opposition Social Democrats in public opinion polls. The CDU traditionally has enjoyed the backing of conservative West Germans, including millions of

"In many speeches I have said that no one wants to connect the unity of the Germans with moving the borders. I don't know what more I can say."

— Helmut Kohl, West German Chancellor

exiles from territories now governed by Poland and the Soviet Union. More than 12 million ethnic Germans were driven from Silesia and East Prussia after the Third Reich was vanquished. The lands east of the Oder and Neisse rivers that were German before the war are now Pol-

ish territory, comprising about one-third of modern-day Poland. If Kohl agrees to give up the lands, he could alienate those voters who provide his party's narrow lead over the Social Democrats.

However, Kohl's equivocating has cost the CDU support in East Germany, where the Social Democrats are expected to win a majority in March 18 elections.

West German political parties have been active in the East German campaign in an attempt to increase their voter base in anticipation of unification.

Kohl has to be worried that the addition of a solidly Social Democratic East German electorate could tip the political balance and deprive him of his dream of being the first chancellor of a reunited Germany.

Democracy in Nicaragua may curtail asylum Chance of forced return small

MIAMI (AP) — A successful switch to democracy in Nicaragua may sharply curtail U.S. granting of asylum to that nation's refugees, but there is little chance political exiles will be forced to return, immigration officials say.

In theory, people granted asylum are subject to review each year, and could have that status revoked, says Duke Austin, spokesman for the Immigration and Naturalization Service in Washington.

"But I know of no single case since political asylum has been an avenue in the United States when we have involuntarily returned someone because conditions in their homeland improved," Austin said last week. "It's in the law, but it's never been done."

What is more likely is that new applicants will get tougher scrutiny of their applications. An estimated 80,000 to 90,000 Nicaraguans are in the United States legally, including both political and non-political cases. Some advocates believe twice that number live in the United States if the count includes illegal immigrants — many of whom were pinning their hopes on political asylum to eventually normalize their status.

In fiscal 1989, the INS granted just under 6,000 requests from Nicaraguans for asylum, while it denied more than 10,000. Between October 1989 and January of this year, about 500 were granted and 650 denied.

In the week since U.S.-backed Violetta Chamorro beat the Sandinistas' Daniel Ortega in Nicaragua's presidential election, Miami immigration officials noted a decrease in the asylum requests.

Dozens of Nicaraguan exiles have either dropped their petitions to stay, or have stopped fighting deportation orders. Most of those voluntarily dropping asylum requests, like Marlene Falcon, say they are eager to return.

"We're here not because we want to be, but because of the repression," she said. "I couldn't see any use to continue battling a political asylum claim that didn't have any validity."

The INS rules on political asylum, in large part, are based on State Department advisory opinions for each individual. Most denials occur because analysts rule applicants are economic, rather than political, refugees.

The State Department cautions it is too early to be assured that democracy will stick in Nicaragua, but a spokesman says its asylum policy will be reviewed.

Nat Kingsley, of the State Department's Human Rights Bureau, emphasizes that under U.S. law, each application is treated individually, whether it comes from England or Albania.

Although the asylum evaluations are individual, INS officials say in reality the changes are reflected widely.

Shuttle completes military mission

EDWARDS AIR FORCE BASE, Calif. (AP) — Space shuttle Atlantis landed safely on a California desert runway Sunday, completing a secret military mission that included the launch of a \$500 million spy satellite.

"Congratulations on a great flight, guys, and welcome back," Mission Control communicator Steve Oswald said.

Atlantis, carrying a crew of five military men, plunged through the Earth's atmosphere in a long fiery dive, flashed over the California coastline north of Los Angeles and touched down at Edwards Air Force base at 12:08 p.m. CST.

With mission commander John O. Creighton at the controls, Atlantis landed smoothly on a dry lakebed runway. It rolled to a stop a minute and 15 seconds later on the center line, ending a 4.5-day mission.

Fifty-one minutes after the landing, the astronauts stepped out of the shuttle into brilliant Mojave Desert sunshine, shook hands with NASA officials and posed for NASA photographers. A flight surgeon examined them briefly before they disembarked.

"You can probably tell by the smiles on our faces we had a great time," Creighton, a Navy captain, told a crowd of 100 NASA workers and friends, going on to refer to the many delays before takeoff. "It was terrific flight when we finally got off the ground. I think we accomplished something that was important for the country."

— John O. Creighton, mission commander

towed Atlantis off the unpaved landing strip to prepare it for a piggyback jet ride to Kennedy Space Center, Fla., on Saturday.

The spacecraft as it returned to Earth experienced a pressure dip in a hydraulic system that controls flaps and steering. The astronauts switched to backup systems. Later, Mission Control said pressure was restored in the primary

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