

state/nation/world

Dropped Reagan aides refuse to talk

By CLIFF HAAS Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Two of President Reagan's recently departed national security aides — both still active in military circles — refused to publicly answer questions yesterday from a House committee trying to explore the Iran-Contra arms-and-money connection.

The dramatic invocations of Fifth Amendment rights by Vice Adm. John M. Poindexter and Marine Lt. Col. Oliver L. North brought an increasing aura of mystery to the burgeoning foreign policy scandal.

The twin refusals to testify came as the Reagan administration appeared, still, to be at odds with itself over exactly what happened and how officials should respond to congressional demands for answers.

Retired Maj. Gen. Richard V. Secord, another principal figure in the controversy, took the Fifth Amendment before the Senate Intelligence Committee.

In citing their constitutional right against self-incrimination, Poindexter, Reagan's former national security adviser, and North, fired as a key National Security Council aide, declined in separate, nationally broadcast, appearances before the House Foreign Affairs Committee to discuss any aspect of U.S. arms sales to Iran or the transfer of profits to Nicaraguan Contra rebels.

"I must decline to answer that question at this time because of my constitutional rights under the Fifth Amendment," Poindexter, who resigned Nov. 25, told the committee. "On the advice of my attorney, I respectfully and regretfully decline to answer the question based on my constitutional rights," responded North, who worked for Poindexter at the NSC.

At the White House, President Reagan, in an exchange with news reporters during a picture-taking session, said he had caught glimpses of the nationally televised House hearings, but also said, "If I were taking questions, I would remind you that I am the one that told

you all that we know about what happened."

In fact, Reagan used his regular Saturday radio broadcast to the nation last weekend to acknowledge that elements of his policy to establish contact with moderate political forces in Iran were "flawed" and that "mistakes were made."

Without directly apologizing for the policy that resulted in the biggest flap of his nearly 6-year presidency, Reagan promised to "set things straight" with the American people.

While members of Congress turned up the heat for answers, two former presidents offered their views.

Richard M. Nixon described the Iran-Contra controversy as "a sideshow" and said it was time for critics of Reagan to "get off his back."

Nixon's comments were made during a closed-door meeting with Republican governors in Parsippany, N.J.

Jimmy Carter said Reagan appears to be trying to hide the facts.

Reagan appears to want the Congress to have to dig for the facts, meaning they will come out piecemeal "and that could be more damaging," Carter said in an interview in Atlanta.

In another development, Rep. Charles Wilson, D-Texas, who strongly supports covert U.S. aid to Afghan guerrillas said he had been assured by CIA Director William Casey that the mixing of money for Nicaragua's Contras with Afghan aid was a clerical error and did not divert any money intended for the Afghans.

Reagan appears to want the Congress to have to dig for the facts, meaning they will come out piecemeal "and that could be more damaging," Carter said in an interview. Poindexter and North had previously declined to answer questions during private sessions of the Senate Intelligence Committee, and North later yesterday cited the Fifth Amendment during an appearance before the House Intelligence Committee, said a committee source who declined to be named publicly.



Fired National Security Council aide Lt. Col. Oliver North leaves the House Foreign Affairs Committee room yesterday after invoking his Fifth Amendment right not to testify in response to probes by a panel investigating charges of illegality in arms deals with Iran.

chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee, said he was frustrated by the repeated refusals by Poindexter and North to testify.

"I wish the White House would stop talking about the tremendous cooperation they're showing, when the people they used throughout this (arms deal) keep coming up and taking the Fifth," Leahy said in a telephone interview from Puerto Rico, where he said he was on a "working vacation."

"The PR (public relations) folks at the White House might not like it, but it would be a lot more factual if they just said, 'We are not going to guarantee you cooperation,'" Leahy said. "From the people most closely involved, we are not getting cooperation."

Attorney General Edwin Meese III, talking to reporters in London, where he was conferring with U.S. allies about measures against drug trafficking, organized crime and terrorism, was asked what impact the refusal to testify would have on the government's investigation. Meese replied that he did not think taking the Fifth Amendment "necessarily would indicate that they (the officials citing the amendment) would not testify fully at some time, nor for that matter, that all facts won't be brought out in the future. In fact, I think they will."

State senators to join the LCB fight

HARRISBURG (AP) — Seven Democratic senators yesterday joined the legal fray over the state liquor system by filing suit to strike down a law requiring the Liquor Control Board to go out of business.

The lawsuit also asks Commonwealth Court to block an executive order by Gov. Dick Thornburgh that sets the framework for dismantling the board.

Under the state Sunset Law, the LCB must enter a six-month phase-out period beginning Jan. 1 because the House and Senate failed to agree on a resolution or a bill to extend the agency.

The suit argues that provisions of the law may be unconstitutional because they "violate the principle of separation of powers" between the Legislature and other branches of government.

Thornburgh's plan created the Alcohol Beverage Control Coordinating Council to develop a phase-out plan by the end of February. The council also would transfer other

duties of the LCB to other state departments by June 30.

"He cannot preempt the legislative function of continuing or discontinuing a state agency," said Senate Democratic Minority Leader Edward Zemprell, D-Allentown. Zemprell filed the lawsuit that was also signed by six other Democrats.

The other Democrats were Sens. Anthony Andrezski, Erie County, Freeman Hankins and Roxanne Jones of Philadelphia, Michael O'Pake of Berks County, James Romanelli, Allegheny County, and Patrick Stapleton of Indiana County.

A day earlier, the union representing more than 3,500 employees of the LCB filed a suit in Commonwealth Court challenging the executive order. The suit says the governor overstepped his authority by issuing the order Dec. 1. The suit also questions the state Sunset Law and actions taken by the Legislature.

Two suits were filed against the order last week.

Job market grows in low paying fields

WASHINGTON, D.C. (AP) — More than half the 8 million net new jobs created between 1979 and 1984 in the United States paid less than \$7,000 a year while the number of jobs paying \$28,000 or more actually fell, according to a new study.

The report, released yesterday by the outgoing and new Democratic chairmen of the Joint Economic Committee of Congress, also said the middle-income share of job growth dropped from 61.2 percent in the 1970s to 47.5 percent in the early 1980s.

Total middle-income employment rose by 3,837,000, including both full- and part-time workers. High income employment, meanwhile, fell by 442,000 — from 17,374,000 in 1979 to 16,932,000 in 1984.

But even among year-round, full-time workers, the authors said they found the "trend toward low-wage employment... is almost as strong."

state news briefs

Debris halts TMI defueling

HARRISBURG (AP) — Defueling at the idled Three Mile Island Unit 2 nuclear plant was temporarily halted when a large-scale drilling effort failed to adequately break up hardened debris inside the reactor vessel, a plant spokesman said yesterday.

The setback casts doubt on whether plant officials can maintain their one-year defueling timetable as part of a plan to put the reactor in storage by late 1988, a federal official said.

"It's an optimistic schedule. That's particularly true in light of the more recent findings," said William Travers, who oversees the cleanup at Unit 2 for the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

"The bottom line — do I think they're going to make it? It's not very likely,"

Gordon Tomb, a spokesman for GPU Nuclear Corp., said efforts to break apart a crust of formerly melted fuel and debris inside the reactor into gravel-sized fragments did not meet expectations.

Defense rests in conspiracy trial

HARRISBURG (AP) — The defense rested yesterday in the bribery-conspiracy trial of state Treasurer R. Budd Dwyer and former state Republican chairman Robert B. Asher.

In a move that shocked courtroom observers, Dwyer's lawyers called no witnesses and called only one substantive witness and nine character witnesses.

Lawyers will argue legal points with U.S. District Judge Malcolm Muir today, then make their closing arguments to the jury on Thursday.

Acting U.S. Attorney James West said he expects the jury of eight women and four men to begin deliberating Friday.

Dwyer and Asher are charged with mail fraud, interstate transportation in aid of racketeering, perjury and conspiracy to commit bribery.

The charges stem from a federal grand jury's allegation that the men were offered payoffs to award a \$4.6 million state contract to Computer Technology Associates, a California data-processing firm.

nation news briefs

Sullivan warns of S. Africa revolt

WASHINGTON (AP) — South Africa will slide into total revolution unless it establishes racial equality by next year, the author of the Sullivan Principles on conduct of business there said yesterday.

The guidelines have wrought fundamental changes in South Africa but time is running out because "a freedom movement has come and it won't stop until apartheid is stopped, stopped from the roots," the Rev. Leon Sullivan told a news conference.

He renewed a call for all foreign business, even companies successfully applying the Sullivan Principles, to withdraw from South Africa unless that country abolishes racial segregation and inequality by the end of next May.

The Philadelphia Baptist pastor urged President Reagan and Pope John Paul II to personally press South African President P.W. Botha to end apartheid and American Methodists and Episcopalians to lobby their fellow members in South Africa.

Asked why he let such progress continue, he replied that the pace must be quickened.

"If the Sullivan Principles had eight more years to move ahead on their own... you would have a silent revolution of momentous proportions, but you don't have even four, five or six years... As long as apartheid continues, violence will continue," he said.

These dolls really stink

SUNNYVALE, Calif. (AP) — For \$4.99, the holiday shopping public can now buy revolting dolls the likes of ugly George Garbage-mouth, a rubbery creature who, when squeezed, blows a foul breath.

George is one of family of "Breath Blasters" being offered by Silicon Valley entrepreneur Nolan Busnell, who created the video game Pong.

The hand-size dolls are all ugly and, when squeezed in the belly, emit aromas such as dog breath, dead fish and vomit.

In addition to young Garbage-mouth, buyers can choose his other disgusting relations: Mackerel Mouth, Ms. M... gmouth, Dog-breath, Deathbreath, and Victor Vomit.

An advertisement boasts, "If (Victor) breaths on you, you'll want to vomit too."

"What these toys are all about is testing the limits of society, and that is what little boys are all about too," said Jim Simmons, marketing director for Busnell's Axlon Inc. "It's their way of rebelling and getting attention."

world news briefs

Emergency powers continue in Chile

SANTIAGO, Chile (AP) — The military regime extended its emergency powers to severely restrict civil liberties and press freedom for 90 days beginning yesterday.

The nationwide state of emergency legislation has been enforced since the military seized power in a coup in 1973. It has been renewed every three months.

The legislation empowers the government to restrict freedom of the press and assembly, curb political and trade union activities and ban people from entering or leaving the country.

Six of the nation's 13 administrative regions remain under the more restrictive state of siege regulations, decreed by the government after the bloody Sept. 7 attempt to kill President Augusto Pinochet. More than 8 million of Chile's 12 million people live under the state of siege.

Truce with Phillipine rebels set

MANILA, Philippines (AP) — The government and rebels resolved a dispute over weapons Thursday, removing the last obstacle to a truce in the Communist insurgency that has plagued the archipelago since 1969.

Spokesmen for President Corazon Aquino and the rebel National Democratic Front said yesterday the 60-day cease-fire would begin at noon Wednesday (11 p.m. yesterday EST) as scheduled.

Both sides said the agreement provides that armed guerrillas will not enter "population centers" and soldiers will not confiscate rebel weapons during security patrols.

One of Mrs. Aquino's first acts after becoming president last February was to free political prisoners, including some former Communist leaders, as part of a "national reconciliation" that also involved seeking a cease-fire with the rebels.

She said there was no reason for them to continue fighting because President Ferdinand E. Marcos, against whom they rebelled, had fled the country.

Defense Minister Juan Ponce Enrile said she was too soft, and there were reports of coup plots by military officers loyal to him. She fired Enrile on Nov. 23.

The last-minute negotiations over the cease-fire stemmed from a military threat to seize illegal weapons, including those belonging to the Communist New People's Army that were found in "security operations" during the truce.

Agreement came several hours after the military said rebels killed five people, including a woman and child, in an attack on the southern island of Mindanao.

After the attack, Gen. Fidel V. Ramos, armed forces commander, ordered the military to conduct "more aggressive operations" against "depredators of the peace, especially against Communist terrorists."

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