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U.S. Circuit Judge Anthony M. Kennedy is said to be the only Supreme Court prospect who has generated little senatorial opposition.

## Top prospect eyed for Supreme Court

By LARRY MARGASAK  
Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON, D.C. — U.S. Circuit Judge Anthony M. Kennedy, of Sacramento, Calif., is the one prospect among Supreme Court candidates who so far has generated little or no opposition among senators of either party, congressional sources said yesterday.

Kennedy was considered by congressional sources as the top candidate for the nomination as President Reagan prepared to announce his selection, probably today. But he was not the only possibility.

Sources familiar with a meeting this week between Justice Department officials and conservative groups said some higher-ups in the department prefer U.S. Circuit Judge Douglas H. Ginsburg, of Washington, D.C., over Kennedy. But Kennedy also reportedly would be backed by department officials.

Ginsburg, on the appellate court for the District of Columbia, is the former chief of the Justice Department's antitrust division. However, some Democrats believe Ginsburg is a conservative ideologue in the mold of Robert H. Bork, whose nomination was turned down by the Senate last Friday, 58-42.

A third prospect is Judge Ralph K. Winter Jr., of New Haven, Conn., serving on the 2nd U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals. The National Right To Work Committee has written the White House in opposition to Winter, saying he supports compulsory unionism.

Also reported under consideration as a dark horse is David H. Souter, a justice on the New Hampshire Supreme Court. Nobody has reportedly registered

opposition to him, but that could be because little is known about Souter.

White House spokesman Marlin Fitzwater said he expected the nomination to be announced today. He said the field had been "narrowed down to three or in that category" and the president was either "close to a decision or has already made it."

As far as he knew, Fitzwater said, Reagan had not met with any of the prospective nominees.

He said the nominee would be "a conservative, who shares his views on strict interpretation of the Constitution, and beyond that a qualified person with judicial experience."

Senate Republican sources said on Tuesday that no objections were raised to Kennedy by five key Republicans when White House chief of staff Howard H. Baker Jr. brought up his name Monday during a discussion of possible candidates. About half the 13 or 14 names on the list were objected to by at least one of the senators.

The ranking Republican on the Senate Judiciary Committee, Strom Thurmond of South Carolina, reportedly had Kennedy on his list of recommendations to the White House.

A Senate Democratic source, speaking only on condition he not be named, said Democrats have not found any reason to oppose Kennedy. But this source, and sources from liberal groups that opposed Bork, made clear that they have not fully researched Kennedy's record.

On the bench, Kennedy is best known for his decision, later upheld by the Supreme Court, that the legislative veto is unconstitutional.

## Iran threatens to seal off gulf

By MARTIN MARRIS  
Associated Press Writer

KUWAIT — Iraq said yesterday its warplanes raided three tankers off Iran and industrial targets on the mainland. Iran threatened to answer any Western economic embargo by sealing off the Persian Gulf.

Iran also said three of its warplanes approached American warships south of the gulf in defiance of U.S. Navy warnings.

The 13th convoy of Navy vessels and reflagged Kuwaiti tankers arrived safely at the sheikdom, which has been hit by three Iranian missiles this month.

Shipping sources in the gulf said they could not confirm the attacks on tankers reported by Iraq. The Iranians indirectly confirmed bombing sorties on the mainland by saying 18 people were killed and 70 wounded in Iraqi air raids on civilian areas.

Iranian authorities vowed retaliation and warned Iraqi civilians, as they have before in the 7-year-old war, to evacuate areas near industrial and economic installations.

Marine executives reported a fire at Saudi Arabia's Safaniyah field near Kuwait, the world's largest offshore oil operation. They said one drilling platform burned for hours and there might have been one casualty.

The fire may have been accidental, the sources said, but Saudi authorities were investigating. Arabian American Oil Co., commonly known as Aramco, operates the field.

President Ali Khamenei renewed the oft-expressed Iranian threat to close the Strait of Hormuz, the narrow gulf gateway whose shores belong to Iran and Oman.

Tehran radio, monitored in Cyprus, said Khamenei's remarks were prompted by an embargo President Reagan imposed this week on nearly all trade between the United States and Iran.

"The Strait of Hormuz is a waterway for shipping and for the Persian Gulf countries," he said. "The day we feel no ship is coming to us through that waterway we will not allow any ship to enter the Persian Gulf."

"We have been threatened by an economic blockade by the Western states. We are not afraid of such things. We have an appropriate reply to any measure."

Iran's official Islamic Republic News Agency said the Iranian warplanes challenged Navy ships last Friday in the Gulf of Oman, south of Hormuz.

It said the pilots "ignored warnings and a threat of attack" transmitted by radio at distances of 20, 22 and 27 miles and replied that they would fly "within the range prescribed" by their command. IRNA said they approached to within 10 miles of

the ships and returned to their bases without incident.

In Washington, the Pentagon said the 290,085-ton Middletown and its escort vessel, the guided-missile frigate USS Ford, arrived at Kuwait yesterday without incident.

The Middletown is the last of 11 Kuwaiti tankers to be registered in the United States and given the American flag to qualify them for U.S. Navy escorts. Iran considers Kuwait an ally of Iraq.

"There was no unusual Iranian surface or air activity and the weather was relatively good throughout the transit," the Pentagon said.

Three Silkworm anti-ship missiles fired by Iran have exploded this month in the main Kuwaiti terminal-anchorage complex at the head of the gulf, hitting two tankers and setting a major loading dock ablaze.

One of the damaged tankers was a Kuwaiti ship flying the Stars and Stripes. The Navy retaliated by destroying two Iranian offshore oil platforms with artillery fire.

Most ships attacked by Iraq are Iranian-chartered vessels that ferry oil from Kharg Island in the northern gulf, Iran's main offshore terminal.

They carry it to makeshift facilities in safer waters near Hormuz, about 400 miles farther from Iraqi air bases. Kharg has been a regular target of the Iraqi air force for years.



### Remembering

At the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C. yesterday, engravers Jim Lee, right, and Kirk Bookman inscribe 24 additional names of soldiers who died or remain missing from the Vietnam War.

## Committee OKs arms spending bill

By TIM AHERN  
Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON, D.C. — The House Appropriations Committee voted approval yesterday of a Pentagon spending bill that sets up yet another fight with the White House over four Democratic-backed restrictions on President Reagan's nuclear arms control policies.

Rejecting Republican pleas that the restrictions would hurt ongoing U.S.-Soviet arms control talks, the Democratic-controlled panel sent the bill to the floor on a voice vote. That came after the committee rejected a GOP attempt to strip the arms control restrictions from the bill.

The bill is likely to come up on the House floor next week, when the chamber begins considering an omnibus spending bill to pay for federal agencies, including the Pentagon, for which individual appropriation bills haven't been approved.

The four restrictions would halt final-stage tests of anti-satellite weapons, require adherence to the unratified SALT II nuclear arms control treaty, halt all but the smallest tests of U.S. nuclear weapons, and block tests of "Star Wars" systems that would violate the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile treaty.

"These restrictions do nothing but force the president to negotiate again with Congress," said Rep. Joseph McDade, R-Pa., who is the ranking Republican on the committee's defense subcommittee. "It's not sound public policy, particularly when a summit may be coming up and a lot of advances are being made."

McDade's motion to strip the restrictions out of the bill failed, 36-17, on a vote which went largely along party lines.

The four restrictions are part of a bill appropriating \$268 billion for the Pentagon for the fiscal year that began Oct. 1.

The restrictions were contained in a separate bill approved by the House last May, a measure which authorized defense spending for the current fiscal year. All four were added on the floor on votes which went largely along party lines in the Democratic-controlled House.

In the complicated congressional budget process, separate bills are needed to both authorize spending and then appropriate money to pay for it.

The Senate later added two of the restrictions, requiring compliance with SALT II and blocking some Star Wars tests, to its version of a bill authorizing the Pentagon budget.

Rep. Bill Chappell, D-Fla., chairman of the Appropriations defense subcommittee, told the full panel that his subcommittee had approved the restrictions "exactly as the House passed them on the floor earlier."

There was little debate before McDade's vote because "this whole thing is going to be fought out again on the floor," said Rep. John Murtha, D-Pa.

The full committee also added another restriction on the Star Wars program, known formally as the Strategic Defense Initiative.

While the bill doesn't grant the Pentagon's entire budget request, it does contain money for a vast array of weapons.

Among those weapons are down payments on a pair of aircraft carriers, a Trident missile-firing submarine, three attack submarines, a pair of Aegis-class cruisers, 143 Army helicopters, 720 M-1 tanks, 568 Bradley Fighting Vehicles, 84 F-18 Navy jets, a dozen F-14 Navy jets, 42 F-15 jets for the Air Force, and 180 F-16 Air Force jets.

## Reagan may delay Contra aid request

By GEORGE GEDDA  
Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON, D.C. — The Reagan administration said yesterday it may delay a request to Congress for new aid for the Nicaraguan Contras, leaving some officials anguished about the potential costs of having to retreat from a stated commitment.

Secretary of State George P. Shultz had said earlier this month that the administration planned to seek a congressional vote on \$270 million in military and humanitarian aid to the Contras before the end of November.

But administration officials said pressure from Central American leaders and doubts about congressional support for the aid proposal have prompted a reassessment.

Although no final decision has been made, the current thinking is that no aid vote will be sought until January, said the officials, insisting on anonymity.

U.S. military aid to the Contras expired on Sept. 30 and officials have been worried since then that the rebels, in the absence of new military aid, may be no match for Sandinista military forces.

## GOP candidates set for debate

By MICHAEL L. GRACZYK  
Associated Press Writer

HOUSTON — The six Republican presidential candidates converged on Texas yesterday for their first nationally televised showdown, a debate bound to produce sharp differences over tax increases and arms control.

As front-runner in the race, Vice President George Bush was expecting fire from his rivals, including Senate Republican Leader Bob Dole of Kansas, Rep. Jack Kemp of New York, former Secretary of State Alexander M. Haig, former television evangelist Pat Robertson and former Delaware Gov. Pete du Pont.

Bush reluctantly agreed to the two-hour debate, a special segment of PBS' "Firing Line" hosted by Wil-

liam F. Buckley Jr., after earlier declining two invitations.

The format called for the conservative Buckley to question the candidates along with Robert Strauss, former chairman of the Democratic National Committee.

"I think it will make for a lively evening," promised Strauss. "The questions will be topical."

For Bush, the event offered an opportunity to reaffirm his status as front-runner. For Dole, it meant a chance to claim a two-way race with the vice president.

For the other four, the debate meant valuable television time on the same stage as their rivals, and thus an opportunity to draw attention to their campaigns.

## Federal deficit shrank in past year

By MARTIN CRUTSINGER  
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WASHINGTON, D.C. — The federal budget deficit, helped by a revenue bonanza, shrank by 33 percent in the budget year which ended Sept. 30 even though the U.S. government spent \$1 trillion for the first time in history, the Reagan administration reported yesterday.

The administration's final accounting for the past budget year showed the imbalance between revenues and spending fell to \$148 billion, down from the record \$221.1 billion in the 1986 fiscal year.

The improvement came in a 12-month period in which the federal government spent a record \$1,002 trillion, up 1.2 percent from fiscal 1986 when federal spending was \$990.2 billion.

Revenues shot up at a much faster clip than spending, rising by 11.1 percent to total \$854.1 billion. The increase was due in large part to higher-than-expected individual tax payments resulting from the change-

over to the new tax law.

The 1987 budget figures were announced as the administration and congressional budget negotiators got down to serious bargaining which they hope will result in substantial deficit reductions aimed at calming stock market jitters over the federal government's unending flow of deficits.

There have now been deficits in 26 of the past 27 years, running up a total accumulated national debt of \$2.37 trillion. Servicing that debt cost U.S. taxpayers a record \$195.4 billion in 1987, up from \$190.2 billion in 1986. The flood of government red ink has been cited by some analysts as a prime cause for the plunge on the stock market as fears increased that the higher interest rates needed to meet the government's borrowing obligations would trigger a recession.

President Reagan, in an effort to calm those concerns, has announced a willingness to bargain with Congress over ways to reach the Gramm-Rudman deficit target of \$144 billion for the current fiscal year.

Many private economists are forecasting that regardless of the outcome of those negotiations, the budget deficit this fiscal year will be substantially higher than 1987, with some predicting a shortfall of between \$170 billion and \$185 billion.

These estimates are based on the fact that more than \$20 billion of the 1987 improvement came from one-time events.

The biggest plus was an unexpected boom in tax revenues caused by the tax law which took effect Jan. 1. The law eliminated the preferential tax treatment for profits from the sale of assets, known as capital gains.

Many investors, seeking to be taxed at the lower capital gains rates in the old law, sold off assets at the end of last year.

Economists are also pessimistic because they figure the stock market drop has so shaken consumer confidence that economic growth in 1988 will be substantially reduced. Lower growth means lower tax receipts for the government.