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inter/national

From Associated Press Reports

**Reagan rips
Soviet stand**

WASHINGTON — Pres. Ronald Reagan strongly denied Monday that the United States had done anything to drive the Soviet Union away from the Olympics and complained that the United States, not Moscow, is always accused of "doing something that might cause the threat of war."

"What have we done to the Soviets that can compare with any of the things that they are presently doing, except tell them that we're not going to let them get so powerful that they can impose nuclear blackmail on us?" Reagan asked rhetorically.

At a hastily arranged news conference in the White House press room, the president criticized the Soviet Union for pulling out of the Olympics, for walking out of U.S.-Soviet arms control talks, for having an expansionist policy, for invading Afghanistan, for building up its strategic forces, and for shooting down a Korean airliner carrying 269 people last fall.

The president denounced the Soviet boycott of the Olympics, saying the reason given — not enough assurance of safety for Soviet athletes — was "absolutely false and we've been able to prove it."

But he said he would not personally intervene in an effort to get the Soviets to change their minds. "Naturally, I would do anything if I thought it could have a result, and I have encouraged citizens' groups and our people to do this. It is not a government relations problem," he said.

Eight Communist countries have withdrawn from the Olympics. Poland is not one of them.

Maintaining the United States was flexible when it came to arms control, Reagan complained that despite U.S. initiatives, the Soviets walked out of the intermediate-range nuclear force talks and have not yet agreed to resume strategic arms reduction talks.

A motion is expected in the House within the next few days to delete \$2.5 billion for the land-based intercontinental missile from a measure authorizing \$208 billion of military spending in the fiscal

year beginning Oct. 1.

"Without...the MX, the incentive for the Soviets to return to the negotiating table is greatly reduced," Reagan said. "The Soviets hope that once again our modernization efforts will be curtailed. To falter now would only encourage the Soviet Union to ignore our arms control efforts."

**Kidnappers
drop threat**

COLOMBO, Sri Lanka — Kidnappers of an American couple withdrew their death threat Monday and announced they were releasing the pair, a Sri Lankan official said. Hundreds of military and police troops scoured the countryside into the night but did not find them.

Tamil separatists who abducted Stanley and Mary Elizabeth Allen last Thursday night announced they were releasing the couple, the Sri Lankan official said, even though demands for \$2 million in gold and the release of 20 prisoners had been rejected.

At first, the Tamil separatist kidnappers had set a deadline for noon Monday (2:30 a.m. EDT) to kill Stanley Allen, 36, and vowed to kill his 29-year-old wife six hours later if the Sri Lankan government did not meet the demands. The kidnappers claimed the recently married couple from Columbus, Ohio, worked for the CIA.

The kidnappers claimed to be members People's Liberation Army, an underground ally of the the Eelam People's Revolutionary Liberation Front. The front issued a statement Monday announcing the impending release of the Allens and expressing hope the Sri Lankan government would make "a matching gesture" by meeting the demand for the release of 20 Tamil "political prisoners."

**Court denies
'sanctuary'**

BROWNSVILLE, Texas — A church worker was convicted Monday of conspiring to transport two illegal aliens from El Salvador as part of a growing sanctuary movement that is causing friction between the church and the federal

government.

Stacey Lynn Merkt, 29, showed no emotion when the verdict was read after almost 17 hours of jury deliberations. She later comforted one of the Salvadorans, Brenda Sanchez-Galan, who sobbed on her shoulder.

"I'm not a criminal, and neither are those arrested and deported by the INS (Immigration and Naturalization Service)," Merkt said later. "It's a sad day when church people in this country are persecuted for helping refugees, but in El Salvador they'd be dead."

She could be sentenced to up to 15 years in prison and fined \$6,000. U.S. District Judge Filemon Vela set sentencing for June 27.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Robert Guerra said Merkt probably would be given probation because she is a first-time offender.

"I think the verdict was fair under the facts and the law," he said. "If people don't like the law, they must go through the proper procedures for changing it."

Merkt, along with a nun, a newspaper reporter and three Salvadorans — one an 18-month-old child — were arrested on a rural South Texas road on Feb. 17 after border patrol agents stopped the group's Catholic diocese-owned car.

**Chug with
the best**

PORTLAND — Oregon officials say they're concerned about a gravity-fed device an advertisement says would enable a drinker to swallow 40 ounces of beer in three seconds.

The device, called the Chug King, has been advertised in fliers distributed on the campus of Oregon State University in Corvallis and at other schools, officials said Monday.

Swallowing beer as rapidly as the ads proclaim could cause loss of consciousness and possibly death in some people, said K.C. Humphrey, deputy administrator of the state Traffic Safety Commission.

Humphrey said the Traffic Safety Commission is concerned about any product that encourages excessive drinking.

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