

National/International

Coast Guard stops refugees on boats

MIAMI (AP) — The Coast Guard intercepted two boats with 188 would-be refugees from Haiti, then returned the people to their impoverished homeland, a spokesman said.

Petty Officer Brandy Ian said the interdictions came last weekend. The two boats, stopped in separate incidents Jan. 3 and 4, were intercepted within 60 miles of the Haitian coast,

she said.

Both boats were considered unseaworthy by Coast Guard personnel, who sank them. The cutter Steadfast transported the Haitians to the capital city, Port-au-Prince.

The Coast Guard has now intercepted 159 boats off Haiti since the Reagan administration began the interdiction program in October 1981.

Gandhi receives award

NEW DELHI, India (AP) — The Smithsonian Institution's first medal for conservation was awarded posthumously to Prime Minister Indira Gandhi Tuesday for her efforts in establishing ecological programs in India.

Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, her son and successor, received the award from Dr. S. Dillon Ripley, secretary emeritus of the American institution.

"Mrs. Gandhi's concern for environmental conservation was tremendous. The award is in recognition of her efforts in the area," said Dr. Michael Robinson, director of the U.S. National Zoological Park.

Smithsonian regents instituted the medal last year to be awarded to individuals for "outstanding services to zoological sciences and conservation."

Mrs. Gandhi was assassinated Oct. 31, 1984.

Official denies cover-up of American prisoners

BANGKOK, Thailand (AP) — U.S. Assistant Secretary of Defense Richard Armitage on Tuesday denied allegations the U.S. government has covered up reports that Americans are still being held prisoner in Indochina.

He said at a news conference such allegations harm official efforts to resolve the fates of about 1,800 Americans still listed as missing in action in the Vietnam War.

Armitage headed a high-level delegation to Hanoi that concluded talks Tuesday with Vietnamese officials on the American MIAs. The American delegation stopped in Bangkok on its way back to the United States.

U.S. involvement in the Vietnam war ended in 1973. Two years later, communist forces overran the south.

Armitage, who met Vietnamese Foreign Minister Nguyen Co Thach during two days of discussions in Hanoi, said reports by some private Americans of live American prisoners were suspicious and the motives for issuing such reports were questionable.

"Overall, the allegations harm our ability to prosecute this issue to the fullest possible accounting," Armitage said.

Armitage said Vietnamese authorities agreed to investigate the question of American prisoners. He said so far the U.S. government has no proof there is any truth to reports of American prisoners being sighted alive.

Communist Vietnam on Tuesday announced it had gathered 50 new reports on American MIAs and hoped to resolve the problem before the end of 1987.

Armitage said U.S. and Vietnamese officials will discuss the technical aspects of the 50 new reports in Hanoi next month.

The U.S. official said Vietnam denied that its authorities held live Americans.

However, Ann Mills Griffiths, executive director of the National League of POW-MIA Families, who accompanied the U.S. mission to Hanoi, told the same news conference in Bangkok that information received by her organization indicated some Americans were being held alive in Vietnam and Laos.

The highest-level U.S. government delegation to Vietnam since the war ended included Assistant Secretary of State Paul Wolfowitz and National Security Council staff member Richard Childress.

Moslem countries support Libya

FEZ, Morocco (AP) — Moslem nations declared themselves Tuesday in "firm solidarity" with Libya, which has expressed fears of military attack by the United States and Israel because of its alleged support for terrorism.

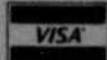
A resolution passed by the 45-member Islamic Conference Organization condemned "aggressive escalation on the part of international imperialism and the Zionist entity" against Col. Moammar Khadafy's radical Arab government.

The United States was not named.

"Zionist entity" is a standard Arab name for Israel.

A conference official acknowledged, however, that "if Israel is bent on attacking Libya, this declaration is not going to stop them."

Libya came to the week-long meeting of Islamic foreign ministers, which began Monday, for the same sort of backing the Arab League gave in Tunis over the weekend. Ali Abdussalam Treiki, the Libyan foreign minister, declared himself satisfied with the statement but added that his government wants action from the Islamic nations, "even military."



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