

Iran claims Iraq shot down passenger plane

TEHRAN, Iran (AP) — Iran said today an Iraqi jet fighter shot down an Iranian passenger plane on a domestic flight between Tehran and Ahvaz. Iranian officials say they believe the plane carried 46 passengers plus crew, and all people aboard were believed killed.

The official Iraqi News Agency quoted an Iraqi military spokesman in Baghdad as denying the Iranian claim. The agency, monitored in Cyprus, quoted the spokesman as saying Iranian "reports in this respect

are sheer lies," and adding that Iraqi air attacks were confined to military targets along the war front and in southern Iran.

Iran's ambassador to the United Nations, Rajaie Khorassani, said in New York he believed there were 46 passengers aboard the downed plane in addition to the crew. There was no reason to believe anyone survived, he said.

The ambassador said, the plane crashed 11 miles from Ahvaz, and wreckage fell in a nearby village.

Khorassani said he did not expect the United Nations to take the necessary action to punish Iraq for this "criminal act" and said Iran "is firmly determined to even accounts in Baghdad."

An investigation crew was sent to the crash site, the ambassador said.

Iran's official Islamic Republic News Agency said the Fokker Friendship airliner was shot down at about noon local time. It had been chartered by Iran's domestic Asseman

Airlines, the news agency said, and carried several members of parliament and a representative of Iranian leader Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini.

IRNA identified the Khomeini representative as Hojatolislam Fadhollah Mahallagi of the Revolutionary Guard Corps.

In Bahrain, Persian Gulf aviation sources who spoke on condition of anonymity said the plane was a turboprop Fokker Friendship, used by Iran for

military purposes.

Ahvaz is about 60 miles east of Iraq and about 330 miles southwest of Tehran, the Iranian capital.

Both sides reported increased activity by their air forces Wednesday despite bad weather on the warfront. Iran claimed to have shot down four Iraqi jet fighters, while Iraq said it downed one Iranian jet and a four-engine C-130 plane used as an airborne radar command post.

Federal study gives education good report card

WASHINGTON (AP) — Education Secretary William Bennett gave the states a report card Thursday on test scores, dropout rates and other measures that he cited as proof America's schools are on the rebound.

He said rising college entrance test scores, and slightly lower school dropout rates, show that "the excellence movement has clearly helped our poor and minority populations."

In releasing the Education Department's third annual chart of state education rankings, Bennett was following a tradition that his predecessor, T.H. Bell, started to the dismay of some state school superintendents.

"When you have this kind of chart, some people are going to come off looking better than others. It's inevitable," he told a news conference.

But he added, "This is big news. It is essential not to keep these findings a secret, to tell the American people how we are doing."

Oregon, New Hampshire and Vermont led in SAT scores in the 22 states where more students take that test; Iowa, Wisconsin and Minnesota set the pace in the 28 states where the ACT is dominant.

Reagan compares Nicaraguan struggle to Grenada invasion

ST. GEORGE'S, Grenada (AP) — Under a dazzling Caribbean sun, President Reagan on Thursday retraced the steps of American invasion forces that ousted a radical Marxist government from this tiny island 27 months ago and vowed the United States also "must help those struggling for freedom in Nicaragua."

In a speech to a cheering, flag-waving crowd estimated at 20,000, Reagan likened events in Nicaragua to those that prompted him to order the invasion of Grenada and declared he won't be satisfied "until all the people of the Americas have joined us in the warm sunshine of liberty and justice."

Reagan flew here to honor the 19 servicemen killed in three days of fighting that forced Cuban troops from Grenada and led to formation of a democratically elected government.

While making no overt threats against Nicaragua, Reagan's statements — particularly coming on the site of the last open use of U.S. military forces — could hardly be construed as comforting to the leftist government 1,500 miles to the west.

Administration officials have said repeatedly they have no plans to invade Nicaragua, but they are making a concentrated effort to gain congressional support for \$100 million in aid for rebel groups trying to overthrow the Sandinista regime in Managua.

Reporters with advance copies of Reagan's speech asked him before it was delivered whether he had any plans to use military force in Nicaragua.

"No," he replied. "I think it's an entirely different situation. We have no plans."

But in his speech, Reagan said: "Today in Nicaragua we see a chain of events similar to what happened here. We hear the same excuses made for the communists, while the people of Nicaragua see their freedom slowly but surely eaten away."

Grenada's prime minister, Herbert Blaize, declared a national holiday for Reagan's visit.

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