

NATIONAL BRIEFS

Star witness linked to gun-drug exchange

MIAMI (AP) — The prosecution's star witness against former Panamanian dictator Manuel Noriega has links to U.S.-supported guns-for-drugs flights in aid of the Nicaraguan Contra rebels, a government source says.

Panamanian drug pilot Floyd Carlton, 42, currently in the U.S. witness protection program, took the stand last week and is expected to resume testifying Monday in Noriega's drug and racketeering trial.

Carlton provided the lion's share of evidence leading up to Noriega's February 1988 indictment. Last week he gave the most damaging trial testimony against Noriega so far, tying him directly to drug payoffs and relating conversations between the two men about cocaine flights.

But Carlton also provides Noriega's defense with its first opportunity to contend that the United States had links of its own to Central American drug trafficking, by working with Florida-based smugglers flying arms to the Contras and returning with cocaine.

Noriega's defense has long claimed that he was doing U.S. bidding in many undercover operations in Panama, especially in aid of the Contras. Prosecutors say, however, that Noriega's claims are simply a smoke screen designed to cloud his private drug-smuggling transactions.

Abortion foes, advocates vie in NY streets

NEW YORK (AP) — Thousands of abortion-rights advocates marched down Fifth Avenue on Sunday to counter a "life chain" staged by abortion opponents.

Abortion foes tried to form a cross by lining 60 blocks on Fifth Avenue and five blocks of 34th Street with people holding signs saying "Abortion Kills Children." But the chain had gaps, with some entire blocks left empty.

Organizer Christopher O'Hare, of the National Traditionalist Caucus, estimated 2,700 abortion foes took part. There was no police estimate.

Counterprotesters organized by the Women's Health Action Mobilization marched down Fifth Avenue carrying signs and chanting slogans including "Not the church, not the state, women must decide their fate."

There were about 4,000 counterprotesters, said police officer Scott Bloch. They were separated from anti-abortion activists by a line of police officers. No arrests were made, Bloch said.

Order postpones nuclear construction

COLUMBIA, S.C. (AP) — President Bush's order to reduce nuclear weapons could mean another delay in restarting an aging reactor at the Savannah River Site, part of the government's nuclear weapons construction complex, officials said.

It could also alter plans for a new \$5.6 billion reactor that South Carolina officials have hoped will be built at the site.

Government and civilian officials who monitor the nuclear arsenal and the U.S. Energy Department's production complex met Saturday to discuss the possibilities.

They agreed the developments probably would lead to postponement of a restart of the K Reactor, used to produce the radioactive gas tritium, one component of nuclear weapons.

But they disagreed on what Bush's decision means for large projects such as a planned new reactor to produce tritium.

Loss of oil pressure forces landing

WICHITA, Kan. (AP) — A United Airlines plane lost oil pressure in one engine and made an emergency landing Sunday at Mid-Continent Airport, authorities said. None of the 52 people aboard was injured.

Flight 388, a Boeing 737 bound from Denver to Springfield, Mo., diverted to Wichita after developing problems in its left engine, said Gene Gauthier, Federal Aviation Administration duty officer in Kansas City.

The pilot told passengers one engine had lost oil pressure and had been shut down, said passenger Dan Shelley, news manager at radio station KTTS-AM in Springfield.

Emergency equipment was on the scene when the plane landed. As the plane taxied to a stop, the passengers burst into applause, Shelley said.

Senator revs up Democratic campaign

WASHINGTON (AP) — Nebraska Sen. Bob Kerrey isn't wasting any time in trying to get a little momentum for his Democratic presidential campaign.

Kerrey enters the race Monday with an announcement in Lincoln, and then will head from his home state to Colorado, where he's viewed as the early favorite because of his close ties to former Colorado Sen. Gary Hart's supporters.

Then it's back to Nebraska for a rally, a trip to Iowa the next morning, and a day and a half in South Dakota. A quick stop in Chicago on Oct. 3 is planned before Kerrey spends a full week in New Hampshire.

The Iowa caucuses are Feb. 10, New Hampshire's primary Feb. 18 and both South Dakota and Colorado in the next two weeks.

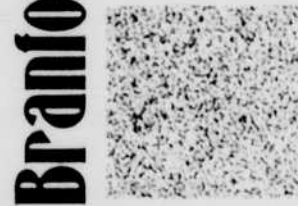
Kerrey won't be the only new candidate on the road this week and next.

Arkansas Gov. Bill Clinton plans to enter the race Thursday, and advisers say a draft schedule calls for him to travel for the following week to 10 days to kick off his campaign. States on his visit list include Iowa, New Hampshire and Texas.



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