

International

Signs point to break in hostage impasse

An analysis by JAMES TRAVERS Southam News

NICOSIA — Weak but encouraging signals from Lebanon indicate kidnapping is falling from favor.

Tuesday's silence from kidnapers who had promised to announce Monday the execution of French hostage Jean-Louis Normandin and moderate comments by Shiite leaders are generating hope for the 26 foreign hostages still held in West Beirut.

Normandin, a 35-year-old television technician, was seized along with three Antenne-2 colleagues last March 8 by the splinter Revolutionary Justice Organization which last week threatened to kill him in response to French President Francois Mitterrand's statements on terrorism and arms sales to Iraq; Iran's enemy in the Gulf war.

But it is expected that Normandin will be spared following the strongly-worded weekend appeal by Sheikh Mohammed Hussein

Fadlallah, spiritual leader of Lebanon's radical, Iranian-backed Hezbollah movement.

"This method does not serve our causes," he told a Shiite congregation. "We understand the reasons from which abductions spring, but we feel this issue must be dealt with in an Islamic and humanitarian way. We call for an end to this issue."

Diplomats point out that the shadowy, pro-Iranian Revolutionary Justice has never been linked to any hostage murder and that it is unlikely that it would risk Fadlallah anger. More cynical observers say the Shiite leader may have more direct control over the hostage's fate and is merely signalling a willingness to deal.

Fadlallah's moderate comments were reinforced Monday when Tehran radio reported that Parliamentary Speaker Hashemi Rafsanjani had agreed to intervene in the case of Terry Waite in response to the offer by Archbishop of Canterbury Robert Runcie to

help find three Iranians kidnapped by Christians in North Lebanon in 1982. Waite, who has been linked to Oliver North, the U.S. marine who quaterbacked the U.S. arms-for-hostages deal for Iran, disappeared in West Beirut January 20 while attempting to resume negotiations for the release of some of the Americans.

The radio report, monitored here, came on the second anniversary of the kidnapping of newsman Terry Anderson, 39, the longest-held of eight U.S. hostages in Lebanon.

There is cautious optimism in the Middle East that the conciliatory tone of Shiite leaders and the presence of Syrian troops in West Beirut heralds a break in the hostage impasse.

Syrian President Hafez Assad would like to take some of the tarnish off his international image by freeing hostages but he has not yet ordered his troops into West Beirut's sprawling, Shiite-dominated southern suburbs where it is believed foreigners are being held.

Radical Shiites, under pressure from Tehran, might be willing to release some of the hostages to keep the troops out of the suburbs and to avoid a confrontation between Iran and Syria.

Iranian-backed Shiite groups have repeatedly warned that hostages will be killed if Syria mounts a southern suburbs rescue operation.

A total of 74 foreigners have been kidnapped and at least seven killed since February 1984 when Moslem militias drove Christian fighters out of West Beirut; effectively dividing the city and country along religious lines.

Apart from Libya, Syria is Iran's only Arab ally in the Gulf war but the two countries are at odds over Lebanon. Iran is attempting to export its Islamic revolution to Southern Lebanon but Assad fears that a Shiite revival would eventually threaten his minority Alawhiite regime.

It is far from certain that Syria and Iran have reached an under-

standing over Lebanon but diplomats and others close to the hostage issue predict that the delicate situation will protect Normandin and may lead to the release of some hostages, perhaps four professors kidnapped at Beirut University College January 24.

The four, Americans Jesse Turner Robert Polhill, Alann Steen and Indian Mithileshwar Singh, were seized during a daring operation at the West Beirut college campus. Little-known Islamic Jihad for the Liberation of Palestine has been silent since February 9 when it postponed a death threat against the four men.

Normandin's murder would badly embarrass Assad and challenge Syria's attempt to impose both order and its political will on war-shattered Lebanon. Following weeks of fierce factional fighting, Syria deployed more than 7,000 troops in West Beirut a month ago.

But after a bloody assault on a Shiite headquarters and suspected hostage prison, Syria has taken a

hands-off approach to Iranian-backed groups as well as to their southern suburb stronghold.

Sources close to the kidnapping issue say negotiations involving Syrian, Iranian and French diplomats have been underway in Damascus, the Syrian capital for the past few weeks. Those talks, the sources say, could lead to freedom for some of the six French hostages or for the professors but are not expected to gain the release of Anderson or Waite.

Sources say victims like Waite and Anderson are too valuable to be used in an internal bargain between Syria and Iran. But they continue to hope that the shared Syrian and Iranian concern over a potentially bloody confrontation in West Beirut will lead to freedom for others.

It is believed that Waite is being held by the same Shiite group that is attempting to barter the lives of Anderson and other Americans for the release of 17 men jailed in Kuwait on terrorism charges. Kuwait has refused to bargain.

No service for top Yugoslav

BELGRADE (AP) — Wildcat strikes protesting new austerity measures have been joined by thousands of workers across Yugoslavia, including hotel waiters who refused to return to work even to serve the premier, official reports said.

The strikes, which are not supported by the official trade unions, began after the Communist government of Premier Branko Mikulic reduced or froze most wages earlier this month in an effort to curb an annual inflation rate of 90 per cent.

The official Tanjug news agency acknowledged Monday that the ille-

gal strikes are more widespread than originally reported, and suggested the possibility they would spread.

In its initial reports on the labor unrest, Tanjug said the only area affected was the republic of Croatia, with several thousand workers striking at 40 companies in half a dozen cities.

However, it said Monday that strikes were taking place virtually across the country. It said 1,000 workers struck for an unspecified period at 11 companies in Serbia, 200 workers stopped work in the southern province of Kosovo for 12 days and an unspecified number

struck for up to two days in a coal mine in Pljevlja in Montenegro.

The report also said teachers in Serbia had shown solidarity with the strikers by refusing to collect their pay rather than by stopping work.

The Ekspres Politika newspaper said waiters at the Kompas Hotel in the Slovenian ski resort of Kranjska Gora went on strike Friday.

It said they refused to work even to serve Mikulic, who was at the hotel along with at least two other high-ranking Communist officials to attend a skiing competition at nearby Planica.

A report in the newspaper Borba said 2,000 people had jammed the corridors of a medical centre in Zagreb during a work stoppage there and demanded to know why their wages would go down 18.7 per cent.

In suggesting there may be more problems ahead, Tanjug noted that the wage freeze has not yet affected about 150,000 workers in Serbia, 50,000 in Kosovo and 27,000 in Montenegro.

The legislation enacted this month says workers will be paid according to productivity and their wages will be cut if they are inefficient.

DEMJANJUK ACCUSED FROM THE GRAVE

JERUSALEM (AP) — Judges allowed prosecutors today to introduce testimony of three former inmates of Treblinka who have died since identifying John Demjanjuk in photographs as the brutal Nazi guard Ivan the Terrible.

Miriam Radiwker, 80, a former Israeli police investigator, described the 1976 testimony of one of the three, Eugen Turowski, and said he was the first Treblinka survivor to place Demjanjuk at the Nazi death camp.

When Turowski saw the photograph, "He began to shout: 'Ivan! Ivan the Terrible of Treblinka!'" Radiwker testified. "I got a shock because I believed (Demjanjuk) to be at Sobibor," another Nazi camp.

Radiwker said she was questioning the survivors at the request of U.S. immigration authorities who told her they believed Demjanjuk had served as a guard at Sobibor, a death camp near Treblinka in occupied Poland.

A Nazi document the prosecution says belonged to Demjanjuk also says he was trained by the Nazis to be a guard at Sobibor. Israel received the document from the Soviet Union last year.

The Ukrainian-born Demjanjuk, 66, is charged with being the guard Ivan the Terrible, who beat and mutilated victims before operating the gas chambers at Treblinka. An estimated 850,000 Jews were killed at the camp in 1942 and 1943.

Demjanjuk, a retired Ohio autoworker, says he is a victim of mistaken identity and that he was a prisoner himself at a Nazi prisoner-of-war camp after being captured in 1942 while serving in the Soviet Red Army.

Radiwker said Turowski, who was a camp mechanic, claimed in his testimony to have heard Demjanjuk's surname at Treblinka.

In his ruling, presiding Judge Dov Levine said the judges would "take into account the difficulties presented to the defence" because the people who provided the testimony could not be cross-examined.

The defence objected to the testimony.

"A witness is testifying she heard another person say something . . . it is hearsay evidence in the classic sense," Israeli defence lawyer Yoram Sheftel told the court.

Demjanjuk's American lawyer, Mark O'Connor, said, "Identification is the central question here. Therefore can you really bend the normal rules of evidence on this issue?"

Swedes fight sex freedom

STOCKHOLM (AP) — Sweden, once in the vanguard of the sexual revolution, launched a multimillion-dollar campaign Monday to fight AIDS by ending sexual permissiveness.

The campaign is intended to give people information and "aims directly and explicitly at changing people's behavior," said Gertrud Sigurdson, minister of social affairs.

Unlike earlier AIDS campaigns in Sweden, which targeted high-risk groups such as homosexuals and drug addicts, the current effort is aimed at heterosexuals.

U.S. scandal deal close

WASHINGTON (CP) — Congressional investigators are considering additional grants of immunity in the Iran-Contra affair and are near agreement on a timetable for taking testimony from two central players — John Poindexter, the former national security adviser, and Lt.-Col. Oliver North, the former National Security Council aide.

Reuters news agency quotes sources as saying congressional investigators have already tentatively agreed to grant immunity to Poindexter in exchange for testimony about U.S. arms sales to Iran and their connection with funding for rebels fighting to overthrow the Nicaraguan government.

SALE

EVERY ITEM MARKED DOWN

10 to 50% Off

danish interiors

1685-3rd Ave. 563-5330 564-5333

Hess behind bars

BERLIN (AP) — Former Hitler deputy Rudolf Hess was taken back to his prison cell at Spandau prison in West Berlin Monday after a 16-day stay at a British military hospital, a British diplomatic spokesman said.

Spokesman Anderson Purdon declined to give any information about the 92-year-old Hess's condition.

Hess has been the only inmate in Spandau prison since 1966. He was admitted to the nearby British military hospital March 1.

His son says Hess has been suffering from pneumonia.

West Pick

Do It YOUR WAY

...winning more often

Save \$5 "All Six" For \$1 LIMITED INTRODUCTORY OFFER

W2

St. Patrick's Day WITH DISCUS

Offer valid until Sat. March 28/87

Also available on

5.99 EACH L.P. OR CASSETTE

15.99 COMPACT DISC DIGITAL AUDIO

UNFORGETTABLE FIRE AVAILABLE AT A SPECIAL IN-STORE PRICE ON L.P. BOY, WIDE AWAKE IN AMERICA, WAR, UNDER A BLOOD RED SKY, OCTOBER, CASSETTE OR COMPACT DISC.

AVAILABLE AT ALL DISCUS LOCATIONS INCLUDING:

PINE CENTRE MALL

discus

EMPLOYERS

LOOKING FOR A FAST, EFFICIENT WAY TO FIND THE SKILLED WORKERS YOU NEED?

GIVE US A CALL!

Your Canada Employment Centre's personalized employment service can save you time and money because we have skilled workers in a wide variety of occupations. And they're available right now!

Give us your job requirements and we'll screen applicants to match. We provide fast job referrals and reliable follow-up service.

And there's no charge!

Call your local Canada Employment Centre today and start saving time and money.

1395 - 6th Avenue Prince George, B.C., V2L 3M9 562-4181

Canada