

NEWS BRIEFS

North's Iran-Contra case dismissed

WASHINGTON (UPI) — U.S. District Judge Gerhard Gesell Monday dismissed the Iran-Contra convictions of former Marine Lt. Col. Oliver North, the key operative in the Reagan administration's shadowy arms-for-hostages deals.

The marathon case against North was dismissed at the request of Special Prosecutor Lawrence Walsh during an anticlimactic five-minute hearing. North then declared he had been "totally exonerated."

In his motion, Walsh concluded that his chances of reinstating North's felony convictions had been torpedoed by two days of damaging testimony last week by Robert McFarlane, who was Ronald Reagan's national security adviser.

North had been convicted of three Iran-Contra felonies, but they were set aside on appeal on the basis that his testimony, given under a grant of immunity, may have affected the witnesses who testified against him at trial.

"I will sign it," Gesell said of Walsh's dismissal motion. "This terminates the case."

Walsh confirmed that dismissal of the case would lead to reinstatement of North's military pension and his right to hold office, which he had lost as a convicted felon.

Law school dean does homework on social change

By Eric Pope

Last week the students and faculty at the University of Detroit Mercy Law School got some firsthand insights into the cataclysmic events unfolding in Europe by hosting Mitja Novak, the dean of Maribor Law School in the newly independent Yugoslavian republic of Slovenia.

Novak visited U-D Mercy for a week as part of a month-long tour in the United States sponsored by the American Bar Association's Central and East European Law Initiative. Seventeen European law school deans are each visiting three American law schools. Novak's next stops are Loyola in New Orleans and the University of South Carolina.

The goal of the ABA program is to support the process of law reform now

underway in many European countries and to develop links with European law schools. This past spring U-D Mercy Law School Dean Bernard Dobranski was part of a group that toured Poland and Yugoslavia.

U-D Mercy already has a foreign study program in London, one of only two recognized by the American Bar Association. Associate Dean and Law Library Director Byron Cooper sees this new initiative as leading to a fruitful exchange of students and faculty members.

"The world is getting smaller and law is becoming increasingly globalized," said Cooper. "This gives our students broader exposure to comparative law and prepares them for practice in a smaller world."

The advantages of the exchange are even greater for Novak, whose new country of 2 million stands on the threshold of a new economic and political era after declaring its independence from the rest of Yugoslavia earlier this year.

The upheaval will bring major changes in Slovenia's legal system, and Novak believes this is a good time to look to other countries for new ideas. The federal constitution of Yugoslavia is no longer the law of the land in Slovenia, and some of the changes that have taken place are in violation of the republic's own constitution.

"It is a nice time to be a lawyer in Eastern Europe. There is a great challenge because everything is changing," he said.

Novak hardly fits the image of the

dour bureaucrat Americans have envisioned running the communist states of Eastern Europe. He is a youthful 42 with an easygoing manner and the sleeves of his stylish Italian jacket rolled up. He is fluent in English, French, German and Spanish, and his country has a very international atmosphere because of its central location in Europe — Maribor University is only 20 minutes from the Austrian border and Italy is close by.

Novak has been teaching law since 1973 and was named dean of the law school in 1987. His specialties are labor law and social security law, which covers the American equivalents of welfare, unemployment compensation, health and pension issues.

He appeared somewhat surprised by how little Americans know about his country. Under Marshal Tito Yugoslavia developed a decentralized form of communism in which decisions were made at the local level by associated labor groups. This version of a market economy worked better than Soviet communism, particularly in Slovenia which is more industrialized than the rest of Yugoslavia.

But lately the Slovenian economy has become stagnant. Novak said that the workers' groups have preferred to take higher wages instead of investing in new equipment, and that too many people sat around talking and not working.

"The self-management system was successful in some ways, but we can't manage with it any more. We must change something," he said.

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Mitja Novak