

## US warplanes bomb northern Iraq

ANKARA, July 16: US warplanes bombed a communications facility in Iraq's northern 'no-fly' zone on Friday after coming under anti-aircraft fire during a routine patrol, the US military said, reports AFP.

The US European Command based in Stuttgart, Germany, said in a statement received here that the site, southeast of Mosul, was used to transmit information from radars that could be used to target the aircraft.

All planes returned safely to the Incirlik air base in southern Turkey after the strike and the military was assessing damage to Iraqi forces, it said.

Incirlik is home to US and British planes which patrol the northern no-fly zone imposed on Iraq after the 1991 Gulf War to protect the region's Kurdish population.

A similar exclusion zone was also set up over southern Iraq in a bid to protect the Shiite Muslim population there and is patrolled by US and British aircraft based in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia.

Iraq does not recognize the zones, which are not covered by any specific UN resolution, and has regularly attacked aircraft patrolling the zones in recent months.

US Defence Secretary William Cohen said Thursday in Ankara that both zones would stay in place "as long as (Iraqi President) Saddam Hussein continues to refuse to abide by and comply with UN Security Council resolutions".

## 13 peasants massacred in Colombia

BOGOTA, July 16: Right-wing Colombian death squads massacred at least 13 peasants and torched 15 homes in two separate attacks on Thursday following a weekend offensive by Marxist rebels, authorities said, reports Reuters.

The surge in violence by the guerrillas and their rightist paramilitary foes came just days before peace talks were due to resume on July 19 between the government and rebels of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC).

The negotiations are aimed at ending a long-running war that has claimed 35,000 lives in 10 years. The talks are being conducted without any prior ceasefire agreement.

The latest violence occurred in the town of Villanueva in the oil-rich eastern province of Casanare, and in the hamlet of Saiza, in northern Cordoba province.

A police spokesman said five people were slain in Villanueva. "This morning we found five bodies that had been beheaded and dumped outside the town hall," the spokesman said. "It seems the paramilitaries were responsible."

In Saiza, paramilitary gunmen, known euphemistically as peasant self-defence groups, murdered eight peasants and set fire to 15 houses, the army said. In 1988, FARC rebels massacred 45 peasants in the village.

## 'Iran preparing to launch missile'

WASHINGTON, July 16: Iran is preparing to test launch later this summer a medium-range multi-stage missile that could have a range of up to 2,650 miles (4,250 km), an independent US specialist said on Thursday, reports Reuters.

The missile, code-named Kosar, would carry a version of Russia's RD-216 liquid-fuel rocket booster, the same engine which powered the Soviet Union's SS-5 missile, said Kenneth Timmerman, director of the Middle East Data Project.

"The Iranians as we speak are in the process of stacking and unstacking missile stages for a test launch later on this summer at the Shahroud missile test centre," he told Reuters. Timmerman, who gave testimony on Iran's missile programme to a House of Representatives subcommittee on Tuesday, said he expected the Iranians would present the launch as a test for putting a satellite into orbit, just as North Korea did when it fired a Taepodong missile over Japan in August.

Iran has already announced plans to commission a communications satellite to be launched within two years. In February it said it was building a missile to launch satellites but Western defence analysts said the missile, named Shehab-4, was more likely to be a surface-to-surface weapon.

The analysts said the Shehab-4 was largely derived from the obsolete Soviet-era SS-4 ballistic missile, which had a range of 1,250 miles (2,000 km).

Timmerman said he had his information on the more powerful Kosar missile from US and Israeli intelligence sources. The Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) had no immediate comment.

It is the US side which is tracking the activities at the launch site right now. They are analysing what they actually see (from satellite photographs). That's where they see the multiple stages and they see them put one on top of another," he said.

The most powerful missile so far launched by Iran was the Shehab-3 in July 1998, with a range of 800 miles (1,300 km).

# Deadline for Kashmir pullout extended for 24 hours

SRINAGAR, India, July 16: India Friday gave Islamic guerrillas a 24-hour deadline extension to complete their withdrawal from Kashmir, while ordering its own troops to exercise restraint, reports AFP.

"On the request of the Pakistani authorities, the deadline for withdrawal has been extended for 24 hours, i.e. up to first light on July 17," said army spokesman Colonel Bikram Singh.

The extension had been signalled Thursday by Indian National Security Adviser Brajesh Mishra, after it became clear that the harsh terrain was hampering the withdrawal to the Pakistani side of the Kashmir border.

"The enemy is on the move and vacating most of the areas," Singh said.

"But just as he has taken a certain number of days to come, it will take some time to get out."

In the meantime, one senior army commander, who declined to be identified said all troops monitoring the with-

drawal had been told to "exercise restraint" in the event of any contact with the retreating forces.

A foreign ministry spokesman said any infiltrators still on Indian soil after July 17 would be "deemed as hostile and suitable action taken".

Military officials in Kashmir said there were still pockets of infiltrators in the Mushkoh Valley sector, near the Line of Control (LoC) dividing Indian and Pakistani-controlled Kashmir.

"But they are clearly packing up," said the military commander.

Indian air force planes were flying reconnaissance missions to verify that all the bunkers on the Indian side of the disputed LoC had been vacated.

The Indian army has been waging a two-month war against the infiltrators, who had crossed the disputed LoC over the winter and set up heavily fortified bunkers on strategic heights on the Indian side.

India says the vast majority of the guerrillas are regular Pakistani troops. Pakistan insists they are Kashmiri "freedom fighters," or mujahideen, opposed to Indian rule of the largely Muslim state.

Indian air strikes and ground fighting have been suspended since Sunday when a meeting of top military officials from the two countries agreed to the withdrawal.

Army spokesman Singh said there had been no artillery exchanges across the Line of Control in the past 48 hours.

While Indian troops continued to advance on the LoC, Singh said their progress was being severely hampered by plastic-coated anti-personnel mines that rendered their mine detectors obsolete.

"Virtually every stone has to be checked before moving forward," he said.

Life was slowly returning to normal in towns and villages along the LoC that have been largely deserted since residents fled intense cross-border

shelling. Many of the refugees have returned to towns including Kargil and Drass in the past few days, and shops and restaurants have begun to reopen.

For most, the main task in the coming months will be to prepare for the harsh winter which cuts off entire communities for six months of the year.

The conflict has robbed the locals of two crucial months that should have been spent sowing, harvesting and stockpiling food. Many have also lost cattle and livestock -- killed in the shelling or by abandoned dogs.

India has rejected repeated appeals by Pakistan to resume talks on Kashmir, insisting there can be no dialogue until all the infiltrators have retreated over the de facto border.

Even then, several government leaders have indicated an early resumption of talks is unlikely, given the deep sense of mistrust the conflict has engendered between the two South Asian rivals.



Iranians shout anti-US slogans outside Tehran University yesterday after Ayatollah Hassan Tahrir-Khorramabadi, a top conservative Iranian cleric, blamed the United States for instigating the past week's violent clashes between student protestors and security forces that left two people dead.

— AFP photo

## 1989 bombing of airliner

# Libya pays compensation to France

PARIS, July 16: Libya has transferred funds to France to compensate victims of the 1989 mid-air bombing of a DC-10 UTA airliner, the foreign ministry said Friday, in a move expected to open the way to normalisation of bilateral ties, reports AFP.

The ministry statement put no figure on the compensation sent to France but said relatives of the 170 people who died in the attack "can obtain the payment of amounts transferred by Libya to France."

Diplomatic sources said Libya had transferred some 200 million francs (30 million euros).

"The French authorities note with satisfaction the Libyan payment of the compensation," the statement said.

The payment is an "expression of the Libyan authorities' acceptance of responsibility for its citizens, in accordance with the decisions taken by French justice officials," it added.

A French court earlier this year sentenced in absentia six suspected Libyan agents to life for the bombing of the DC-10 UTA airliner. The plane exploded on September 19, 1989 over the Sahara desert in Niger while on a flight from Brazzaville, Congo, to Paris.

Among those sentenced in the case was Abdullah Senoussi, the 47-year-old brother-in-law of Libyan leader Moamer Gaddafi, alleged to have planned the bombing in his role as number two in the secret service.

In April, Libyan Prime Minister Mohammed Ahmad al-Mangouchi said Libya would respect all decisions made by the French justice system, "just as Gaddafi promised French President Jacques Chirac."

French Foreign Minister Hubert Vedrine reiterated Wednesday in an interview with the Arab daily Al-Hayat that France would only normalise its ties with Libya if Tripoli paid the promised compensation.

"We are still waiting for the Libyan authorities to respect the consequences of the Paris court ruling, in accordance with the commitments they have made. They have given us their assurances," Vedrine said.

"Once that is done, I can confirm that we would be ready to resume normal relations, without forgetting the past but with the wish to look towards the future. We are at that point," he said.

French envoys recently travelled to Tripoli.

One of them, presidential advisor on African affairs Michel Dupuch, took a personal message to Gaddafi about bilateral relations and the implications of the lifting in April of international sanctions against Libya.

The sanctions were lifted after Tripoli handed over two suspects wanted in another air-liner bombing, that of a Pan-Am airplane over Lockerbie, Scotland, in 1988 that killed 270 people.

## Iran bans further protests

TEHRAN, July 16: Iranian officials will not authorise any protests in the coming days, Interior Minister Abdol-Vahed Mousavi-Lari announced on state television Friday amid rumours of a fresh student rally on Saturday, reports AFP.

"No one has asked for authorisation and in fact no such authorisation will be given," Mousavi-Lari said.

"What we need now is peace and calm. Given the current situation, the demands of the students must be examined under reasonable and calm conditions," he said.

Student sources have indicated they might take to the streets again Saturday to press their demands for the sacking of the police chief and the removal of security forces from the direct control of supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

They have also been demanding the return of leading reformist newspaper Salam, whose banning last week sparked the first protests.

Those demands went unmet as days of unrest at Tehran University led to bloody clashes with security forces and culminated in a clampdown on the growing pro-reform student movement.

## In East Timor

# Bloodshed mars start of voter registration

SUAI, Indonesia, July 16: Bloodshed marred the start of voter registration for a UN-supervised ballot on the independence of Indonesia's troubled province of East Timor, officials of the world body said Friday, reports AP.

Witnesses said anti-independence militiamen attacked pro-independence supporters in remote Salasa village in Zumalai district, about 100 kilometers (60 miles) southwest of the provincial capital of Dili, on Thursday night.

One militia member was killed and two other people were injured in the brawl, officials said. The clash erupted just hours before a 20-day registration period was launched Friday in 200 UN outposts and offices across the half-island territory.

Jan Devold, a UN electoral officer in the nearby town of Suai, said four registration posts had been closed because of the fighting. Some 200 villagers fled their homes before UN personnel arrived at the scene, witnesses said.

The area around Suai and other districts in East Timor have been wracked by violence among supporters and opponents of continued Indonesian rule.

In Jakarta, President B J Habibie pledged to respect the results of the referendum, which gives East Timor's people the choice between becoming an autonomous region within Indonesia or full independence.

Francisco Lopes da Cruz, the government's special envoy for the region, said Habibie would visit the province if the pro-independence option wins. "Otherwise, the president will deliver a nationwide address to congratulate the East Timorese who chose to separate from Indonesia," Da Cruz said.

Elsewhere in East Timor, voter registration got off to a mainly peaceful start but the United Nations postponed it by three days because of fears of more violence.

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An East Timorese man shows his identity papers yesterday as he registers for the UN-held ballot in August at the Bairopite neighbourhood in Dili as voter registration stations opened simultaneously across the territory. Registration began ahead of the planned landmark poll on the future of East Timor. Stations in the capital Dili and its outskirts opened their doors to receive all East Timorese over the age of 17.

— AFP photo

# Barak ready to move quickly for broad peace in ME

WASHINGTON, July 16: New Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak told President Bill Clinton on Thursday the Middle East had reached a "moment of truth" and he was prepared to move quickly for a broad peace, a senior Israeli official said, reports Reuters.

"The Middle East has suffered long enough," the Israeli official said, describing Barak's 2-1/2 hours of talks with Clinton. "We are ready. This is the moment of truth. It's a fateful moment. There are dangers, but we are ready to try to reduce them."

The White House extended every courtesy to Barak, who met Clinton for the first time as Israel's premier, arranging separate talks with Vice President Al Gore and a rare overnight stay at the Camp David presidential retreat in Maryland.

The two men, accompanied by their wives Hillary Rodham Clinton and Nava Barak, flew by helicopter to the wooded camp for dinner and further discussions on Thursday night.

Clinton and Barak vowed to put momentum into Middle East peace talks and slipped quickly into an easy relationship that had been absent in US-Israeli ties in recent years.

"I came here as a messenger of the people of Israel who have called for change and renewal. And I am determined to bring about change and renewal," Barak said in the White House before he and Clinton engaged in one-on-one talks.

"It is our intention to inject new momentum into the peace process and to put it back on all tracks. For this we need American leadership and support all along the way," he said.

Barak's comments were music to the ears of Clinton, who had an uneasy relationship with Barak's predecessor, Benjamin Netanyahu, whom Barak defeated in Israeli elections in May with the help of some of the same American political consultants Clinton relied on in his presidential campaigns.

Clinton cast ex-soldier Barak in the same peacemaker mould as the late Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, who was assassinated in 1995. Rabin had signed a West Bank accord with Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat and Clinton at the White House.

"Mr Prime Minister, if your mentor Yitzhak Rabin were here today, I believe he would be very gratified seeing the leadership of his cherished nation in your most capable hands," Clinton told him.

The Israeli official said Barak told Clinton that he was "ready for a painful compromise" with Syria on the Golan Heights, which Israel seized during the 1967 Arab-Israeli war.

"Our goal is to have this generation, our generation, end the conflict, bring an end to the conflict. If there is not an agreement now, then we will know that an agreement is impossible, because we're ready to

turn over every stone to see if there is an agreement possible that will strengthen Israel," the official said.

Barak told Clinton he was ready to begin negotiations not only with the Palestinians but with the Syrians and Lebanese as well, the official told Israeli reporters after the meeting.

A senior US official said Clinton found Barak sincere, thoughtful, serious-minded and "committed to pursuing peace."

"The president said that it was very clear that this was a leader who was going to be scrupulous in terms of fulfilling obligations and also very vigilant in terms of pursuing peace with Israeli security in mind," the official said.

Barak professed a willingness to meet Syrian President Hafez al-Assad on their differences over the Golan Heights.

"When the time comes I hope we'll be able to meet. It takes two to tango," Barak said in the Rose Garden.

Despite the goodwill, Barak may have left himself at odds with US negotiators over implementation of the land-for-peace pact that Clinton negotiated with Netanyahu and Arafat last autumn at the Wye Plantation in Maryland.

## Off the Record

### Tale of a 'Tiger Lady'

JACKSON, NJ, July 16: A New Jersey woman who keeps tigers on her property refused on Thursday to give in to state authorities who have been trying to close down her private animal preserve since a Bengal tiger was found roaming her neighbourhood, reports Reuters.

Joan Byron-Marasek, dubbed the "Tiger Lady" by local residents and the media, keeps 17 adult tigers and five cubs on the 11.5-acre (4.6 hectare) grounds of her Tigers Only Preservation Society near Jackson, 25 miles southeast of Trenton, the state capital.

Byron-Marasek has kept tigers at the site for nearly two decades under a state theatrical permit. But in recent years, suburbs have sprouted up around the once-rural setting, leading authorities from the New Jersey Division of Fish, Game and Wildlife to decide not to renew the permit.

"She now has neighbours and they are objecting to the odour and the insects," said Greg Huljack, the wildlife division's deputy chief of law enforcement.

The Tigers Only preserve faces a July 29 hearing before an administrative law judge who will decide whether it will be closed down.

In January, residents reported a 431-pound (195 kg) tiger prowling in the streets. State officials tried to tranquilise the animal with darts, and when that failed, they shot it dead.

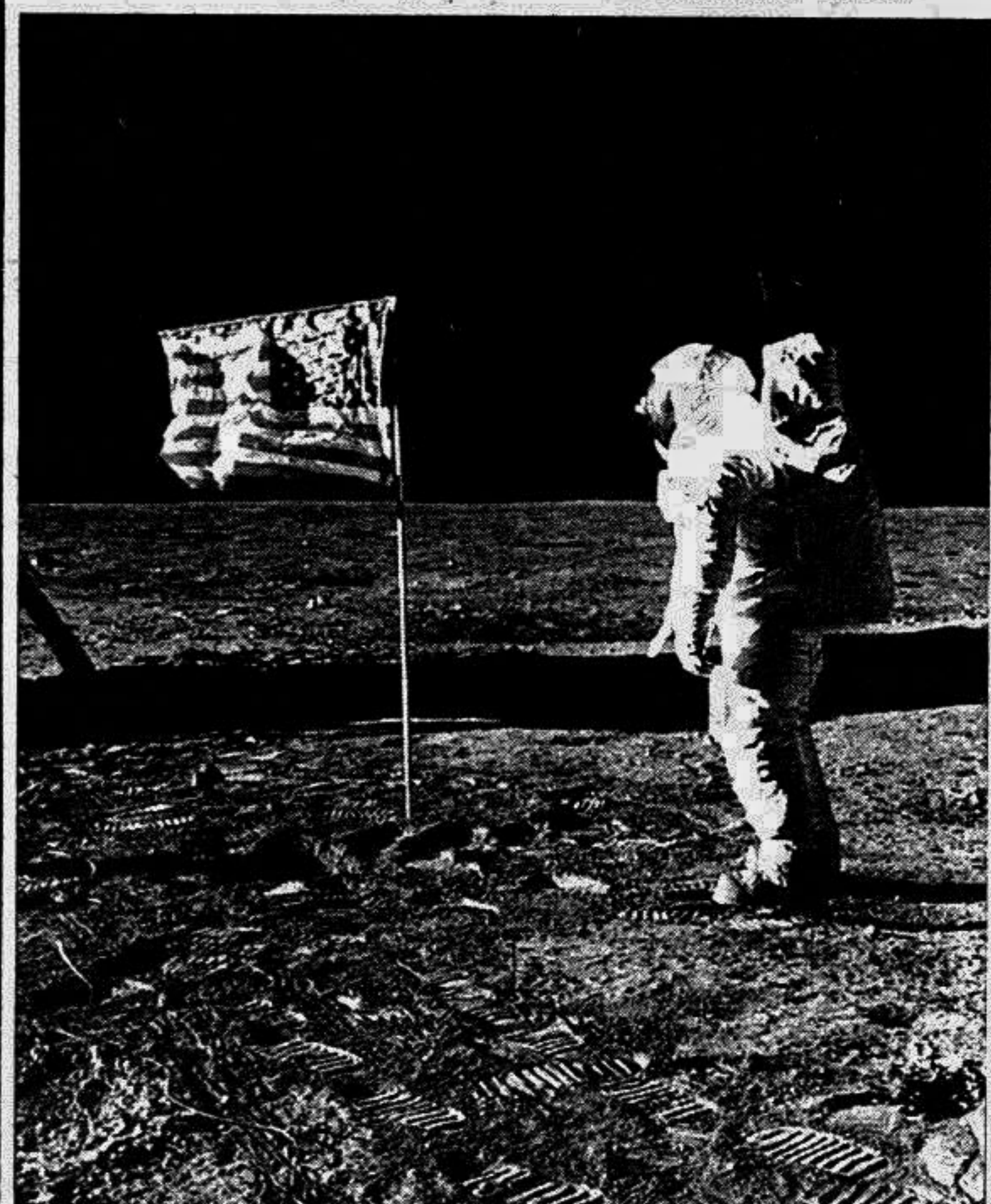
Attempting to determine that the tiger came from Byron-Marasek's compound, authorities raided it and found DNA evidence they said linked the animal to her property.

Nearly six months later, however, Byron-Marasek still denies state assertions that the cat belonged to her. "The tiger which was shot was not ours. It did not escape from our preserve," she told reporters on Thursday. "I have no knowledge as to where that tiger came from. Our preserve is, and has always been, safe and secure."

Byron-Marasek's attorney, Valter Must, plans to ask the judge to suppress the state's DNA evidence on grounds that it was obtained illegally during the raid.

"They broke into her private dwelling and even searched her underwear drawers," Must said.

He suggested that someone may have planted the tiger in January to help justify the state decision to close the operation down.



Released by NASA, this file photo dated July 20, 1969 shows astronaut Edwin E. "Buzz" Aldrin, Jr. saluting the US flag on the surface of the Moon during the Apollo 11 lunar mission. The 20th July this year marks the 30th anniversary of the Apollo 11 mission and man's first walk on the Moon.

— AFP photo