

USDA aide resigns in lobby flap

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Carter has accepted the resignation of an assistant agriculture secretary who had lobbied other government officials about a law affecting irrigation water used by his farm, Agriculture Secretary Bob Bergland said Friday.

Robert H. Meyer submitted a letter of resignation to the White House on Thursday, Bergland said in an interview. Meyer has admitted contacting other government officials on behalf of his family and neighbors in the rich Imperial Valley irrigated farming area of Southern California.

"I met with the President yesterday morning and discussed the situation," Bergland said. "He said that he was not going to change his policy about avoiding even the appearance of a conflict of interest," Bergland said.

At that point, Bergland said he told Carter that since Meyer felt strongly about the water issue, he probably would resign.

Carter replied, "That will be his choice" and indicated the resignation would be accepted. Bergland said he met later with Meyer, who then submitted his resignation.

Bergland said he personally felt "very disturbed" about the incident and that his meetings Thursday with Carter and Meyer added up to "a very rough day for me." Meyer, 44, has been assistant secretary in charge of USDA marketing programs since he was sworn in April 8. His farm holdings in the Imperial Valley were put in a blind trust.

Made contacts

Last month, it was disclosed that Meyer contacted other government officials — including members of Congress, White House aides and Interior Department officials — after an appeals court in California upheld a 1902 law which restricts irrigation water from federal projects to farmers holding no more than 160 acres each.

The Interior Department subsequently proposed rules to enforce the law, which would mean the breakup of many corporate and individually owned large farms in the West, where federal irrigation water is important.

Meyer and others contend that the Imperial Valley was exempt from the 1902 law because the area had developed its own water resources before federal projects had evolved.

On Sept. 30, Carter told a group of farm editors that he personally thought the 1902 law was wrong for today's agriculture since most farms need to be larger than the 320 acres a man and wife could have together under the law.

However, while Carter said at the time he thought the law should be changed. "We don't have any alternative but to enforce it in the meantime," he said.

After the Meyer lobbying was disclosed last month, Meyer said Bergland had given him permission to speak as a private citizen on the problems of the Imperial Valley as they affect him. He said that at no time did he represent his position in the department during talks with various officials.

Bergland said that in retrospect it had been a mistake to give Meyer permission to talk at all on the issue.

"I should have been more explicit with him," Bergland said Friday. "I should have forbidden him to talk about this with anyone, even his wife."

'The Lute' brings \$440,000; highest ever for a Matisse

NEW YORK (AP) — A Swiss art dealer paid \$440,000 for Henri Matisse's "The Lute," the highest price ever paid for a painting by the French artist.

The previous high for a painting by the master was \$350,000 for "Woman at a Window" sold in July 1973.



Barbra's kid sister

This is not one of the finalist in a mike-eating contest, but vocalist Rosalyn Kind going into the grand finale of her singing act at a nightclub in New York.

A talent for singing may be something Rosalyn picked up around the house — she happens to be Barbra Streisand's younger sister. —AP photo

Crash survivor says some feared to fly

Skynyrd band knew plane needed repairs

GILLSBURG, Miss. (UPI) — A chartered plane which crashed in Mississippi killing key members of the popular Lynyrd Skynyrd rock band was in rundown condition and several members of the band were going to vote on whether to continue flying in it, a member of the entourage said Friday.

Six persons, including lead singer and bandleader Ronnie Van Zant, 28, were killed when the craft, a propeller-driven Convair 240, reportedly ran out of gas and plowed nose first into a thickly wooded area 200 yards from an open field where the pilot apparently hoped to set it down.

Twenty others aboard were injured, several critically.

Kenneth Petden, a sound technician with the group that was based in Jacksonville, Fla., said Friday several members had decided to take a vote on whether to continue flying on the plane as soon as it reached Baton Rouge, La., for a concert that had been scheduled for Friday night.

Petden said a six-foot flame was shooting from one of the engines on a flight earlier in the week from Miami to Greenville, S.C. He said that moments before the crash, oil poured out of the engine.

"I asked the pilot about the engine and he said it was already scheduled to be worked on in Baton Rouge," Petden said.

He said one of the victims in the crash, Cassie Gaines, indicated she wanted to

ride with the band's equipment truck but was talked out of it.

The plane was en route from Greenville to Baton Rouge when the crash occurred.

Van Zant, Cassie Gaines and her brother, Steve, were among the victims. Others who died included Dean Kilpatrick, a member of the entourage; the pilot, Walter McCreary, and copilot, John Grey, both of Dallas.

Amite County officials said an autopsy would be conducted on the pilot and copilot.

Survivors included guitarists Allen Collins and Gary Rossington, drummer Thomas Artimus Pyle, bassist Leon Wilkenson and keyboard player Billy Powell. Wilkinson Friday was listed in critical condition, while Rossington, Powell, Pyle and Collins were listed as stable.

"The band will never again play as Lynyrd Skynyrd, I'm almost certain," Petden said. "Ronnie Van Zant was the lead vocalist and writer. The only other member who sang and wrote was Steve Gaines. I'm sure Lynyrd Skynyrd is deceased."

Spanish bullfighter gored

MADRID (UPI) — Sebastian Palomo Linares, one of Spain's best known bullfighters, was reported recovering — although not yet out of danger — after being gored in the chest during a bullfight at Zaragoza.

Carter asks firepower for Korea

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Carter asked Congress Friday to allow the U.S. to turn over \$800 million worth of tanks, missiles and other equipment to South Korea to offset military deficiencies stemming from the withdrawal of U.S. troops.

The transfer would be made without any reimbursement from the government in Seoul.

In seeking congressional approval, required by law for the transfer of U.S. military equipment to a foreign nation, Carter reaffirmed his commitment to withdraw the ground troops from South Korea over the next four or five years.

In addition to the tanks and anti-tank missiles, the equipment includes helicopters, artillery, radar, and ammunition, the White House said.

The equipment is now being used by the U.S. troops in South Korea, although the sophisticated M60 tanks the Americans are using there will be replaced by less-advanced M48 tanks, some of which are currently being used by the South Koreans.

The transfer is being sought, according to National Security Council staff member Michael Armacost, "to offset the consequences of our withdrawal, to offset any deficiencies in Korean defenses arising out of the withdrawal."

Armacost stressed that the \$800 million figure, which Carter used in a letter to Congress seeking approval of the action, was an estimate based on the predicted replacement costs and anticipated inflation.

Carter said in the letter that he planned to withdraw 6,000 troops by the end of 1978. The Pentagon said Friday there are 40,000 U.S. ground and air troops in South Korea.

The U.S. air troops will remain in South Korea, along with some Army troops providing communications, intelligence and logistic support for the U.S. Air Force contingent there and the Republic of Korea military.

Crippled Kuwait tanker fouling waters off Japan

TOKYO (AP) — A 35,000-ton Kuwait-registered tanker has sustained a big crack on its bow and is contaminating Pacific waters off southern Japan, the Maritime Safety Agency (MSA) said.

An MSA patrol boat reported an oil slick of 328 feet in width and 30 miles in length. The agency said the tanker was en route to Japan from Kuwait carrying about 346,500 barrels of heavy oil.

The Sands



OCT. 23, 1947 — Russia lost in an effort to include the five big powers of the United Nations subcommittee to draft a blueprint for the partition of Palestine into separate Jewish-Arab countries.

OCT. 23, 1957 — Three plastic bombs exploded in and around U.S. installations in Saigon during a conference on the American-backed Colombo plan for Asian economic cooperation.

OCT. 23, 1967 — A military pay scale beginning at the minimum-wage level was suggested by 19 House Republicans as the first step in a plan they claim would "help reduce draft calls down to zero."