

News Digest

By The Associated Press

Study indicates Star Wars worthwhile but not leakproof

WASHINGTON — President Reagan's "Star Wars" missile defense program could "substantially increase" America's safety under certain conditions, but it will never be able to protect the entire country from nuclear attack, science advisers to Congress concluded Tuesday.

A study by the Office of Technology Assessment said the United States would need "great technical success" in its research program along with a change in the Soviet Union's strategy to also emphasize defense rather than offense.

A companion OTA study raised new questions about U.S. anti-satellite, or ASAT, weapons and cautioned that while this country may lead now in a technology field related to Star Wars, the Soviets are likely to catch up.

"What this means is that after spending billions and billions of dollars, we could find that we have bought ourselves greater instability than the world has ever confronted in the atomic age," said Rep. Les Aspin, D-Wis., chairman

of the House Armed Services Committee.

The 324-page study of the Star Wars program, which is known formally as the Strategic Defense Initiative, was done at the request of Aspin's panel and the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Release of the report comes in the midst of a debate over the place of the high-tech missile-interception program in the nuclear balance between the two superpowers.

The SDI program "carries a risk" that it could start an entirely new arms race and could create "severe instabilities" if it made the Soviets think the United States was seeking a first-strike capability, the study suggested.

It noted there is confusion over the specific goals of Star Wars. Some supporters of the program want a so-called "Astrodome" defense that would defend the entire nation, while others call for a defense of U.S. missile sites. Critics say the latter would violate the 1972 treaty limiting missile defenses.

The study concluded that while anti-

missile weapons would "substantially increase" the safety margin in a nuclear attack, "assured survival of the U.S. population (the 'Astrodome' defense) appears impossible to achieve if the Soviets are determined to deny it to us."

That is because any U.S. defense could be countered by Soviet offensive maneuvers that would likely ensure that some attacking missiles would make it through the American shield, it said.

As the November summit meeting between Reagan and Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev approaches, the Soviets have increasingly called for cuts in the Star Wars program and said any new nuclear arms limitation agreement depends on the United States limiting its research.

But the president, contending the Soviets are mounting their own research into missile defenses, said again last week that he would not agree to limiting the scope of the research program, although he did say he would negotiate before any system is deployed.

Reagan: Tax plan means \$600 gain

ATHENS, Tenn. — President Reagan unveiled a new study of his tax overhaul plan Tuesday, saying it showed each American household would eventually gain about \$600 a year if his proposal is implemented.

Calling his struggle with a reluctant Congress over the tax bill "a kind of drama, with good guys and bad guys and even a damsel in distress," Reagan asked members of his audience, "Do you find our present (tax) system utterly disgusting and demoralizing?"

"Yes," the crowd replied.

"Well, I'm with you," said the president.

"The heroes are the citizens across this country who are asking for tax justice," Reagan said. "The villains are the special interests the 'I got mine' gang. And the damsel in distress?"

"A lass named Endless Economic Growth who's tied to the tracks and

struggling to break free."

Referring to the study in his speech at the McMinn County Courthouse in Athens, Reagan said his economic advisers told him the growth inspired by the tax changes "should create the equivalent of almost four million new full-time jobs. They found that the personal economic gain for each household will be about \$600 a year."

As Reagan began a two-stop visit to eastern Tennessee on his weekly trip out of Washington to campaign for the tax bill, the White House issued a rosy new assessment of the plan drawn up by the President's Council of Economic Advisers. It predicted the proposed overhaul of the federal income tax system ultimately could boost the gross national product by as much as 3.2 percent.

The council, whose forecasts of economic growth during the Reagan admin-

istration have proved over-optimistic in the past, acknowledged that its tax study projections "should be viewed as plausible outcomes rather than as precise predictions."

Nonetheless, according to a summary released by the White House, the administration economists said Reagan's tax plan "will increase incentives to work and invest while reducing incentives to cheat on taxes."

It said the predicted gains "may take 10 years to become fully effective" but might eventually have "the same value as a \$600 to \$900 per year inflation-indexed perpetuity for each American household."

Congressional leaders have expressed skepticism that both the House and Senate can agree on a tax bill before the end of the year, but Reagan has sought to keep the issue alive by pressing his campaign across the country.

'Baseball on trial'

Drug tests sought for players

NEW YORK — Baseball Commissioner Peter Ueberroth on Tuesday asked major league players to voluntarily submit to drug testing. The players' union responded that the action may be unlawful and indicated it would tell players to ignore the request.

At a news conference, Ueberroth said he had designated a representative from each club's management to deliver letters to every major league player. The letters ask players to submit to urinalyses three times a year beginning in 1986. Ueberroth said he had asked for responses to the letters by Friday.

At the same time, Ueberroth said he had decided to postpone any punitive action against seven players who testified in the federal drug trial in Pittsburgh of Philadelphia caterer Curtis Strong.

"Baseball is on trial," Ueberroth said, "and it has suffered public humiliation in the last few weeks, not to anybody's surprise, least of all to mine. I've wrestled with what to do as commissioner."

"If we fail — and most experts predict we will — what we will have done

is started a decade in which baseball has become synonymous with drugs. We will have turned off a generation of kids and we will have dealt a financial body blow to the game."

Ueberroth said the program would be similar to one already being used to test minor leaguers and non-playing major league personnel. Tests would be done without notice, but would always be conducted in the player's clubhouse. They would be conducted by medical people, and he said there would be no punitive steps taken against players who tested positively.

He said baseball's winter leagues, with the exception of Venezuela, have joined the program. Venezuela was excluded because "they have severe penalties, and we will have no penalties," Ueberroth said.

The acting executive director of the players union, Don Fehr, called Ueberroth's action "a plain, old-fashioned attempt not to bargain...but to bypass the union."

He said Ueberroth's plan "is possibly unlawful, it is entirely inappropriate and it is demonstrably unlikely to advance the ball further. What it does

seem to be designed to do is to make news."

Early indication was that players were favoring Ueberroth's proposal, with a hitch. The New York Mets voted unanimously in favor of the plan, subject to details being worked out with the Major League Players Association.

A spokesman for the commissioner, Rick Cerrone, said Ueberroth's office would be more than willing to work out details with the players association.

Cubs General Manager Dallas Green said in Chicago that the union should stay out of the situation, adding: "Drugs are not a union problem."

"Regardless of what the union may think," Green said, "it is up to every player on this team to agree to the voluntary testing to show the entire baseball world that drugs have not taken over our game."

Baseball negotiated a Joint Drug Agreement with the Major League Players Association last year. It provides for treatment and amnesty for players who come forward with drug problems. In it, there also is a provision for reopening the agreement to collective bargaining if one side feels testing is necessary.

In Brief

Tecumseh site of ABC miniseries

TECUMSEH — Tecumseh has been chosen by ABC-TV as the site for a miniseries about life in the United States after a takeover by the Soviet Union, a Tecumseh official said Tuesday.

Eloise Bartels, secretary of the Tecumseh Chamber of Commerce, told the Lincoln Journal that the southeast Nebraska town of 1,900 had been chosen as the site for the miniseries titled "America."

ABC apparently began looking at Nebraska towns in midsummer and at that time obtained pledges of secrecy from city officials and Doug Breisch, coordinator of the Lincoln Film and Television Office. Breisch has been assisting ABC officials for several months. Official announcement is expected this week.

Final vote on LB1 expected today

LINCOLN — Lawmakers are expected to cast a final vote today on an \$8.5 million claim against the state stemming from the failure of the Commonwealth Savings Co. of Lincoln. Simultaneously, they are faced with a call for an investigation into two other industrial loan and investment companies.

A vote on final passage of LB1 could be delayed by further attempts at amendments. The bill was designed to provide \$8.5 million as payment of a claim against the state. The claim stemmed from the 1989 failure of Commonwealth.

Appropriations Committee Chairman Jerome Warner was chief sponsor Tuesday of Legislative Resolution 1. It calls for a probe of the American Savings Co. of Omaha and the State Security Savings Co. of Lincoln. The investigation is to be completed by March 1, 1986. The Legislature's Executive Board was to meet today to consider the new resolution.

Residents flee capital fearing disease

MEXICO CITY — Thousands fled the city Tuesday, fearing disease from polluted water and decaying bodies. Others watched rescuers pull survivors from earthquake debris that had imprisoned them for days, praying to see relatives.

Workers dug and listened on ultra sound equipment, specially trained dogs sniffed and pawed in the desperate effort to find the estimated 1,500 people still buried.

The latest official count put the death toll at 3,000 from the two major earthquakes that struck the heart of the city last Thursday and Friday. The government said 7,100 people were injured and 600 remained in hospitals.

Kerrey urged to repeal farm tax

LINCOLN — Fourteen senators urged Gov. Bob Kerrey on Monday to seek repeal of a new sales tax on farm equipment sold at auctions in a special legislative session, saying the new levy will worsen the state's slumping agricultural economy.

"We believe that a humanitarian issue such as this warrants that special attention of the Legislature," they said.

Kerrey Chief of Staff Don Nelson had no comment on the request.

The new tax on farm equipment and other production items sold at auctions, which takes effect Oct. 1, was contained in a section of LB715 that closed the sales tax exemption for occasional sales.

Lockdown set until cell search over

LINCOLN — The lockdown of 440 inmates at the Nebraska State Penitentiary will continue until a cell-by-cell search of the prison is completed, Warden Gary Grammer said Tuesday.

Several knives, or shivs, have been found during the search, Grammer said. "We have found three or four items that might be described as weapons," he said. "We found some items that normally would be called a shiv. They're limited in number."

Grammer's lockdown order came Friday after several meetings were held on the prison yard by inmates upset with new policies dealing, in part, with possession of personal property and inmate classification.

Under the new property policy, inmates are restricted in the amount of clothing, books, toiletries, artwork and legal materials they can keep in their cells. Inmates became upset last week after prison personnel began going into cells and removing excess property.

FarmAid 'cash crop' falling short

CHAMPAIGN, Ill. — The \$50 million promoters hoped to raise from the FarmAid concert remained far from harvested Tuesday, and some observers speculated that viewers may have been offended that politics were injected into the benefit concert.

Others said contributions from Sunday's star-studded 14-hour show may have been reduced by public awareness that many farmers are well-off, or because attention was diverted by the earthquakes that shattered Mexico City.

A nationwide television audience Sunday pledged \$8 million to \$10 million, said concert publicist Victoria Rose. She said corporate donations, mail contributions, and revenue from tickets, concessions, and a planned music video and album could "real easily" bring the total to the \$50 million hoped for by concert organizer Willie Nelson.

However, a spokesman for the nation's largest farm organization said many farmers were disappointed that some of the entertainers publicly endorsed a farm bill by Sen. Tom Harkin, D-Iowa, which proposes increased government price supports.

Smith calls for cargo rule exemption

WASHINGTON — Rep. Virginia Smith, R-Neb., said Tuesday she will introduce an amendment to the 1985 farm bill to exempt agriculture exports from cargo preference rules. Present maritime laws require half of all good shipped under government export programs to be carried on U.S. flagships. A spokeswoman in Smith's office said that adds about 80 cents per bushel to export costs.

The House voted last week to retain a House Merchant Marine Committee provision instead of an Agriculture Committee section that would have exempted government trade programs from cargo preference rules. Smith warned that maritime interests could expand cargo preference rules to all commercial export programs if her amendment is not adopted.

Newsmakers

A roundup of the day's happenings

The Rev. Jesse Jackson, who tried unsuccessfully to win the Democratic presidential nomination last year, says he hasn't ruled out another try in 1988.

Union college President Ben Wygal has resigned after less than a year as head of the Lincoln-based Seventh-day Adventist school. Wygal, 48, said he is leaving for "purely personal, professional reasons." John Wagner, a former Union vice president, will succeed Wygal.

Jared L. Johnson, 31, who is accused of threatening to kill President Reagan has been committed to a mental

hospital, where he will remain for four months before being re-evaluated to determine his ability to stand trial. Threatening to kill the president is a felony punishable by five years in prison.

A presidential emissary was sent to Syria in an effort to gain the release of the Rev. Benjamin Weir, says an administration official who asked not to be identified. NBC News says Vernon Walters, the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, met in secret for four hours with Syrian President Hafex Assad.