

News Digest

By The Associated Press

Soviets make ABM, 'Star Wars' offers; U.S. response skeptical

WASHINGTON — The Soviet Union has offered to halt construction of a suspicious Siberian radar and to accept small-scale tests of the controversial U.S. "Star Wars" program, Reagan administration officials said Tuesday.

But the offer to halt work at the Krasnoyarsk site, which President Reagan branded as illegal in a report to Congress, is drawing a skeptical U.S. response because it would depend on the United States not going ahead with the modernization of early-warning radar in Greenland and Britain.

"They have made us an offer we can refuse," an official said, stressing the importance of upgrading the Thule and Fylingdales radars in alerting the United States to a nuclear attack.

The Soviet gesture on Star Wars, however, is considered a positive move

in dealing with the main impediment to progress on a new nuclear arms control treaty. Reagan's \$26 billion program to develop a high-technology anti-missile shield has slowed arms negotiations in Geneva, Switzerland.

Both proposals, through diplomatic channels in Geneva, appear to be part of a concerted public relations campaign by the Soviets in advance of Reagan's Nov. 19-20 summit meeting with Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev.

The Soviets are resisting cuts in offensive nuclear weapons unless curbs also are applied to the Strategic Defense Initiative. But Reagan has refused to submit the program, known popularly as Star Wars, to the give-and-take of the negotiating table.

The president also concluded this month that research, testing and

development of anti-missile technology does not violate the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty with the Soviet Union. The Soviets, and many American scientists and analysts, insist that the U.S. program flouts the arms control accord.

However, Gorbachev informed Sen. Sam Nunn, D-Ga., in Moscow in September that fundamental space research cannot be verified — or thereby challenged by the Soviet Union.

Subsequently, officials said, Soviet negotiators in Geneva acknowledged that tests of "small-scale mockups" could not be challenged when they essentially are extensions of laboratory research. However, Moscow still objects to full-scale engineering development of anti-missile devices, said a U.S. official who demanded anonymity.

Lawmakers reject proposal for 1 percent cut in state aid

LINCOLN — A proposal aimed at curbing local government spending, in hopes of limiting cuts in the state operations budget, was rejected Tuesday by the Legislature.

On an 18-21 vote, lawmakers rejected an amendment that sought to impose a 1 percent across-the-board cut in state operations and state aid programs and an additional 5 percent reduction in state aid to school, counties, cities and natural resources district.

"We've allowed it (state aid) to get out of control, and it is out of control," said Sen. John DeCamp of Neligh, who co-sponsored the amendment along with Sens. Vard Johnson of Omaha, Chris Beutler of Lincoln and R. Wiley Remmers of Auburn.

"It is time we deal with the entire picture of government spending. You can't make all the adjustments in only one spot," DeCamp said, who added that senators have concentrated too much on state operations.

DeCamp estimated that the amendment would have shaved \$16 million from the \$828.3 million general fund budget for fiscal 1985-86, which fell a couple of million dollars below

budget cuts proposed by Gov. Bob Kerrey and the Appropriations Committee.

The Neligh lawmaker estimated that a 6 percent reduction would have whittled \$8 million from school districts, \$1 million from both cities and counties and about \$40,000 from natural resources districts.

Remmers warned that "we'll be here until Christmas" unless lawmakers accept an alternative to budget-cutting recommendations offered by the Appropriations Committee and Kerrey.

"If we don't do something like this, we are going to be here for a long time," Remmers said.

DeCamp warned that rejection of the amendment would leave lawmakers with little recourse but to accept a major tax increase or "massacre" state government to resolve revenue shortfall.

He said the federal government, under the Reagan administration, has passed along many fiscal burdens to state governments.

Sen. Tom Vickers of Farnam argued that lawmakers should "starve" local governments to force a change in Nebraska's governmental system.

However, Sen. Gary Hannibal of Omaha chided DeCamp and Johnson for abandoning their traditional pleas for property tax relief by advocating state aid cuts, which could trigger higher property taxes.

Sen. Howard Lamb of Anselmo argued that the amendment fell far short of the amount necessary in budget cuts to stave off a deficit at the conclusion of fiscal 1985-86.

Johnson, meanwhile, argued that local governments easily could survive a curtailment in state aid by reducing expenditures, raising taxes or trimming bulging reserves.

Johnson lambasted local governments for expanding their budgets amid an economic downturn that has caused state government to be "slowly squeezed... and wrung dry."

"Local governments have continued to operate as though there is no economic crisis in Nebraska," he said.

After rejection of the amendment, lawmakers began to plod through a long list of budget cuts recommended by the Appropriations Committee.

The panel's package is being considered as an amendment to LBI.

In Brief

Alcohol deaths high among Indians

More than 35 percent of all Indian deaths in the United States are directly related to alcohol, according to a report recently released by the Department of Health and Human Services.

"In the Aberdeen area the incidence of alcohol-related deaths among Indians is 9.2 times greater than the general population," said Mike Wood, in charge of program planning for the Aberdeen area of the Indian Health Service. The Aberdeen area includes North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Iowa and Minnesota.

About 10 percent of deaths among the overall U.S. population are alcohol-related, according to the HHS report on Black and Minority Health. The report, which covers the years 1979 to 1983, is the result of a year-long study of health disparities between minority and non-minority Americans.

Alcohol-related deaths in the report include accidents, alcoholism, cirrhosis of the liver, suicide and homicide.

"Disruption to the Indians' traditional way of life" has led to "a powerlessness and hopelessness resulting in a high incidence of alcohol abuse," the report says.

In addition, a majority of Indians live in areas where the availability of physicians is less than half the national average, according to the study.

New disease linked to AIDS virus

NEW YORK — A new fatal disease that is linked to the AIDS virus and produces extreme weight loss has been found in heterosexuals in Africa, where it has become known as "slim disease."

"Although slim disease resembles AIDS in many ways, it seems to be a new entity," its discoverers wrote in the Oct. 19 issue of *The Lancet*, a British medical journal.

AIDS and slim disease share many of the same symptoms, the researchers report, but AIDS does not generally produce the extreme weight loss and diarrhea seen in slim disease.

Victims of slim disease are not as likely to exhibit the swollen lymph glands and the rare cancer called Kaposi's sarcoma, both common features of AIDS, or acquired immune deficiency syndrome, in American and European homosexuals, the researchers said.

Sixty-three of 71 patients with slim disease showed evidence of infection with the AIDS virus. Studies are under way to determine why evidence of the virus did not appear in all patients, the researchers said.

The disease, found in Uganda and believed to have originated in Tanzania, differs not only from AIDS in America but also from the heterosexual form of AIDS seen in neighboring Zaire, the researchers said. Slim disease occurs predominantly in promiscuous heterosexuals.

Tremor shakes Mexico City again

MEXICO CITY — A strong tremor hit this earthquake-ravaged capital shortly after 9 a.m. Tuesday, lasting about 25 seconds.

Lamps swayed and ceiling tiles fell in some already damaged buildings. The Red Cross dispatching desk said it had not received any calls for assistance, and no damage was immediately reported elsewhere.

The U.S. Geological Survey's National Earthquake Information Center in Golden, Colo., said the quake struck at 9:02 a.m. and had a magnitude of 5.5 on the Richter scale. It said the temblor was centered about 235 miles south of Mexico City.

"This is actually an aftershock to the whole series of earthquakes that have occurred in that area," he said. "I don't think it is the beginning of something new."

Sailor to return to Soviet Union

NEW ORLEANS — A Soviet sailor who jumped ship twice near New Orleans in what appeared to be a defection attempt will return to the Soviet Union, an official in Washington said Tuesday.

The official, declining to be identified, said the State Department planned to issue a detailed statement on the case later Tuesday.

The sailor, Miroslav Medvid, described as exhausted and nauseated six days after the ordeal began, was at the Naval Support Activity center here, State Department spokesman Bernard Kalb said in Washington.

Officials had reported earlier that the sailor was too sick to be interviewed any further. But Kalb said Tuesday another interview had been scheduled.

Medvid was taken Monday afternoon from the 120,000-ton marshal Koniev to the Coast Guard cutter *Salvia*, where a State Department official who speaks Russian and other U.S. representatives began interviewing him, said State Department spokesman Peter Martinez.

Kalb confirmed that representatives of the Soviet embassy were allowed to join Medvid during an interview Monday night and that Soviet representatives accompanied the sailor to the center.

Panel urges nation to pocket cards

WASHINGTON — The chairman of a House banking panel urged the nation's 91 million holders of credit cards on Tuesday to cut up or burn them, or at least pocket their plastic, in a national movement to try to force interest rates down.

Consumers should "hold their credit card up to a mirror, and say 'I'm addicted to this darn thing and I'm better off without it,'" said Rep. Frank Annunzio, D-Ill., chairman of the consumer affairs and coinage subcommittee of the House Banking, Finance and Urban Affairs Committee.

He advised consumers to either pocket their cards, cut them up or hold "credit card burning parties."

He said there are more than 700 million credit cards in the hands of about 91 million Americans who are paying \$6 billion in interest charges.

He said if consumers suddenly stop using credit cards, or only use them for emergencies, rates would drop overnight.

Opening a hearing on credit cards, Annunzio said interest rates average 18.62 percent nationally and are too high.

But David K. Hunt, representing the American Bankers Association, said that interest-rate caps on bank credit cards could result in a reduction of credit, services and choices for consumers.

Disaster agency broke rule, panel says

WASHINGTON — The nation's disaster relief agency broke federal contracting rules to purchase a radiation treatment course, and then scrapped it after persistent objections that the material could endanger accident victims, a House Committee reported Tuesday.

The House Government Operations Committee unanimously approved the report, which contended the Federal Emergency Management Agency wasted \$90,000 and "demonstrated a lack of concern for the safety of the public."

The lack of concern, the report said, came when a panel of federal scientific experts warned FEMA in August 1983 of potentially life-threatening material in the course. That was more than two months before the course was purchased from a publishing firm Oct. 31, 1983.

The report accused FEMA of "disregarding the advice" of the panel, which included scientists. But, it added, when the panel members continued their objections, the course "was withdrawn from pilot testing and put on the shelf, where it remains today, resulting in a waste of public funds."

FEMA officials originally had announced plans to send the course of slides and manuals around the country to teach "first responder" emergency personnel how to handle victims of radiation accidents.

Bill McAda, a FEMA spokesman, said the agency has deleted the controversial material and now is using about 85 percent of the content in its emergency training program at the agency's Emmitsburg, Md., facility.

While acknowledging the course was never sent to emergency personnel

around the country by FEMA, he said: "It's not all a loss."

The publishing firm, Bradford Communications Corp. of Greenbelt, Md., has said it distributed the course on its own to a number of communities, contending it is safe and effective.

The report also concluded FEMA should have allowed companies to bid competitively to produce the course. No bids were permitted by FEMA.

The report, however, did not attempt to resolve whether the course was, in fact, dangerous, nor did it fix blame for violation of contracting rules.

It added that allegations of wrongdoing should be resolved by the Justice Department, which is investigating this contract and other allegations against FEMA under former director Louis O. Giuffrida.

Newsmakers

A roundup of the day's happenings

Actor Vincent Price, 74, a veteran villain of silver-screen chillers, says today's horror movies are horrible. "Right off the bat, three people's heads are rolling down the aisle," Prince said Monday during a visit to Auburn University.

Sen. Cal Carsten of Avoca, a mainstay in the Legislature and a former longtime Revenue Committee chairman, announced he won't seek re-election next year. Carsten, who will begin his 16th year in the Legislature when the regular 1986 session begins in January 1986, said the time has come to devote more time to family and give someone else a chance to serve the 2nd District in southeast Nebraska.

The odor from Lake Maloney's Brian Fournier's sneakers became the sweet stench of success when the 11-year-old won first place in the fifth annual Rotten

Sneaker contest. Brian, whose year-old sneakers were judged to be in worse shape than those of 27 other contestants, was awarded a new pair of shoes, foot deodorant and Odor Eaters.

Pope John Paul II urged continued and growing understanding between Roman Catholics and Jews, and denounced the "ugly" specter of anti-Semitism while addressing a session of the International Committee of Cooperation Between the Catholic Church of Judaism.

President Reagan, Chief Justice Warren Burger and the natives of about 117 nations will help celebrate the restoration of the Statue of Liberty in a July 4 weekend celebration that will be "heard and seen around the world." That's the promise of Lee Iacocca, head of the Statue of Liberty-Ellis Island Foundation, for the unveiling of the restored statue on its 100th anniversary.