

News Digest

By The Associated Press

Reagan makes new arms control offer to Soviets

WASHINGTON — President Reagan announced Thursday he was making a new nuclear weapons limitation proposal to the Soviet Union and would request the current round of negotiations in Geneva be extended to consider it. The proposal will build on the recent Soviet proposal and emphasize reductions in "destabilizing" nuclear arms systems, he said.

In a nationally televised statement, Reagan said the latest Soviet offer "unfortunately fell considerably short" in certain areas. But, he said, there also were positive "seeds" for an agreement and that he had built on them with the new U.S. offer.

Significantly, he called both sides' proposals "milestones" in the quest for

reductions of nuclear weapons. "I believe progress is indeed possible if the Soviet leadership is willing to match our own commitment to a better relationship," Reagan said.

Just before his announcement, Reagan told four Soviet journalists in an interview that he would accept some of the figures proposed by Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev, who called last month for a reduction of about 50 percent in missiles and bombers carrying nuclear warheads.

Reagan said the U.S. offer calls for "deep cuts" in offensive weapons, research on defensive systems and "no cheating." But the president said he would divulge no further details. He

said the American proposal would be offered in Geneva, Switzerland on Friday.

"It is my hope that our new proposal would enable both our nations to start moving away from ever-larger arsenals," the president said.

The Soviet proposal, in a letter to Reagan from Gorbachev last month, and the U.S. response are designed to make headway in the slow-moving negotiations before the two leaders meet at the summit in the Swiss city Nov. 19-20.

"Arms control is a result," Reagan said. "First you've got to eliminate the suspicious and paranoia between us." He called the U.S. proposal serious and detailed.

Life after farming Transition program helps farmers find new careers, ways of life

LINCOLN — Whether they like it or not, some former farmers are discovering there is life after farming.

The depressed agricultural economy is forcing them into that realization as they leave the farm at a near-record pace. For most, the transition wasn't easy.

Accustomed to self-sufficiency and working outdoors, many farmers don't quickly embrace the prospect of punching time clocks at factories or stores. For many, working off the farm is a new experience.

Gov. Bob Kerrey has predicted 15,000 Nebraskans will lose their jobs in the next year because of the sagging farm economy. Officials say hundreds, perhaps thousands, have lost their jobs this past year.

Dave Anderson, coordinator of the

Nebraska Farmers in Transition program, said the situation has caused tremendous upheaval in rural Nebraska.

"There are some really hellish times in farm families before a decision (to leave the farm) is made," he said.

The transition can be accompanied by depression, alcoholism, suicide and domestic abuse, all of which are on the rise in rural areas. And, officials say, guilt often is the biggest problem of all.

"When a guy loses his farm, he not only feels he failed his parents and grandparents who farmed it before him, he knows his children and grandchildren now won't be able to farm," Anderson said.

Donna Saathoff of Diller, a psychiatric health nurse, likened the process to that of dealing with a death in the family.

"They actually go through a grieving process of losing something dear," she said. "They have a lost of self-image. You are seeing more domestic abuse, marital discord and alcoholism. Schools are reporting an increase in attempted suicide by students."

And like any grieving process, Saathoff said, adjustments can take a year or more.

The Farmers in Transition program is trying to help farmers ease into new careers and ways of life. Administered by the Greater Nebraska Job Training Program and state Department of Labor, Farmers in Transition started about a year ago.

Before depleting its first-year funds in mid-summer, the program had placed 177 farmers, ranchers and spouses in on-the-job training positions and 39 in classroom training at community colleges.

The program recently received a \$1 million federal grant to help 600 of the displaced farmers, ranchers and other workers who will lose their jobs this year because of the depressed farm economy.

Mollie Anderson, director of the Greater Nebraska Job Training Program, said "Farmers in Transition" most likely will be changed to "Agriculture in Transition," which would apply to ranchers and agribusiness workers, as well as farmers.

The \$1 million will be used to set up six centers in connection with community colleges in Scottsbluff, North Platte, Grand Island, Beatrice, Norfolk and Fremont. The centers should open in December, she said.

The center will assess applicants' job skills and financial needs. In some cases, it will provide individual and family counseling and will direct families to other agencies.

She said farmers don't turn to the program until they feel they have exhausted all other options. "They almost have to reach rock-bottom before they decide they need a new job."

Farmers are placed in jobs where the program shares the training cost with the employer, who eventually assumes full financial responsibility. Some return to the classroom for up to a year, although there is less interest in that.

"On-the-job training is what farmers like to get because they need that cash income," said Anderson. "The drop-out rate is very low. The people need the jobs and are glad to have them. And they are very good workers."

So far, the program has placed farmers as truck drivers, machinists, mechanics, clerks, school bus drivers and nurses aides.

The program tries to match people with jobs near their present communities, although long-distance commuting often is necessary.

In Brief

Radioactive gas could threaten millions

ATLANTA — Federal health officials said Thursday that millions of Americans may be exposed to higher-than-recommended levels of radon, a naturally occurring radioactive gas blamed for as many as 30,000 lung cancer deaths each year.

The radon problem attracted national attention last December when an engineer with a company building the Limerick Nuclear Power Plant near Philadelphia was found to have been exposed to very high levels of radiation — not from his work, but from the air in his home, which sat on an area of natural uranium deposits.

A subsequent survey of more than 2,000 nearby houses found more than 40 percent had radon levels above the Environmental Protection Agency's recommended guidelines for indoor exposure, and about 7 percent had levels above the higher, stricter levels for people regularly exposed on the job, the CDC said.

"A sizable percentage of houses across the United States — maybe a couple of percent or so — could be above the (indoor) guidelines," said Matthew Zack, a researcher with the Atlanta-based CDC.

"That doesn't mean people should panic," but as many as six million Americans may live in homes where radon levels may be of concern, he said.

Hostages' fate linked to Kuwait

BAALBEK, Lebanon — The leader of a radical Shi'ite Moslem group says there's no hope of five Americans and four Frenchmen kidnapped in Lebanon being released until Kuwait frees 17 extremists convicted of bombings.

"I wish the demands of the kidnappers could be met and all the Americans freed," said Hussein Musawi, leader of the pro-Iranian Islamic Amal, a splinter group of the main Amal movement.

But he said Islamic Jihad, or Islamic Holy War, the group of Shi'ite fundamentalists believed to hold the U.S. and French hostages, "will not release them until the 17 people held prisoner in Kuwait are freed."

Release of the 17, most of them Shi'ites, has been Islamic Jihad's main demand since it began kidnapping westerners in January 1984.

Kuwait refuses to release the men, jailed for bombing the U.S. and French embassies in December 1983.

Islamic Jihad claimed on Oct. 4 that it had killed a sixth American hostage, U.S. diplomat William Buckley, in revenge for Israel's air strike against Palestinian guerrillas in Tunis. But Buckley's body has not been found, and American officials have said they cannot confirm the claim.

3 more announce bid for governor

OMAHA — Three more names have been thrown into the hat of potential candidates for Nebraska.

Former state Sen. Jack Milles of Lincoln, former Douglas County Commissioner P. J. Morgan and former Lincoln Mayor Helen Boosalis join a group of at least 14 possible candidates to succeed Gov. Bob Kerrey, who has announced he will not seek re-election next year.

Milles, a Democrat turned Republican, is executive director of the Nebraska Association of County Officials. He said he has almost reached a decision about whether to become a candidate for the GOP nomination for governor.

Morgan, a former state senator and unsuccessful candidate for the Republican 2nd District nomination in 1976, said running for governor is "something I have to give consideration to."

Boosalis, director of the State Commission on Aging, said she has not given serious thought to running for the Democratic nomination but did not rule out seeking the nomination for governor or lieutenant governor.

Universities aid apartheid battle

NEW YORK — U.S. colleges and universities are opening another front in the battle against apartheid besides just selling off South African related stock holdings: providing scholarships to South African blacks wishing to attend multiracial universities.

That is among the ideas being discussed by leaders of 13 top U.S. universities and five foundations who are exploring ways to form partnerships with non-discriminatory South African universities to provide educational opportunities for that country's blacks.

The group, which includes the presidents of Harvard, Princeton, Yale, Stanford and Brown universities as well as the heads of the Ford Foundation, the Carnegie Corporation and the Rockefeller Foundation, met here on Oct. 16 to hear ideas from leaders of South African universities on how American universities and foundations might help ease the plight of that nation's blacks.

Stuart Saunders, vice chancellor and principal of the University of Cape Town, told the presidents in remarks made available to The Associated Press that "funds are needed to ensure a steady increase in the number of black South Africans attending South African universities as undergraduates and postgraduates."

He said each student would need about \$2,500 to attend the university in 1986.

Actors to be notified of kissing scenes

LOS ANGELES — Fueled by fear that AIDS can be spread by open-mouth kissing, the Screen Actors Guild has asked movie producers and agents to notify performers if any film scenes include such intimate contact.

Notification of such scenes must come before an actor signs for a role, the talent union said Wednesday.

Since it was disclosed in July that actor Rock Hudson was suffering from AIDS, questions have been raised about the safety of open-mouth kissing for movie and television scenes.

Hudson, who died Oct. 2 of complications from the acquired immune deficiency syndrome, had a kissing scene last year with Linda Evans on the ABC television series "Dynasty." Evans has refused to comment on whether she was concerned or had medical tests because of her contact with Hudson.

Scientists have said that while the suspected AIDS virus has been found in saliva, they do not believe the disease can be transmitted by kissing. They say the concentration of the virus in saliva is too low.

But they have warned that it is conceivable the disease might be spread by kissing if saliva containing the virus comes into contact with an open cut in the other person's mouth.

Murdock family readjusts after giving up farm

By Dan Looker
The Lincoln Star

MURDOCK — Fifty-three years ago Vern Lau was born "upstairs in the north bedroom" of the brick farmhouse that his father and grandfather built. Yet, not until recently has he been able to savor rural living.

One of a growing number of former farmers, he now commutes to Lincoln, where he works as a mechanic. The two-year battle in bankruptcy court, the struggle against falling crop prices, the viral disease in his hog herd, the sale of his farm machinery last December — are over.

The Lau family has emerged from what state officials euphemistically call a "transition."

Today, while Vern feels more relaxed in his new role, his wife, Dorothy, recalls the depression and bitterness that the family suffered last winter. Their youngest son, Doug, feels frustrated, shut out from a dream of carrying on a farming tradition.

On a warm October Saturday, as their neighbors were preparing to climb into combines for long days of harvesting, Vern and Dorothy could spend part of a morning reflecting on the changes in their lives.

The couple feels lucky to have left farming last year. They were able to settle their largest debt — \$172,000 to the South Omaha Production Credit Association — by signing over their remaining crops and 70 acres of the last 80 acres they owned. They had once farmed about

600 acres of land they were renting or buying.

"Everything has deteriorated so much more, even since we sold the machinery," Dorothy says, referring to falling land and machinery prices. Her family's machinery sale last December brought in \$59,000, with the 6-year-old combine going for \$27,000.

Before the machinery sale, Vern answered a newspaper ad for a mechanic at Lincoln's Snyder Industries, a company that makes fiberglass tanks.

Vern started the job a week after the machinery sale. Like farming, it offered variety — building maintenance, making electrical repairs on the mold ovens, repairing vehicles and machinery. His 30-mile commute began at 6:15 a.m. and he was home by 4 p.m.

Last summer Vern realized that in the afternoons "I had five hours of daylight and the rest of the farmers were out working." Both Dorothy and Vern planted gardens. "It took the hog lot; we had his and hers," Vern recalls.

Vern began to feel a sense of relief. He told his friend, American Agriculture Movement leader Corky Jones of Brownville, that farmers didn't realize the pressure they were under until they'd quit.

"My workload going into the city was a heck of a lot easier than farming," Vern recalls now. "I had more time to look around and I realized one day the grass was greener, the trees were taller and the sky was bluer."