

News Digest

By The Associated Press

Currency changes announced New design aims to thwart counterfeiters

WASHINGTON — The government announced Tuesday design changes in U.S. currency aimed at thwarting counterfeiters.

The changes are the culmination of several years of study into ways to make U.S. currency more difficult to duplicate on sophisticated new copying machines.

The Treasury Department considered and rejected such radical changes as using a different color for U.S. money other than green. The changes announced were considered so minor that they are not likely to be noticed unless the currency is studied carefully.

Treasury Secretary James Baker, who announced the changes, said production of the new currency would begin in about one year, with the first new notes entering circulation in 15 to 18 months.

The main change announced was the addition of a clear, polyester thread woven into the paper. The thread, which will run vertically on the left border of U.S. currency, will be visible to the eye when held up to the light but cannot be reproduced by copiers, the department said.

The other change will involve printing of the words "United States of America" repeatedly around the portrait in such small type that copiers will not be able to reproduce the tiny letters.

The department's changes, even though minor, were not likely to calm jitters among people who are suspicious of any changes in U.S. currency.

Ron Paul, a former Republican congressman from Texas, has questioned

the government's motives. He contends that the real reason the design of the money is being changed is to find out where people have hidden away large reserves of currency.

But the Treasury Department insisted again that it had no intention of forcing people to exchange existing currency for the new currency once it is in circulation.

"Both the new currency and existing currency will be legal tender and will circulate side by side," the department said in a statement announcing the changes. "Old currency will be removed from circulation in the normal course of currency processing at the Federal Reserve Banks and branches. It will remain legal tender as long as it is in circulation."

First time in 71 years

Trade debt makes U.S. net debtor

WASHINGTON — The deficit in the country's broadest measure of foreign trade hit a record \$117.7 billion last year, confirming that the United States became a net debtor for the first time in 71 years, the government said Tuesday.

The Commerce Department said the deficit in the country's current account, which includes trade in merchandise and in services, surged 9.6 percent above the previous record deficit of \$107.4 billion in 1984.

As recently as 1981, the country enjoyed a surplus in its current account because earnings on American investments overseas, the services category, were enough to erase perennial merchandise trade deficits.

But the deficits in the current account have steadily mounted since 1982. This has had the adverse side effect of pushing the country into the status of a net debtor nation.

Simply put, that means foreigners now own more U.S. investments than Americans owe in foreign investments,

something that had not occurred since 1914.

The final accounting of the country's status as a net debtor will not occur until later this year, but Commerce Department analysts said the figures released Tuesday indicate that a small

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investment surplus of \$28.3 billion at the end of 1984 was wiped out last year, leaving the country \$56.7 billion in debt to the rest of the world.

This figure, if it stands up to revisions, means that the United States is now the third largest debtor country in the world, behind Brazil at \$103.5 billion and Mexico at \$97.7 billion.

Given current trends, the United States is likely to become the world's largest debtor country sometime this year, and some economists are predicting the total debt could hit \$400 billion before it begins to improve.

These pessimistic projections are based on expectations that the country will run current account deficits for some time to come.

"We are a net debtor and we are going to become an even bigger net debtor," said Roger Brinner, an economist at Data Resources Inc. He predicted that the current account deficit of \$117.7 billion in 1985 will swell to \$126 billion this year before beginning to decline slightly in 1987 as the favorable impact of a lower value of the dollar helps to reduce imports and boost American exports.

Foreign investment in the United States at the end of 1985 totaled an estimated \$1,009 trillion while U.S. investment overseas totaled an estimated \$952.9 billion, giving the deficit total of \$56.7 billion.

In Brief

Winger weds

BIG SUR, Calif. — Actress Debra Winger and Oscar-winning actor Timothy Hutton married Sunday in a private ceremony, her publicist says.

It is the first marriage for Hutton, 36, and Winger, 29, who had been linked romantically with Nebraska Gov. Bob Kerrey.

In Lincoln, Kerrey said Tuesday he had been aware that Winger was planning to be married.

"She told me about it a month or so ago and said something about it last week for sure," he said. "I think it's wonderful."

Kerrey said he and Winger have remained friends and he expects to remain a friend to her family.

AIDS referral

LINCOLN — At least 132 doctors and dentists have responded, most of them positively, to an effort by the Nebraska Coalition for Gay and Lesbian Civil Rights and the Nebraska AIDS project to establish a health-care referral list, a coalition spokesman said.

About 120 responded positively, asking for more information or saying they would be willing to treat gay or lesbian patients, John Taylor said.

Nearly 4,000 letters were sent early this month to physicians and dentists throughout the state asking them to fill out a form indicating whether they would be comfortable treating gay or lesbian patients and non-gay patients who may be at risk for AIDS.

The names of doctors and dentists to be included in the referral list will be turned over to state and county health departments and used to direct patients to sympathetic physicians.

Marcos documents

WASHINGTON — The United States on Tuesday gave the Philippine government a box containing

1,500 to 2,300 pages of documents expected to detail worldwide, multibillion-dollar holdings of deposed President Ferdinand Marcos.

The same documents also were subpoenaed by a House subcommittee which has been investigating Marcos' U.S. dealings, which include an estimated \$350 million worth of real estate in the New York City area.

The action came a day after a federal judge in New York refused to halt the release of the papers which Marcos and his wife, Imelda, took with them last month when they fled to Hawaii after the collapse of Marcos' 20-year rule.

Teacher foundation

WASHINGTON — The 112 teachers who were nominated in their states in last year's competition for space flight announced Tuesday a foundation to recognize and reward outstanding members of their profession, especially those who do innovative work.

The Teacher in Space Education Foundation's president is Barbara Morgan who, as runner-up to Christa McAuliffe, now is destined to be the first teacher in space. McAuliffe was killed along with six other crew members of the shuttle Challenger after liftoff on Jan. 28.

'Disinformation'

WASHINGTON — The U.S. government is engaged in a campaign of "disinformation" aimed at preventing technical information about several weapons systems from reaching the Soviet Union, Aviation Week & Space Technology magazine reported this week.

The magazine reported that the program, initiated by the Defense Department and Central Intelligence Agency, has been under way for two years and applies both to aircraft and weapons development projects.

There was no immediate response to the report from the Pentagon.

U.S. agrees to acid rain program

WASHINGTON — The United States, under pressure from the Canadian government, agreed Tuesday to begin a long-range program to combat future acid rain pollution threatening the environment of both countries.

Although officials were still working on the wording of an announcement to be made today, the Associated Press learned the United States had agreed in principle to endorse a report prepared for both governments.

The long-awaited U.S. statement appeared to represent a triumph for

Canadian Prime Minister Brian Mulroney, who made the issue the key item on his agenda for his meetings this week with President Reagan.

A senior U.S. official said Reagan and Mulroney also agreed to sign a five-year extension of the North American Air Defense agreement.

And the Canadians announced that Mulroney had agreed to participate in the construction and operation of a manned space station that the United States wants to put into orbit in the mid-1990s.

The U.S. official, briefing reporters at the White House after Reagan and Mulroney opened their two days of summit talks, said the leaders reached agreement on the sensitive acid rain issue in their first few minutes of private conversation.

One Canadian official said Mulroney told aides after his discussion with Reagan that he was "encouraged" by the president's position on the acid rain question. Asked if Mulroney was told what Reagan would say today, the official would say only, "I guess he has some impression."

Presidential spokesman Larry Speakes said those details would be announced at the conclusion of the talks today, when each leader would make public remarks.

Canadian officials, however, said use of the word "agreement" was misleading, saying "there is still some crunching to be done."

The Reagan administration has insisted for five years that more study was needed to determine what the sources of the acid rain problem are and what action should be taken.

Shuttle Probe Salvage ship recovers Challenger booster part

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. — The Navy reported Tuesday a salvage ship had retrieved from the ocean bottom a piece of booster rocket wreckage that might provide a clue to what caused the explosion of space Challenger.

The Stena Workhorse hoisted the 500-pound, 4-by-5-foot chunk to the surface from a depth of 650 feet, 32 miles northeast of Cape Canaveral.

Officials were not sure if the part is from the left or right solid rocket booster. But if it is the right booster, it could be critical to the investigation because it could contain the segment joint believed to have started the accident Jan. 28 that killed the seven-member crew.

The presidential commission investigating the explosion has concentrated on a joint between the bottom two segments of the right booster as the most likely source of the problem.

Launch film shows a puff of smoke in the joint area on liftoff and a tongue of flame flashing from it 58 seconds later, 15 seconds before the blowup.

Investigators believe O-ring seals designed to prevent hot gases from escaping through the joint may have been at fault.

At a NASA laboratory at Cape Canaveral Air Force Station, forensic experts continued identifying astronaut remains recovered from Challenger's shattered cabin, which was located 100 feet below the Atlantic surface.

Air Force official calls astronaut memos 'cheap'

SPACE CENTER, Houston — A top Air Force official has sent a personal letter to chief astronaut John Young denouncing Young's criticism of NASA management as a "cheap shot" that is dividing the astronaut corps from the rest of the space agency.

Col. Richard L. "Larry" Griffin, head of the Air Force's 2nd space wing and the twin brother of a former Johnson Space Center director, told Young in the letter that "you have taken such a cheap shot, I just cannot remain silent in good conscience."

Griffin wrote the letter in response to a series of memos written by Young that were slipped to the media. In the memos, Young accuses National Aeronautics and Space Administration management of sacrificing crew safety in the interest of a space flight schedule. Young claimed that management was giving in to pressure to launch the shuttle when there were unresolved safety issues.

"You criticizing anyone for 'pressure' is ludicrous when the primary axiom in the astronaut office is, 'Don't cross John if you ever want to fly.' That's pressure!" Griffin said, according to the Houston Post.

Griffin continued: "As a matter of fact, largely due to your example, your attitude pervades some of the astro corps with the likes of Sally Ride also portraying NASA management in some sort of we-they confrontation."

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Newsline
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