

News Digest

By the Associated Press

Arms control

U.S., Soviet negotiators meet in special talks

MOSCOW — U.S. and Soviet delegations opened a special round of arms talks Monday with eight hours of discussions in a secluded mansion near Moscow. The Kremlin's chief negotiator, Viktor Karpov, said just before the talks began that the Soviets "would do anything" for a new summit, and he complained that the United States does not seem interested in arms control.

Moscow has said it wants some assurance of progress toward an arms control accord before it schedules another summit.

The U.S. Embassy spokesman in Moscow, Jaroslav Verner, later reported: "Mr. (Paul) Nitze (the chief U.S. delegate and President Reagan's arms control adviser) said that he and his team had eight hours of serious exploratory talks with Soviet experts today and will continue the talks tomorrow."

The special talks were scheduled to

run two days and were getting low-key treatment from the Soviets.

The English-language channel of Radio Moscow's world service reported the Sunday arrival of the U.S. delegation for the talks, which were being held in a government guest house south of Moscow.

But no mention of the meetings was made in the Communist Party daily Pravda or the evening government paper Izvestia, the only national newspapers issued on Mondays.

The Kremlin, which sent no one to the airport to meet the U.S. officials, seemed to be trying to play down the significance of a meeting that comes during a flurry of presummit diplomatic activity.

Karpov, chief of the Soviet delegation to the Geneva arms talks and head of the new Foreign Ministry arms control desk, told an American TV reporter he would not provide any details on the

confidential meeting.

But he stressed the issue of nuclear testing, which has become a centerpiece of Soviet arms control policy and a focus of Kremlin pronouncements on the possibility of holding a second summit this year between Soviet leader Mikhail S. Gorbachev and Reagan.

"We would do anything for that (an agreement on a summit)," Karpov insisted. "So it depends on our partners."

Reagan and Gorbachev agreed to hold the meeting in the United States after their first summit in Geneva last November. But no date has been set.

Secretary of State George P. Shultz and Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard A. Shevardnadze are to meet in the United States on Sept. 19-20 in what is being billed as an effort to set an agenda for a summit.

The meeting was originally set for May, but the Soviets canceled it after the U.S. bombing raid on Libya in April.

White House drug tests underway

WASHINGTON — Drug-screening began in earnest at the White House on Monday, with Vice President George Bush and an undisclosed number of presidential aides taking part in the testing.

"It is, and should be, confidential," Deputy Press Secretary Larry Speakes told reporters, refusing to say how many aides volunteered or to speculate on the test results.

"...The objective is, if anybody has a problem, they should straighten out the problem, give them help and put them back in the workplace drug-free. Confidentiality, I think, is an important part of that."

President Reagan took the test on Saturday, before traveling to Bethesda Naval Hospital for a urological examination, and Bush took the test on Monday morning, said the vice president's spokesman, Marlin Fitzwater.

Last week, the White House, to dramatize Reagan's new anti-drug abuse program, said all 78 of the president's senior staff members would be asked to give urine samples on a voluntary basis.

Speakes said Monday that he had taken the test, but refused to be drawn into questions about whether any of Reagan's aides demurred.

"Nobody's come to me about civil liberties," he said when asked whether anyone raised invasion-of-privacy questions.

The idea of a voluntary system of drug testing among the 78 senior staff aides to Reagan was broached last week by members of the staff — not by Reagan, White House spokesmen said at the time.

Shuttle engineers settle on new design

SPACE CENTER, Houston — Engineers have developed a new solid rocket engine design that will prevent a failure like the one that caused the explosion aboard the space shuttle Challenger, according to a NASA source.

A NASA engineer, speaking on condition that he not be identified, said that a team at the Marshall Space Flight Center in Alabama has settled on a new, fundamental design for the rocket engine, a major step toward returning the shuttle to flight.

Challenger exploded Jan. 28, killing all seven crewmembers, after a joint in its solid rocket booster failed. The shuttle fleet was grounded until the rocket design flaw could be corrected.

The Rogers commission, which in-

vestigated the accident, said that two O-rings in the rocket engine joint failed to seal, allowing superheated gases to burn through the wall of a propellant tank. Fuel and oxidizer from the tank ignited, causing the explosion.

The NASA engineer said the new solid rocket design will include a third O-ring and feature a metal lip that will force the joint to remain sealed.

He said the new rocket engine would have interlocking insulation that would prevent hot gasses from touching the rubberized O-ring seals.

Another change, he said, would add a bolt assembly attaching the rocket nozzle to the engine. This will provide an additional seal for the rocket nozzle joint, he said.

Pentagon: No evidence missing secrets in Soviet hands

WASHINGTON — The Pentagon told Congress on Monday it does not believe any secret documents missing from an aircraft plant have fallen into Soviet hands, but that it still can't account for the 1,400 papers.

The documents from a Lockheed Aircraft Corp. plant in California reportedly relate to the "stealth" fighter plane, a project supposedly so secret the Pentagon does not acknowledge its existence.

"We have no information to suggest that the information has been com-

promised in the sense of being lost to someone on the outside," Donald Hicks, undersecretary of defense, told a House investigating committee.

Hicks' testimony came as part of a continuing probe by the Energy and Commerce investigations subcommittee.

The investigation has focused on what Hicks and Lockheed officials have admitted was slack security at the company's famed "skunk" works in Burbank, Calif. That is the plant that developed the U-2 and SR-71 spy planes.

Victim of capitalism could make \$35,000, newspaper says

NEW YORK — Joseph Mauri, the evicted New Yorker who was portrayed in a Soviet documentary as a victim of capitalism, is a newspaper union member who could make \$35,000 a year if he wished, his union and newspaper said.

Mauri, 57, appeared in the program, "The Man from Fifth Avenue," after newspaper reports on his eviction last year from a Manhattan apartment, which the building's owner wanted to make into a sewing room.

Mauri is on an expense-paid tour of the Soviet Union, where he has been featured in newspapers and on national television. The Soviet news agency Tass called him a man "who first lost his job and then also became homeless."

Mauri, who said he seeks to publicize the plight of America's homeless, is not homeless himself. In an interview two weeks ago, he said he moved to a small, \$112-per-month room in a residential hotel after his eviction.

At a factory in Moscow last week, he told workers: "My fate is not

unusual, as this happens all over the richest country in the world, where there is an army of homeless."

Mauri said before leaving for Moscow that he worked part-time at various jobs, including a mailroom job at The New York Times.

The Times reported Monday that Mauri, while not a regular employee, is 10th on its list of 400 mailroom substitutes and could work full-time if he chose to, earning \$680 per week. It said he earned \$3,000 in 23 shifts this year.

Mauri "didn't want to work," Edward J. Burke, chief shop steward for New York Local 6 of the International Typographical Union, told the Times.

Mauri, a member of the union, told the newspaper in an interview Saturday that chronic hepatitis prevented him from working regularly.

Several times, when questioned about his health and employment, he turned the discussion to his eviction or stopped to consult with a Soviet companion, then said homelessness was "the real issue," the Times reported.

Smith introduces bills to ease grain woes

WASHINGTON — Rep. Virginia Smith, R-Neb., Monday announced that she has introduced two bills mandating actions to ease the expected grain storage crisis and give a boost to sagging grain prices.

"The grain price slump of recent days almost certainly stems directly from the government's failure to act swiftly and decisively to solve the grain storage crisis," the 3rd District Repub-

lican said. She said in Nebraska alone the grain storage shortage might be as much as 145 million bushels prior to harvest of the 1986 bumper crop.

"My bills would mandate immediate entry into the farmer owned reserve and require the Commodity Credit Corp. to begin making grain storage facility loans immediately," Mrs. Smith said.

Smith introduces bills to ease grain woes

The plant is the site of Lockheed's effort to develop a "stealth" fighter known as the F-19, a plane that would use exotic materials and shapes so the plane could evade enemy radars, according to sources speaking on condition of anonymity.

The Pentagon has never officially acknowledged the existence of the "stealth" fighter, although it does admit it is building a "stealth" bomber.

While the Pentagon won't talk about the stealth, Rep. John Dingell, D-Mich., chairman of the panel, said some of the

documents involved detail "the structure and some of the sensitive technology of the stealth fighter."

Dingell's comment came as he talked about how investigators had discovered that some of the documents were taken outside the plant by a Lockheed employee who was trying to impress his girlfriend.

At a subcommittee hearing three weeks ago, Lockheed officials admitted their security procedures were sloppy, but said they had no information that the papers had been turned over to any other countries.

Looking to help America's farmers

Federal bankruptcy ruling provides little protection, experts say

DES MOINES, Iowa — A ruling requiring federal judges to give farmers who are facing bankruptcy credit for skill and experience won't have much impact on providing protection from creditors, farm experts said Monday.

They said the federal court ruling, while helpful, is a minor factor compared to the historically low rate of return farmers gain on their investment and the high cost of borrowing money.

However, one expert said courts are likely to hear more of the claims, because the farm crunch is starting to claim more and more high-quality farmers.

"We're losing some of the best and the brightest who farm," said Neil Harl, an Iowa State University farm economist.

"It (bankruptcy law) was never designed for farmers," said Peter

Brent, a spokesman for the rural advocacy group Prairiefire. "I would guess that less than 5 percent actually succeed."

Ruling in a Minnesota case, the 8th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals last month held that bankruptcy judges must assign a value to a farmer's skill and experience when adding up assets and liabilities.

That can be important, because if a farmer can demonstrate a repayment plan which is workable, he can remain on the land while working out of financial trouble rather than being forced to liquidate assets to satisfy creditors.

But Harl said major factors work against farmers seeking that type of protection.

Farm operations have a traditionally low rate of return — about 5 percent to 7 percent — even in the best of times, while the cost of

borrowing money remains high, Harl said.

"The difficulty today is that it's extremely difficult to make a bankruptcy work because of the low return," Harl said. "Production Credit is still at 12 percent to 14 percent. The number of approved (bankruptcy) plans has been very, very low."

Still, Harl said, judges are likely to face the question of assigning a value to skill and experience simply because of the kind of farmers going broke this year.

During the first couple of years of the credit crunch, inefficient farmers were quickly eliminated. Those who survived were forced to rely on skill and imagination. Those farmers are now going under, he noted.

"We have known for the past several months that there are farmers in trouble who do not lack in man-

agement skills," Harl said.

Brent said a bigger factor is the unpredictability of farming, which makes lenders reluctant to allow operators time to work out of debt.

"The nature of the whole beast is that it treats farmers differently than others," Brent said. "Let's face it, if you made a plan last winter for this year's corn crop, the numbers you used to project cash flow are irrelevant now."

"You've done everything you said you would, but the income is not there," Brent said. "Creditors know that."

Brent said farmers accept the relatively low return they get on their investment, but pay the consequences when they try to work out repayment plans.

"I don't know very many people who bought a farm looking for a return on investment," he said.

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