

Negotiators drop demands, make arms control progress

MOSCOW - The United States and the Soviet Union made headway Thursday toward new arms control agreements, officials on both sides said.

A half-dozen senior U.S. officials, speaking on condition of anonymity, said Secretary of State James Baker III and Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze made progress toward treaties to curb long-range nuclear weapons, ground troops, tanks and combat aircraft in Europe, and to ban production of chemical weapons.

Both Shevardnadze and Deputy Foreign Minister Alexander Bessmertnykh echoed the positive U.S. appraisal. "The discussion of the disarmament problem is proceeding very well," Shevardnadze told Tass, the Soviet news agency.

Bessmertnykh, who specializes in U.S. relations, was quoted by Tass as saying both sides had presented new ideas, narrowing the gap between their positions.

Gennady Gerasimov, Soviet Foreign Ministry spokesman, called the discussion "very technical" and said it would keep U.S. and Soviet experts busy through the night sorting the proposals out.

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Baker offered at least one concession that would permit the Soviets to exclude from a projected ceiling some of the combat aircraft they contend are defensive.

The Soviets, meanwhile, dropped their demand for a provision that would

allow them to scrap a long-range missile-reduction agreement if they determined U.S. anti-missile defenses in space were illegal.

But the U.S. official who reported the concession acknowledged that the treaty, which President Bush and Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev intend to sign at their Washington summit meeting in June, would include an escape clause. Either side could abandon the restrictions if it concluded the treaty did not serve its national interest.

The separate briefings produced evidence of discord, too.

Gerasimov said the United States still flatly refuses to consider reducing naval forces. And he said the Soviets would not sign the treaty if a dispute over sea-launched cruise missiles was not resolved.

The Bush administration refuses to accept limitations on the weapons carried aboard nuclear submarines and surface ships.

Soviet activists call for more reforms

MOSCOW - Communist maverick Boris N. Yeltsin and progressive activists said Thursday the party's decision to renounce its legal claim on power is not enough to end Soviet political repression and centralized control.

"It is necessary to eliminate (Communist) party organizations in the army, the police, the KGB, the courts, in all the state institutions," said Yuri Mityunov, a spokesman for one would-be opposition party, the Democratic Union.

Yeltsin was the sole member of the party's policy-making Central Committee to oppose the political reforms Wednesday. He said they failed to go far enough.

"I had grounds to vote against. But I think, however, that the platform represents if not a step then a

half-step forward, and that lessens the tension before the (party) Congress," he said in an interview in his office near the Kremlin.

He recommended the formation of a second party if the Communist Party fails to excise conservatives at the Congress to be held in early summer.

Mityunov said pressure for reform is now moving to the streets and pointed to the growing number of incidents of angry crowds across the Soviet Union demanding the ouster of hard-line local Communist leaders.

Party secretaries in Volgograd, Tyumen, Chemigov and Sverdlovsk were removed in recent weeks, and activists said 6,000 people gathered in front of the party headquarters in Donetsk on Wednesday with a similar demand.



Oil slick threatens estuaries

HUNTINGTON BEACH, Calif. - A drifting oil slick threatened miles of beaches and estuaries Thursday after a tanker apparently was punctured by its own anchor and spilled 295,000 gallons of Alaskan crude oil.

But favorable offshore wind held the slick stationary against an on-shore current about a mile out to sea from this popular Southern California recreational area. And calm seas eased the effort to skim the oil from the surface.

The 811-foot tanker American Trader, which had been fully loaded with 21 million gallons, lay off the coast surrounded by a floating oil containment boom and Coast Guard vessels.

The purple slick covered an area measuring 2 1/2 miles by 4 miles, said Coast Guard Lt. Vincent Campos. Three skimmer boats were at work and five more were en route to the area, off the Orange County coastline about 35 miles southeast of Los Angeles.

Along the shore, booms were laid to protect the environmentally delicate estuaries at the Santa Ana River mouth, Anaheim Bay, Bolsa Chica Wetlands and upper Newport Bay -- all teeming with wildlife.

Biologist Esther Burkett said oil coming ashore on a sandy beach would be less harmful than in an estuary such as Bolsa Chica, where birds would ingest the petroleum

with the plants they eat.

Curt Taucher, a Fish and Game spokesman, said there was some initial concern about migrating gray whales but that was not the biggest worry. "The concern is for the furbearing animals, harbor seals, animals like that," he said.

Mindful of the massive Exxon Valdez spill in Alaska last year, California politicians rushed to call for tighter controls on oil shipping and stiffer penalties for spills.

"This is a wake-up call," said Lt. Gov. Leo McCarthy.

The American Trader was chartered by British Petroleum Oil Shipping Co. USA, said Joe Braden, manager of the firm's Los Angeles field office.

The spill began Wednesday afternoon while the tanker maneuvered 1 1/2 miles off Huntington Beach to moor at a nest of mooring buoys at an offloading station for an underwater pipeline leading to a refinery on shore. Water in the area is about 80 feet deep.

A swell may have lifted the ship and swung one anchor against the bottom, Schmidt said in a telephone interview after speaking with the ship's captain.

A diver found a 3-foot hole in the single-hull bottom of the No. 1 forward compartment, a tank which holds more than 1 million gallons of crude. Industry critics say tankers should have double hulls for safety.

AIDS records slowest increase

ATLANTA - The number of new AIDS cases in the United States rose just 9 percent in 1989 -- the slowest increase ever -- but the disease is spreading faster among heterosexuals, newborns, women and Southerners, federal AIDS specialists reported Thursday.

A total of 35,238 AIDS cases were reported in 1989 by the national Centers for Disease Control, compared with 32,196 reported during 1988. That 9 percent increase is easily the slowest since the spread of AIDS began in the early 1980s. For example, AIDS was up 34 percent in 1988 and 60 percent in 1987.

"This is somewhat of a continuing trend," said Dr. Ruth Berkelman, chief of AIDS surveillance for the Atlanta-based CDC. "There has been a leveling in reported cases."

The CDC also attempts to tabulate AIDS cases according to when they were first diagnosed. In the latest 12-month period of that survey (October 1988 through September 1989) the annual increase was similarly modest, a 14 percent rise over the preceding 12 months, the CDC said.

The two tabulations differ somewhat in part because of case reporting delays, revisions in the standards for reporting of AIDS cases and other factors.

Of the 35,238 new AIDS cases

reported in 1989, 56 percent occurred among homosexual and bisexual males, as has been the case in previous years, the CDC said. But those cases among gay and bisexual men were up only 8 percent over 1988 levels, while heterosexual-contact cases -- just 4 percent of the total -- were up 27 percent compared with the previous year.

"I think the leveling off reflects both a reduction in the number of new infections among homosexual and bisexual men, and also the introduction of some effective therapies (such as the drug AZT) in 1987, delaying the onset of AIDS itself among infected persons," Berkelman said.

In 1989, 547 cases of AIDS transmission from mothers to newborns were reported, up 17 percent from 1988. And while females made up just 3,931 of the 35,238 cases last year, that was an increase of 11 percent over 1988; the number of male AIDS cases last year was up 9 percent from the preceding year.

Other larger proportional increases occurred in the South, up 22 percent over 1988; in population areas of less than 100,000, up 35 percent; and in areas of 100,000 to 500,000 people, up 32 percent.

Among the regions, the South accounted for the largest proportion of AIDS cases reported in 1989, 31

percent, compared with 30 percent in the Northeast, 24 percent in the West and 10 percent in the Midwest.

And the majority of cases -- 70 percent -- occurred in cities of a million people or more.

The number of new AIDS cases among hemophilia patients actually dropped 5 percent in 1989, from 339 in 1988 to 321. And the cases associated with blood transfusions dropped 14 percent, from 935 to 808. Improved screening of blood donations since the AIDS epidemic began has reduced the danger from new transfusions and from the blood products used by hemophiliacs.

"But in IV (intravenous) drug users, we have not seen such optimism," Berkelman said. Intravenous drug abusers still make up the second largest group of AIDS patients, and the 7,970 such cases in 1989 marked a 5 percent increase over 1988.

Nationwide, the CDC has reported 117,781 cases since AIDS reporting began in 1981. Sixty percent have occurred in homosexual or bisexual men, and 21 percent have occurred among IV drug abusers, with 7 percent among patients in both categories.

AIDS has killed 70,313 of the 117,781 reported patients, or 60 percent.

Business fined for transporting video

M-K Enterprises of Des Moines, Iowa, and its president, Lynn Sparks, have been fined and Sparks sentenced to probation in U.S. District Court for conspiracy and transportation of obscene material in interstate commerce.

Judge Warren Urbom fined M-K Enterprises, parent company of the Embassy Theater, \$50,000 and or-

dered the Iowa company to pay special assessment costs of \$400.

Urbom on Wednesday sentenced Sparks, 32, to five years' probation, a \$41,800 fine, 1,200 hours of community service and barred her from ownership or management in companies dealing with X-rated films.

Sparks and M-K were convicted in

September of transporting and selling the videotape "Marilyn Chambers' Private Fantasies No. 5," which Urbom ruled obscene.

The Embassy Theater ordered the tape from M-K and Sparks, who sent it to Lincoln via United Parcel Service. The tape was then sold to an undercover police officer.

Omaha attorney files civil rights suit alleging segregation in public housing

OMAHA - A civil rights lawsuit was filed Thursday in U.S. District Court in Omaha accusing Omaha's public housing program of discrimination against racial minorities.

Attorney Mary Clarkson of Omaha said she filed the class-action suit on behalf of four black residents of the Logan Fontenelle low-income public housing project. The four are Mary Hawkins, Rodriquez Hargett, Claudia Nelson and Ersalene Davis.

Clarkson is an attorney with the law firm headed by Robert Broom, the former Legal Aid Society lawyer who filed the lawsuit that led to court-ordered integration of Omaha public schools.

The public-housing lawsuit says that the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, the Omaha

Housing Authority and the City of Omaha "have constructed and maintained a segregated system of federally assisted housing and that the practices of all defendants in different ways have caused a separate segregated housing system."

The suit asks the court to block local and federal governments from doing anything to perpetuate what the suit says is a segregated housing system.

Steven Reikes, legal counsel for OHA, said he was not aware of the lawsuit.

Clarkson said her clients cite as an example of discriminatory policy the Omaha City Council's Dec. 13 vote defeating a proposal by OHA to tear down Logan Fontenelle and replace it with scattered-site housing across the

city.

She said the council's decision to retain Logan Fontenelle means low-income housing residents have to remain in racially segregated communities. She said HUD and OHA have "condoned" for years a policy of allowing whites and blacks who qualify for public housing to live in racially separate projects.

"We want the court to certify that this is a class action. We want a declaration that the defendants have implemented and continued a segregated system of housing. We want an injunction against actions by defendants which would continue the system -- an injunction requiring the defendants to prepare and implement a plan completely eliminating the effects of discriminatory actions."

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