

Scientists unlikely to defect

WASHINGTON — Nuclear scientists who worked in the Soviet weapons program aren't likely to cross the "great moral threshold" required to sell their expertise to Third World countries, senior officials from the Commonwealth of Independent States said Thursday.

"So far, we don't know of a single example" of a nuclear scientist leaving the former Soviet Union, said Yevgeny Avrorin, chief scientist at the Russian nuclear arms complex at Chelyabinsk-70.

"Not only that," he went on, but "we don't know of any proposals being made."

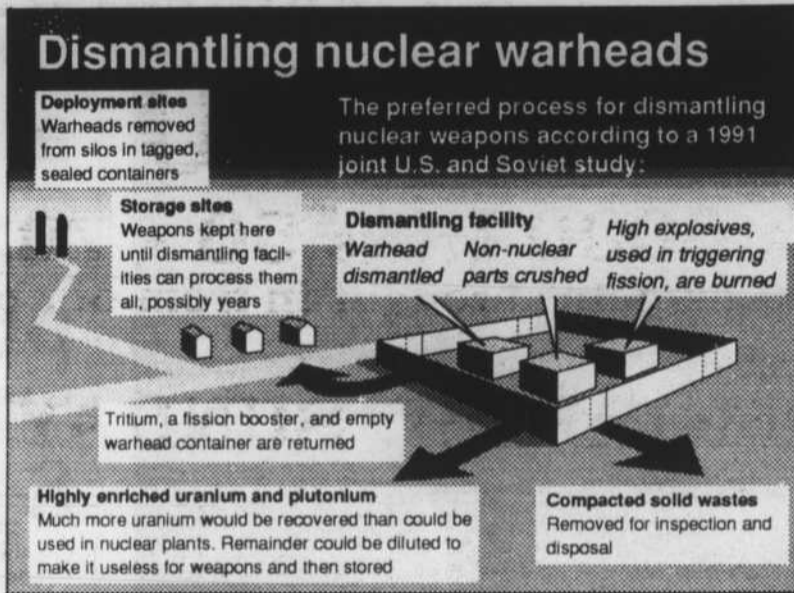
Avrorin was one of several senior CIS officials who met with American scientists to discuss nuclear weapons issues at a seminar sponsored by the Federation of American Scientists and the Natural Resources Defense Council.

One of the officials, Gen. Sergei Zelentsov, said at a news conference that removal of tactical weapons from all former Soviet republics except Belarus and Ukraine is complete.

Zelentsov said the process is running about two months ahead of schedule and should be completed in May.

Geographic consolidation of the nuclear arsenal of the former Soviet Union has been a major goal of the Bush administration.

When Secretary of State James A. Baker III visited Russia earlier this month he met with Avrorin at Chelyabinsk. Later, a senior administra-



tion official said in Moscow that the Russians had told Baker they were well over half finished moving the short-range weapons to Russia.

As for out-of-work nuclear experts, U.S. officials have expressed concern that scientists who were among the professional elite in the former Soviet Union but now are out of work would receive offers to help Iran, Iraq and Libya develop weapons.

"A lot of experts were left jobless," said Avrorin. He said the concern they would rush to accept job offers from countries eager to join the

rank of nuclear states were exaggerated.

"A great moral threshold has to be crossed," he said.

Avrorin said that about half the nuclear scientists once employed by the Soviet Union are no longer involved in military projects.

Boris Y. Nekipelov, first deputy minister for nuclear warhead development in the Ministry for Atomic Power and Industry, said Russian law prohibits nuclear scientists from emigrating for ten years after leaving the weapons program.

Campaigns begin personal attacks

By the Associated Press

Bill Clinton, Bob Kerrey and Paul Tsongas vied to attack one another Thursday in a Democratic presidential race growing testier by the day.

"This isn't a love fest," said Kerrey. There are seven contests and 783 delegates on next Tuesday's Democratic ballots.

Kerrey derided Clinton's reasons for not serving in Vietnam as "baloney." Clinton said Tsongas' opposition to a middle class tax cut was "cold-blooded."

Tsongas went after both his rivals, noting they raised the gas taxes in their states but now were criticizing his call for a similar increase.

Clinton also mended fences with Jesse Jackson after bitterly accusing him of "backstabbing" when he was told erroneously that Jackson had decided to back a Democratic rival. Clinton's comments were picked up by an open microphone and recorded without his knowledge.

Tsongas piled into that dispute

calling Clinton's comments "vituperative," and suggesting they were unrepresentative. "I think the American people want a president who's cool under fire and that kind of instinctive, angry emotional outburst I don't think is appropriate," he said.

The verbal fisticuffs came as the five major Democrats girded for next week's primaries in Maryland, Georgia, Colorado and Utah, and caucuses in three other states.

The 504 delegates at stake in contests on Tuesday, Friday and Saturday, and another 783 on March 10 are more than enough to propel one candidate along the path to nomination and doom others to oblivion.

Clinton had Tsongas in his sights as he sought support for next week's primary in Colorado, where polls show him narrowly trailing his rival. He called the former Massachusetts senator "a candidate of Wall Street" for his pro-business economic policies, noting that Tsongas earned \$200,000 in corporate board fees last year and is a registered lobbyist in Washington.

Tsongas retorted with what seemed like a reference to the draft controversy: "Is Bill Clinton now our resident expert on courage?"

House adopts temporary, election-year tax cut

WASHINGTON — The House on Thursday approved a temporary, election-year tax cut for 90 million wage earners that would be financed by permanently raising taxes on the richest 1 percent of Americans.

The final vote on the bill was 221-209. Bush's own plan was rejected on a near party-line vote of 264-166.

Rep. Mickey Edwards of Oklahoma, chairman of the Republican Policy Committee, countered that the Democratic bill was de-

signed not to benefit the economy but to "tax the rich, bust the budget, raise the deficit and beat the president."

The Democratic substitute for the Bush bill was accepted on a 221-210 vote before the final roll call was taken. Forty-six Democrats voted with the Republicans in both cases.

The legislation now goes to the Senate Finance Committee, which next week begins writing what likely will be a similar version. As

a result, Republicans insist, there is no chance it will become law because Bush will veto it.

He and other opponents ridiculed the maximum \$400-a-year tax cut that wage earners would collect from the bill this year and next. Rep. Steny Hoyer of Maryland, the Democratic caucus chairman, said that represented a 10-percent tax reduction for a \$30,000-a-year family.

The centerpiece of the Democratic bill is a

20-percent credit for Social Security and Medicare taxes paid this year and next. About 80 percent of all workers would get the maximum credit of \$200, or \$400 for a couple.

The bill would boost the 31 percent maximum tax rate to 35 percent, which would affect the estimated 1 million people with incomes above \$105,000 for singles and \$185,000 for couples. In addition, about 60,000 people with incomes over \$1 million a year would face a new surtax of up to 10 percent.

Drop in home sales cause analysts to doubt economic recovery claims

WASHINGTON — Existing home sales fell 1.5 percent in January, the first decline in four months, and claims for jobless benefits rose for a second straight week in mid-February, reports said Thursday.

The negative figures, combined with recent reports of a rebound in factory orders and climbing retail and automobile sales, showed the cross-currents buffeting the economy.

"It's an economy that's gasping for air," said economist Mark Zandi of Regional Financial Associates in West Chester, Pa. "Sometimes it's below water and sometimes it's above. There's no clear sign the recovery is imminent."

John F. Welch Jr., chief executive of General Electric Co. said, "There is clearly no clear direction."

Welch who is chairman of the Business Council, which is made up of the chief executives of 100 of America's largest corporations, told reporters after a council meeting here Thursday, "Things are a little better — and I mean little, with a heavy underline."

The National Association of Realtors on Thursday attributed the decline in sales of previously owned homes to consumer uncertainty over the economic outlook and a blip in

mortgage rates as much as to the usual mid-winter lull in housing activity.

Sales fell 1.5 percent, to a seasonally adjusted annual rate of 3.22 million units, from 3.27 million a month earlier. It was the first decline since a 2.5 percent drop in September.

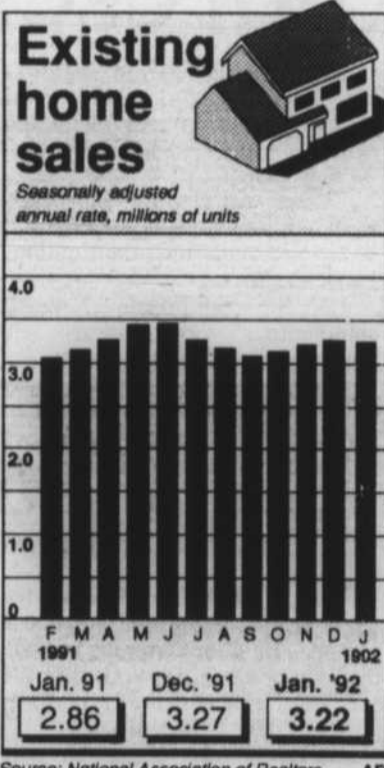
The Midwest posted the only regional gain.

Noting a 12.6 percent advance over January 1991, Dorcas T. Helfant, the Realtors' president said, "Sales eased up a bit but, overall, the market is in much better shape than it was a year ago."

Most analysts contend that the housing recession ended in January 1991 and that the housing sector has assumed its traditional role of leading the economy out of the recession.

Helfant also said a national survey in early February showed a substantial increase in contracts signed for closing later this year, hinting that a jump in activity could come as early as the spring.

Meanwhile, the Labor Department reported that 7,000 more people filed initial claims for unemployment compensation in the week ending Feb. 15, pushing the seasonally adjusted total to 459,000. It was the second straight advance, although less than the 18,000 increase a week earlier.



While cautioning that the changes from week to week can be extremely volatile, analysts noted that the four-week moving average for claims has remained at a discouragingly high level of about 450,000.

War over in Yugoslavia

BELGRADE, Yugoslavia — The president of Serbia declared the war with Croatia over Thursday, ending his quest to keep Yugoslavia united.

President Slobodan Milosevic of Serbia appeared to be responding to mounting opposition inside Serbia over the war's human and economic toll. Many Serbs have turned against the once popular leader and are demanding his resignation.

"Today we can say that most of the agony in our country is over,

and that conditions now exist for the peaceful and democratic solution of the Yugoslav crisis," Milosevic told Serbia's parliament as a U.N.-mediated truce stretched to nearly two months.

In a rare public speech, Milosevic also seemed to move away from previous insistence that Serb-dominated regions in other republics be united with Serbia. He said Serbia's union with tiny Montenegro in a smaller Yugoslavia was "the best option."

3 killed in riots at space center

MOSCOW — Poor food, hazing and beatings helped set the stage for riots by hundreds of soldiers at the former Soviet Union's main space center, newspapers said Thursday.

Three people were killed in the violence Monday and Tuesday at the Baikonur Cosmodrome, where angry soldiers reportedly looted supplies and burned barracks. The unrest reflects deep problems in the former Soviet army, including falling morale and

mistreatment of recruits. The riots involved several hundred of the 17,000 soldiers assigned to construction jobs at the cosmodrome, about 1,560 miles southeast of Moscow.

The soldiers stole 17 cars, looted food supplies and warehouses, and burned four barracks, according to the Nezavisimaya Gazeta (Independent Newspaper) and Interfax news agency.

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