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Kerrey, Hagel weigh nuclear treaty's merits

By JOSH KNAUB
Staff writer

"We are far better off to take the time necessary to work our way through the critical questions."

SEN. CHUCK HAGEL

U.S. Sen. Bob Kerrey urged his Senate colleagues on Tuesday to ratify the nuclear test ban treaty. Sen. Chuck Hagel wants to delay.

Although the two Nebraska senators said they would vote in opposition if a vote was held this week, they both cited national security as the reason behind their positions.

Fewer than 50 senators have stated support for the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty being debated in the Senate this week. A two-thirds majority of the Senate, or 67 votes, is needed to ratify the treaty.

Hagel, a Republican, said in a speech on the Senate floor Friday that the Senate had not had enough time to consider the treaty, which would end all physical tests of nuclear weapons. The treaty must be ratified by the 44 nations that have some nuclear capability before it would take effect.

Hagel said if a vote was held this week he would be forced to vote against the treaty.

"We are far better off to take the time necessary to work our way through the critical questions and issues," Hagel said Friday.

He said the issues included who would monitor compliance with the treaty and what body would enforce the treaty.

Kerrey, in a speech on the Senate floor Tuesday, said it was in the United States' best interest to ratify the treaty.

"Bluntly speaking, we have the most effective and deadly nuclear force in the world," said Kerrey, a Democrat.

"Therefore, to maintain our existing nuclear edge, it is in our interest to ratify the CTBT and halt nuclear development and advancement of other nations."

Kerrey called nuclear weapons the "Rolex wristwatch of international security."

He said nations had begun to develop the weapons not for security but for status in the international community.

Kerrey and Hagel differed in their assessment of how the treaty would affect the safety and reliability of exist-

ing U.S. nuclear weapons.

Hagel said he needed more information.

"The safety and reliability of the nuclear arsenal ... must be maintained above all," Hagel said.

"We might be able to do that with computers and means other than testing ... but I want to be assured a lot more than I am now."

Kerrey said he was comfortable that the U.S. nuclear arsenal would be safe even with a ban on future testing.

"I have an extremely high level of confidence in the nuclear stockpile even without continued testing," he said.

"The United States has not conducted a nuclear test for over seven years, but the American people should understand our nuclear stockpile is safe."

The Senate will resume debate on the treaty today. A vote is scheduled today, but the Senate may postpone action.

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Center to offer radio technology

■ The UNL facility will allow firms and students to test developing technology.

By KIMBERLY SWEET
Senior staff writer

Nebraska corporations specializing in radio frequency and wireless technology will soon get a chance to test their new gadgets, thanks to the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

The addition of a radio frequency and wireless testing center to UNL's technology park in northwest Lincoln will soon be a reality, in part because of \$162,000 worth of matching funds given to the university by the U.S. Department of Commerce.

The facility will allow Nebraska firms that specialize in the radio frequency and wireless industry to test their developing technologies.

The center will be important to small firms in Nebraska that don't have enough money to purchase the expensive testing equipment that large firms have, said Robert Palmer, an associate professor of electrical engineering who is involved in the project.

"In Lincoln there are a lot of start-up firms that can't afford major testing facilities," Palmer said. "The equipment is very expensive but is

needed for testing."

Ram Naryanan, a professor in the electrical engineering department who is leading UNL's efforts, said having a testing site will allow small companies to develop new technologies more quickly.

Instead of firms going out of the state and region to test their products, they can do it quickly at the Lincoln site.

"You can go out of the local environment, but you want to test it right away, otherwise you stifle development," Naryanan said.

The center will benefit UNL students as well, Naryanan said.

Later in their undergraduate career, electrical engineering students will have the opportunity to get hands-on experience working with the testing equipment.

Right now, students don't have contact with the instruments until they are employed at the companies.

"I think it's exciting because students will be working in the industrial environment and not just in a lab in the university," Naryanan said.

The partners in the project include UNL, the Nebraska Center for Excellence in Electronics and Southeast Community College.

UNL will share the costs of funding the facility with the grant from the Department of Commerce.

The facility is estimated to cost

\$349,776. Firms will be charged fees to test their instruments.

Naryanan said he expects it to take nine months before the facility will be in operation. Before the end of the year, a test engineer will be hired and state-of-the-art test instrumentation will be ordered.

Nebraska Sen. Bob Kerrey, who announced the awarding of the matching funds, said the project will further emerging technology in Nebraska.

"The project will help Nebraska capitalize on the emerging expertise to encourage economic growth and the creation of new jobs while focusing on companies which specialize in radio frequency and wireless technology," Kerrey said in a statement.

The links formed between the industry and the university will be positive, Naryanan said.

"This will present lots of opportunities for companies and the university to interact," Naryanan said. "This is a small step in a growing relationship between businesses and the university."

The federal dollars the department of commerce is providing promotes the university's goal of acquiring more government dollars for research, Naryanan said.

"This is a unique development meant to foster these types of interactions," he said.

Californians debate e-mail privacy

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — Privacy advocates say California has lost the chance to clarify whether companies have a right to monitor employees' e-mail and punish them for transgressions.

As hundreds of companies implement monitoring policies, a bill vetoed Sunday by Gov. Gray Davis would have required those doing business in the state to notify employees in writing of such action. Davis said the law would infringe on employers' rights and leave them open to unjust lawsuits.

David Sobel, general counsel for the Electronic Privacy Information Center, a nonprofit research group, called Davis' veto "befuddling." Some states are considering banning e-mail monitoring altogether as a cottage industry evolves to make it easier for companies to snoop, he said.

Davis, a Democrat, likened e-mail monitoring to other employer rights, such as the right to limit personal long-distance phone calls. He also noted that businesses can be sued if employees use work computers to defame or harass someone.

"It therefore follows that any employer has a legitimate need to monitor, either on a spot basis or at regular intervals, such company property, including e-mail traffic and computer files stored on either employer-owned hard drives, diskettes or CD-ROMs," he said.

About 20 percent of Fortune 1000 companies and six federal agencies now use monitoring software to watch over their office computers, according to the American Management Association. By 2001, 80 percent of large companies are

expected to be using such software, according to International Data Corp., a research firm in Framingham, Mass.

Employers say they want to improve productivity, ferret out computer products that could malfunction in 2000 and avoid legal problems, such as leaking company secrets or someone sending racist or harassing computer messages.

But state Democratic Sen. Debra Bowen, who sponsored the notification bill, said employees should at least be fully informed when a company plans to keep tabs on them electronically.

"I disagree with the governor's starting point, that equipment in a business is always company property," Bowen said Monday. "Because an employer provides you a restroom, that doesn't give him a license to videotape everything you do in there."

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