

Brown says defense needs \$56 billion

WASHINGTON (AP) — Secretary of Defense Harold Brown said Thursday the United States must increase its defense spending by \$56 billion over the next five years in order to stay up with Russia.

He also said that Soviet advances in satellite-destroying weapons are leaving the United States with little choice but to get into a space weapons race with Russia.

"Because of our growing dependence on space systems, we can hardly permit them to have a dominant position in the anti-satellite realm," the Pentagon chief said in his annual report.

The report was issued the same day

Brown went to Congress to ask for \$126 billion in military spending for next year.

The total spending authority requested is up \$9.2 billion from the authority voted by Congress for the current fiscal year. Brown said the Pentagon is planning for growth to a total budget of \$172.7 billion in fiscal 1983 to keep the United States from falling behind Russia.

The budget request brought prompt criticism from a group of House liberals who appeared at a news conference sponsored by SANE, an organization opposed to what it says is excessive spending on defense.

"I disagree with the concept of more planes, more missiles, more tanks and larger bombs," said Rep. Fred Richmond, D-N.Y. "We already have the capacity to defend ourselves."

"When you come up with a defense budget like that, you have to look at other areas that are being squeezed," said Rep. Tom Harkin, D-Iowa.

"Look at the farmers who have been here asking for a little more for the products of their farms, and yet we can't squeeze anything out of the budget for them."

The congressmen charged that the

budget was a violation of Pres. Carter's statement during the 1976 presidential campaign that defense expenditures could be reduced by about \$5 billion to \$7 billion per year without danger.

In his 375-page annual Defense Report, the secretary said the main objective "must be the maintenance of an overall balance with the Soviet Union no less favorable than the one that now exists."

He described this balance as "a standoff or stalemate," adding that the Russians had the edge in some areas and the United States in others.

World at a glance

From Associated Press Reports

Carter puts lid on arms sales

WASHINGTON — Pres. Carter put an \$9.6 billion lid Wednesday on arms sales to some foreign governments this fiscal year, \$740 million less than sales to the same countries during fiscal 1977.

He said a bigger cut would violate commitments, "including our historic interest in the security of the Middle East."

The lid applies to all nations except members of NATO, Japan, Australia and New Zealand. Including estimated sales to those nations, the National Security Council calculates weapons-related arms sales this fiscal year will total \$10.1 billion, said staff member Jessica Tuchman.

Groundhog makes appearance

PUNXSUTAWNEY, Pa. (AP) — Punxsutawney Phil, the weather-watching groundhog, followed both tradition and the odds today by reportedly seeing his shadow.

To believers in the groundhog tradition, this means six more weeks of winter.

Soviets, Cambodians may split

MOSCOW — The Soviet Union appears headed toward a final break with Cambodia, the radical Indochinese nation, whose take-over by the Communists in the 1975 war was first applauded by the Kremlin.

Cambodia's border war with Vietnam, a close Soviet ally, has hastened the deterioration in relations. But Soviet diplomats had been hinting since early December — well before the border fighting peaked — that relations were headed downhill for a variety of other reasons as well.

Charges dropped against Filipinos

DETROIT (AP) — Poisoning and conspiracy charges have been dismissed against two Filipino nurses accused in connection with a series of respiratory failures at the Ann Arbor Veterans Administration Hospital.

"From the very beginning I said I was innocent and this proves it," said Filipina Narciso.

"It's over and I'm happy," Leonara Perez said Wednesday after the dismissal of charges that had been pending against them for two and a half years.

They were convicted of conspiracy and poisoning last July in connection with the mysterious fatal breathing failures of patients at the VA Hospital in 1975 where both were nurses.

U.S. District Judge Philip Pratt, criticizing the conduct of federal prosecutors, overturned the verdicts last December.

The same judge dismissed the indictments at the request of U.S. attorney James Robinson.

Both women said later at a news conference they don't know whether they will return to nursing. They said that they plan long vacations, perhaps in their native Philippines. They had been free on bond since their convictions were overturned.

In an unusual, 20-page memorandum explaining the action, Robinson said he was seeking dismissal of the case because the prosecution's evidence against the women was weak and entirely circumstantial. He was not in office when the case went to trial.

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Something other than sun kisses Israeli oranges

THE HAGUE, The Netherlands (AP) — Western Europe issued an alert Wednesday for Israeli-grown oranges poisoned with mercury in a purported Arab-Palestinian scheme to sabotage Israel's economy.

The Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) denied that any Palestinians were responsible as claimed in a letter to the Dutch and West German governments from "The Arab Revolutionary Army Palestinian Commando."

U.S. government officials said there was no evidence any of the tainted fruit had reached the United States and the Israeli Embassy in Washington claimed none of the oranges were for sale in U.S. stores.

Five Dutch children were hospitalized for mercury poisoning last week after they ate the contaminated oranges and became ill, the Dutch Health Ministry reported. Doctors pumped out the children's stomachs and sent the

youngsters home a few days later, completely recovered.

In West Germany, police discovered a Jaffa orange containing "a pea-size quantity" of mercury. The fruit was part of a consignment sold to grocery stores in the central industrial city of Darmstadt.

The sale of Israeli oranges was stopped by trading companies or supermarkets in several European countries and as far away as Greenland, Britain, Belgium, Switzerland, West Germany, Norway and Finland ordered tests on their remaining stocks of Jaffa oranges.

"So far the problem is of a very small magnitude," said Isaac Lipkis, spokesman for the Israeli Citrus Marketing Board in Tel Aviv. "We don't think this really applies to a large quantity of oranges."

Health officials said about three cases of the large-sized, juicy oranges were injected with mercury somewhere in Europe and all the tainted fruit had visible brownish markings on their broken skins. Mercury would give the fruit a bitter taste, they added.

The Dutch and German governments said they received identical letters pinning responsibility on "The Arab Revolutionary Army Palestinian Commando." A PLO spokesman in Beirut said he had never heard of the group and called the reports "a mischievous propaganda ploy."

House revises offshore drilling

WASHINGTON (AP) — The House Thursday approved sweeping revisions of offshore drilling laws to govern stepped up U.S. exploitation of its offshore oil and natural gas reserves.

As much as one-third of domestic oil and gas production could come from the offshore leasing program. The central aim of the legislation is to increase competition for the leases while earning the Treasury top dollars for private development of the publicly-owned resources.

Approval of the bill came by a vote of 291 to 91. A conference committee will have to reconcile

differences between House and Senate versions of the legislation.

Essentially, both House and Senate bills survived their floor tests with most of the provisions sought by coastal states, environmentalists and the Carter administration.

The House rejected a trade protectionist move which would have required offshore drilling companies to use only U.S. equipment and manpower.

The House voted 279-120 to revamp the formula channeling federal aid to coastal states to offset the effects of increased offshore development.

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