

Soviet move initiates new peace offensive

WASHINGTON (AP) —The Soviet decision to temporarily halt deployment of intermediate-range missiles in Europe appears to be part of a new peace offensive by Moscow aimed at influencing West European public opinion and, ultimately, the arms control talks in Geneva.

Administration officials have expected for some time that the Soviets, in their bid to persuade President Ronald Reagan to back down from his space-based missile defense system, would try to create a split between Washington and its European allies.

According to this rationale, the Soviets would show flexibility on the issue that is at the center of allied concerns: the intermediate-range nuclear (INF) weapons that Moscow has been targeting at Western Europe.

A generous Soviet offer on these SS-20 missiles would have great appeal in Europe, and the Reagan administration would come under heavy allied pressure to cut a deal with Moscow.

As administration officials see it, however, the Soviets' price for flexibility

on the SS-20 issue would be U.S. abandonment of its "Star Wars" research program, which Moscow has derided as an attempt by Washington to "militarize space" and to accelerate the arms race.

The administration has said that the research program is not negotiable.

To U.S. officials, the decision of Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev, announced Sunday, to order a halt in missile deployments until November was not a surprise. The Soviets are reported to have disclosed the plan privately to U.S. negotiators several weeks ago shortly after the arms talks resumed in Geneva.

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Gorbachev said the Soviet decision on whether to resume the deployments after November would depend on whether the United States ordered a freeze of its own on installing cruise and Pershing II missiles in Western Europe. He is hoping that European pressure will leave the

administration no choice but to opt for a freeze.

Hours after Gorbachev's interview with Pravda was made public, presidential spokesman Larry Speakes said the administration has no intention of altering its deployment schedule, claiming that the Soviets already have a 10-1 advantage over the United States in warheads.

Gorbachev coupled his SS-20 offer with an expression of interest in meeting with Reagan. But Speakes said the Soviet leader's statement added nothing new to what was already known about his views on that subject.

Gorbachev's decision on INF deployments evoked memories of the peace offensive Moscow carried out in 1983 to try to persuade the allied countries to reject the installation of cruise and Pershing II missiles.

That bid failed and prompted the Soviets, in the fall of 1983, to walk out of the intermediate-range weapons negotiations as well as separate discussions on intercontinental missiles.

It is generally believed here that the Soviets agreed to return to the bargaining table last month with one priority objective in mind: to negotiate an end to the "Star Wars" research program, formally known as the Strategic Defense Initiative.

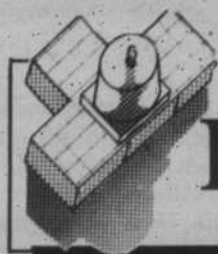
The Soviets' actions to date indicate they are eager for an early agreement that would involve both cuts in intermediate and strategic missiles and a ban on advance missile defense research.

The Reagan administration has been pressing the Europeans to endorse the "Star Wars" concept, but the response has been mixed.

Some Europeans have expressed support, but British Foreign Secretary Geoffrey Howe said recently he is worried that SDI could touch off a new round of arms spending aimed at finding ways to penetrate the new defensive shield.

Analysis by George Gedda
Of The Associated Press

George Gedda has covered the State Department for the Associated Press since 1975.



Legislative Update

Editor's note: Here are highlights of the Oregon Legislature last week.

Unemployment Benefits

Sen. Margie Hendriksen, D-Eugene, said Thursday that U.S. Senate legislation to phase out Federal Supplemental Unemployment Benefits is a "slap in the face to Oregonians." The move also was criticized by Rep. Bob Shiprack, D-Beavercreek, chair of the House Labor Committee.

The Senate voted Wednesday to phase out the benefits for the long-term unemployed. The program, enacted in 1983, extended unemployment compensation by an additional 14 weeks.

Noting that Oregon's unemployment rate is substantially higher than the nation as a whole, Hendriksen said ending

the program could affect 11,000 Oregonians by June. She criticized Sen. Bob Packwood, R-Oregon, for his vote for the legislation and his failure to use his influence as chair of the Senate Finance Committee to retain the benefits.

In a statement Thursday, Packwood said he voted to end the benefits because they faced a veto from President Ronald Reagan.

The Senate Labor Committee, which Hendriksen chairs, will begin hearings today on Senate Bill 448, which would extend the state supplemental benefit program that is due to expire June 29.

Sales Tax

The Senate Revenue Committee has put together a distribution plan for the proposed 5 percent sales tax. Under the plan, most Oregon homeowners would receive an approximately

30 percent reduction in property taxes.

The committee plans to have a final vote on the distribution plan today. After a public hearing Tuesday, the panel probably will approve the entire sales tax package, sending it to the full Senate for a vote this week.

The sales tax package passed in the House in February. If passed in the Senate, the sales tax would go before voters in a special election Sept. 17.

Seat Belts

The Senate passed 20-10 a bill (SB 342) requiring passengers under age 16 to wear seat belts or other restraints while riding in an automobile. Drivers would face a \$50 fine if their young passengers are not buckled up.

The bill now moves to the House. An earlier Senate bill requiring that all Oregonians wear seat belts was killed in the House.

Gypsy Moths

The Joint Ways and Means Committee approved a bill (House Bill 2044) Friday authorizing the state Agriculture Department to spend an expected \$7.3 million in federal aid to combat gypsy moths in Lane County. The measure now goes to the House.

The anticipated federal aid is in addition to \$4 million in state money that will be used to buy a bacterial insecticide to fight a Lane County outbreak of the plant-eating moths.

Aerial spraying is expected to be conducted at the end of this month and in early May, when the insects are in the caterpillar stage.

Miscellaneous

Gov. Vic Atiyeh said he would veto a bill (House Bill 2714) approved by the House Transportation Committee that would raise the speed limit on Oregon freeways from 55 mph to 65 mph. Under the bill, a nominal \$5 fine would be levied for exceeding the the speed limit by 10 mph.

The Senate passed a bill (SB 136) that would require the state Lottery Commission to submit its budget for approval by the Legislature. Oregon voters approved the lottery in November, and tickets for an "instant winner" lottery game go on sale April 25.

Learning Resources Center holds new-student workshop

Susan Lesyk, acting director of the Learning Resources Center, will conduct a workshop for new students Tuesday that will explain services available through the center.

The workshop is designed to help students become familiar with the center and to learn time-management techniques. Participants also may sign up for individual tutoring if desired.

"The workshop is intended for any University student who is unacquainted with these services," says Eric Bressman, an orientation program coordinator. "Part of the reason we're doing this is that our survey of students who enrolled last term showed that one of their biggest interests was in finding out more about this area."

The workshop, sponsored by the Spring Orientation Host Program, will take place at 3:30 p.m. in the EMU Forum Room. For more information, contact Bressman or Sue Gray at 686-3218.

Body-inversion units recalled

The risk of possible serious injuries has prompted the manufacturer of the Ever Young BackExerciser to recall the body-inversion exercise device, several units of which have been sold in the Eugene area, according to manufacturer reports.

The device, manufactured by Shinn Fu Co. of Taiwan, consists of a free-standing frame with a backrest and ankleholders. The backrest pivots to suspend the user upside down by the ankles.

Shinn Fu Co. has received reports of several instances in which the rivets attaching the ankle holders to the frame have broken, causing the user to fall head-first. Users could suffer head and spinal injuries ranging from fractures to possible paralysis.

Anyone who has purchased BackExerciser is encouraged to call (206) 575-1567, an emergency telephone number established to accept collect calls from customers or from others who know the whereabouts of owners.

Users of this equipment are urged to stop using it. Arrangements will be made to have the equipment returned to the dealer or manufacturer and to compensate consumers who have bought it.

Because of the product's design, it cannot be repaired safely, the manufacturer reports.

Although there are several other body-inversion devices on the market that appear similar to or almost identical to the Ever Young BackExerciser, the recall is limited to the BackExerciser.

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