



Senators chide defense as budget debate begins

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Senate, upset about recent defense spending episodes such as \$640 toilet seats and gift cookbooks billed to the taxpayers, tried Monday to agree on how to change the way the Pentagon spends its billions of dollars.

The Defense Department "has a credibility problem" and it "deserves to be kicked in the shins" for its lax practices that have led to the abuses, said Sen. Dan Quayle, R-Ind. in support of his bill to overhaul Pentagon procurement.

Sen. David Pryor, D-Ark., argued that the public "has lost confidence" in the Pentagon because of "weapons that don't work and cost overruns that stagger the imagination and bleed the taxpayer."

The appeals for change opened a week of debate on a bill that provides most of the Pentagon's authorization to spend a record \$302 billion in the next fiscal year.

That amount would keep pace with expected inflation but is far less than President Ronald Reagan's original request for a 5.9 percent hike beyond the inflation rate. Reagan has reluctantly supported the Senate bill.

Whatever bill finally passes the Republican-controlled Senate will have to be reconciled with the version approved by the Democratic-dominated House in a conference committee. The House is considering a budget blueprint that would simply freeze Pentagon spending at current levels, without permitting an increase for inflation.

Again, it's Jackson on the freedom trail

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Rev. Jesse Jackson met Monday with relatives of American hostages held in Lebanon and reported no progress in winning the hostages' release.

He told a news conference he is trying to arrange talks with officials in several Middle East nations, including Iran, but refused to give details. To disclose some of those initiatives, he said, "would not be helpful for the protection of the hostages."

Jackson offered to meet with representatives of any Mideast government or organization that might have some influence over terrorists holding the five American captives, probably in

Syrian-controlled Lebanon.

If needed, Jackson said, "We would appeal to and negotiate with the devil in hell if hell were burning and the devil was the only one who had a fire hose. If he would put the fire out, we would shake his hand and leave hell as quickly as possible."

Jackson met privately with relatives of three of the hostages, plus Sen. Paul Simon, D-Ill., and Rep. Norman Mineta, D-Calif.

Two years ago, Jackson successfully negotiated the release of a U.S. Navy pilot, Lt. Robert Goodman, who had been shot down over Lebanon.

Radio Marti signs on

WASHINGTON (AP) — With a rousing "Buenos Dias, Cuba," Radio Marti, the Reagan administration's news service for Cubans, went on the air Monday. The Havana government retaliated immediately with immigration sanctions and tried to jam the broadcasting signal.

After station identifications and salutations, newscaster Moises Lopez delivered the "most important news" of the day — a report that President Fidel Castro had already responded to Radio Marti's startup by suspending all Cuban-American immigration proceedings.

At the White House,

spokesman Larry Speakes said, "If that is their reaction to the lawful presentation of accurate, balanced and objective news reports, then that speaks volumes for the Cuban government."

Speakes said he was not aware of any Cuban jamming of U.S. broadcasts in retaliation.

Radio Havana also said the Cuban government would "adopt additional measures relating to the communications between the United States and Cuba," but did not elaborate.

Radio Marti is scheduled to be on the air with news, information and entertainment programming 14½ hours a day, seven days a week.

Atiyeh threatens veto

SALEM (AP) — Gov. Vic Atiyeh threatened Monday to veto a bill to raise Oregon's "basic rule" speed limit on freeways and some other highways from 55 mph to 65 mph.

At his weekly news conference, Atiyeh said even though many motorists are ignoring the 55 mph limit, it has helped to save lives.

In a related development, the speed limit bill, which was approved last week by the House, ran into trouble Monday on the floor of the Senate.

On a voice vote, the Senate refused to go along with the measure, and sent it to a House

and Senate negotiating committee for reworking.

Senate opponents of the bill said raising Oregon's speed limit might mean a loss of federal highway dollars.

In threatening to veto the measure, Atiyeh said the 55 mph speed limit has helped to cut down on the number of traffic deaths and injuries that occur each year in Oregon.

The governor conceded many motorists are flouting the current limit, but said people "are always going to drive a little faster than the speed limit."

"If we raise it up to 65...then people will be driving 70 miles an hour," he said.



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