

National

AWACS package deal suffers first Congressional setback

WASHINGTON — President Reagan's proposed Saudi arms deal is in a see-saw battle on Capitol Hill, losing some fights, winning others and heading toward a limactic showdown.

The House Foreign Affairs Committee voted 28-8 Wednesday to block the \$8.5 billion package, handing Reagan his first congressional setback on the measure that he says is vital for Middle East security.

At the same time, Reagan, while lobbying 43 Republican senators at the White House, won

over a second convert, improving his chances of victory in the Senate.

Sen. Alan Simpson, R-Wyo., said he no longer opposes Reagan's bid to sell Airborne Warning and Control System radar systems to Saudi Arabia. Sen. Orrin Hatch, R-Utah, who had also opposed the deal, said Tuesday he now supports it.

On the Senate floor Wednesday, five undeclared senators — Richard Lugar, R-Ind., Jeremiah Denton, R-Ala., John Warner, R-Va., Sam Nunn, D-Ga., and Harry Byrd, Virginia independent —

announced they would back the deal.

Despite these defections and pledges of support, Senate opponents of the deal said they still believe they can kill it.

For Reagan's package to be stopped, a majority of the House and Senate would have to pass resolutions of opposition by Oct. 30. It appears certain such a resolution will pass the Democratic-controlled House.

Reagan is concentrating his efforts in the Republican-dominated Senate, where last month 50 senators — half of the chamber — signed a resolution of opposition.

Wednesday night, Congress began a weeklong Columbus Day recess, during which both sides are expected to lobby for support.

Reagan told the senators who answered his summons to the White House that the proposed package is now "particularly important" in light of the assassination Tuesday of Egyptian President Anwar Sadat.

The president has maintained the package would bolster Middle

East security. Foes, however, fear the package could add to a Middle East arms race. Israel opposes the package, claiming it would endanger its security.

"I need you, your country needs you and the world needs you on this decision," Reagan told the senators.

"It was a hard sell by the president," said Sen. John Danforth of Missouri said, while remaining opposed.

Assistant Senate Democratic leader Alan Cranston, an opponent of the deal, did not seem overly concerned about Simpson and Hatch's defection to the Reagan camp.

The House committee action came after 2½ hours of debate, interrupted several times by floor votes, which some Democrats charged had been engineered by the White House to seek to delay the vote.

Eighteen Democrats joined with 10 GOP members to reject the sale. Five Republicans and three Democrats backed the sale, including chairman Rep. Clement Zablocki, D-Wis.

Small ELF project approved by Reagan

WASHINGTON — President Reagan has approved a scaled-down version of Project ELF, a giant antenna grid in Michigan that will improve communications with the nation's submarine force, the Pentagon announced Thursday.

The controversial project — the source of years of bitter debate between the Pentagon and critics in Wisconsin, Michigan and on Capitol Hill — will be operational by 1985 and cost \$230 million, the Pentagon said.

The approved plan for ELF — named for the "extremely low frequency" radio waves needed to penetrate the oceans' depths — will consist of a grid requiring 56 miles of exposed cable in Michigan's upper peninsula.

It will be linked to an existing experimental facility with a 28-mile-long grid near Clam Lake, Wis.

The modified system approved by the president compares with original plans that would have required up to 2,500 miles of buried cable or exposed antennas. This plan touched off an outcry among environmentalists and residents of the proposed sites.

The Pentagon announcement said the decision is the result of a review of strategic communications ordered earlier this year.

The Michigan grid will be installed at Sawyer Air Force Base.

Capt. Daniel Donovan, deputy commander of naval communications said, ELF will permit brief low-speed signals to be sent to submerged submarines in the Atlantic or Pacific oceans.

The signals will consist of only a few code symbols — not lengthy instructions or "Doomsday" messages to launch nuclear missiles, he said.

The wave length of a single transmission could be up to 2,500 miles long, Donovan said.

The signals could instruct a submarine to remain submerged in response to a present danger or to come nearer the surface to receive fuller instructions on more conventional frequencies.

"The system enhances the survivability of our submarine force," Donovan said, and would resist jamming by hostile forces.

Michigan and Wisconsin were selected as grid sites because their peculiar geological structures improve the transmission of extremely low frequency emissions.

"I don't think there is an environmental problem," Donovan said. However, Sen. Donald Riegle, D-Mich., said the long battle against the project will continue "at every step of the congressional process."

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Budget cuts face GOP juggling

WASHINGTON — Republicans on the Senate Appropriations Committee want to juggle President Reagan's proposed second round of budget cuts by digging deeper into defense and adjusting cost-of-living increases for benefit programs.

Committee chairman Mark Hatfield, R-Ore., said the GOP members agreed they want to cut fiscal 1982 defense spending by more than Reagan's proposed \$2 billion, but set no specific figure.

Staff sources said the Republicans, meeting privately Wednesday, informally agreed to a \$4 billion figure. The committee is composed of 15 Republicans and 14 Democrats.

Hatfield said Republican members want an adjustment in cost-of-living increases in benefit programs instead of Reagan's proposed 12 percent across-the-board cut-back for most federal agencies.

Reagan had considered a delay in cost of living increases for all benefit programs, including Social Security, welfare and unemployment. But he decided against the proposal after it was harshly criticized as a Social Security cut.

Hatfield said Republican members considered Reagan's proposed 12 percent cut for most agencies excessive because many of the

reductions would fall on social programs that were major victims of spending cuts last summer.

The president's proposed 12 percent cut is designed to reduce fiscal 1982 spending by \$8.4 billion. Hatfield said Republican committee members felt the should be trimmed to \$5 billion.

Additional savings, he said, could be achieved through adjustments in cost-of-living increases in benefit programs.

Last month, Reagan proposed Congress cut \$13 billion from fiscal 1982 funds. This would be in addition to the record \$35 billion in cuts approved last summer.

Hatfield said his panel supported the president's proposal to reform entitlement programs, a basic benefit program, for a \$2.5 billion reduction; and his proposal for user fees and other tax code changes, \$3 billion.

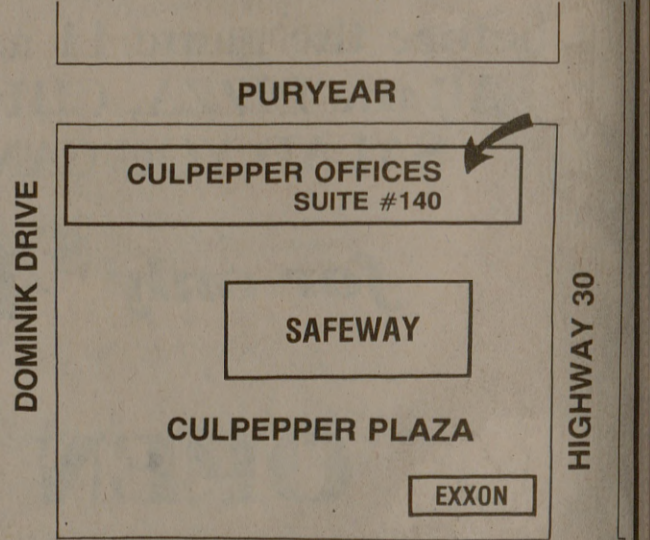
He said his panel agreed on alternatives to the cost of living adjustment, including a three-month deferral of the personal tax cut approved by Congress this summer and excise taxes on liquor and tobacco.

Meanwhile, the White House said Reagan is likely to veto a House-passed bill providing \$4 billion more than he proposed for social programs.

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