

## Analyst: Drop in gas prices due to conservation, Saudis

United Press International  
LOS ANGELES — Retail gasoline prices have taken their biggest plunge in history over the past two weeks because of the world oil glut, an industry survey shows.

An oil analyst, Dan Lundberg, said Sunday in his biweekly report that Saudi Arabia has caused the price drop by its policy of deliberate overproduction.

"The ball is in our court," Lundberg said, adding members of OPEC "are scrambling to undo the glut engineered" by Saudi Oil Minister Sheikh Ahmed Zaki Yamani.

By keeping prices relatively low and producing large quantities, the oil-rich Saudis have used their massive reserves as leverage against other OPEC producers, who

would prefer to cash in quickly on their less extensive reserves.

OPEC oil ministers announced agreement Saturday to cut production and lower some prices slightly in an effort to end the oversupply of oil on world markets.

The agreement was not expected to have a measurable impact on U.S. gas prices, which have declined rapidly in recent weeks.

Lundberg said a survey of 16,000 service stations around the country showed retail gas prices nationwide averaged \$1.216 per gallon, a dip of 4.3 cents "representing the sharpest national decline for any two-week period in history."

He said American drivers are conserving more than ever — buying less gas because the recession has forced them to spend money "on macaroni instead of gas."

## Salvadorian rebels try to stop election

United Press International  
SAN SALVADOR, El Salvador — The army called off a northern offensive against elusive guerrillas Tuesday and rebels dynamited 18 buses in the capital in a drive to disrupt Sunday's elections.

Col. Dionisio Hernandez, commander of the garrison in the northern provincial capital of Chalatenango, said Monday the army had ended its sweep against guerrillas entrenched near the northern border.

He said the offensive, spearheaded by Green Beret-trained commandos, started late Saturday and was planned as a 48-hour blitz on the rebel position. The army deployed about

2,000 men in a two-pronged pincer movement to try and trap a major guerrilla camp in Las Hueltas, just north of Chalatenango.

Artillery and fixed-wing aircraft pounded positions around the towns of Las Vueltas, Arcaño and Las Flores, about 40 miles northeast of San Salvador.

The Popular Liberation Forces, the most radical of five Salvadoran guerrilla groups, followed their usual practice of withdrawing before superior forces, area commanders said. They have occupied some towns in the area for the past decade.

Guerrillas dynamited 18 buses Monday around San Sal-

vador. Officials at the main bus terminal said several cities in the east were suspended by owners fearing guerrillas would burn their vehicles.

The rebels have blown up 250 buses this year, have vowed to bring all transportation to a halt and prevent voting in the coming assembly election Sunday.

Seventeen political leaders were reported Monday, including the local head of the military civil guard, his wife and six children who were shot and hacked to death with machetes Sunday in a town near San Miguel, 83 miles from the capital.

## New VDT allows 'plain talk'

United Press International  
NEW YORK — From the couple who invented the best-selling "Merlin" electronic game comes a hand-held computer terminal which allows individuals to communicate with large central computers in plain English.

The Telecomputer was designed to allow users to extract information from a central computer or feed information into it without having to know anything about computers or the often-times complex language they speak.

"Most people are computer-illiterate and computer-intimidated and you're not going to change the mind-set of those people in this generation," said Jeffrey A. Rochlis, president of IXO Inc., the Culver City, Calif., firm that produces the terminals.

On that premise, Drs. Robert and Holly Doyle — the husband-wife team who invented "Merlin" and other Parker Brothers' electronic games between 1977 and 1979 — conceived the Telecomputer system.

In an interview in New York, Rochlis, founding president of Mattel Electronics, described the IXO system as "the data equivalent of the telephone" — making computer conversations almost as easy as phone conversations.

The terminal, about the size of a paperback book, has its own automatic telephone dialer which lets the user reach a host computer by simply plugging the unit into any modular phone jack.

With the device, "logging on" to a central computer is simplified and communicating with it can be as easy as pressing a "yes" or "no" button in response to a question viewed on the terminal's one-line liquid crystal display. At most, it involves typing out in plain English on the small typewriter-style keyboard a response to the host computer's question.

There is even a "help" button on the keyboard for when the user is puzzled about what to do next.

The unit itself cannot automatically translate any computer's language into plain English. Rather, as part of the total system, IXO will help corporate customers add the software (internal data guiding the operation of the computer) needed so employees can communicate with the central computer in plain English.

Mark Plakias of Link Resources Corp., a research and consulting firm specializing in new technology products, believes the IXO system is a breakthrough.

"What's unique is that they've developed a series of software with standard English dialogue to enable an individual to interact with the remote computer using simple yes or no commands — and that is revolutionary," he said.

As for the marketing skills crucial to the success of such new products, Plakias notes that "these people, such as Dr. Rochlis, are proven successful marketers of new technology."

But he says the price — which runs \$500 a unit down to \$300 for quantities of 1,000 — is too high and will have to drop.

The initial marketing thrust will be to companies which have large central computers. Executives could keep the terminal on their desktops to access a variety of data — and outside databases as well. The unit is portable enough so that a salesman could take it on the road and get instant product information or place orders directly to the host computer.

The system has security safeguards to restrict what access a user has to the computer files as well as to protect, by use of passwords, against unauthorized use of a terminal.

Among optional accessories will be a printer and a device to connect the terminal to a televi-

sion screen to display more information.

Based on a simulation operat-

ing on IXO's computer, a user one day would be able to do everything from pay his bills and

do his banking to check stock prices and execute orders and make airline reservations.

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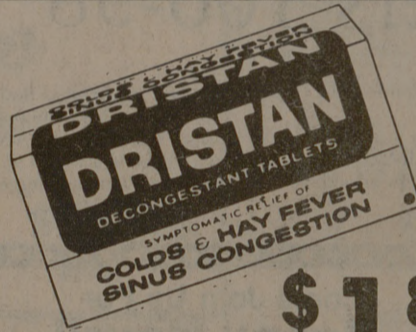
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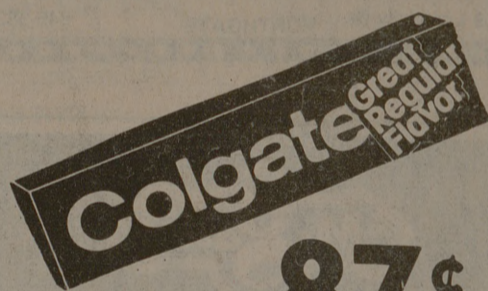
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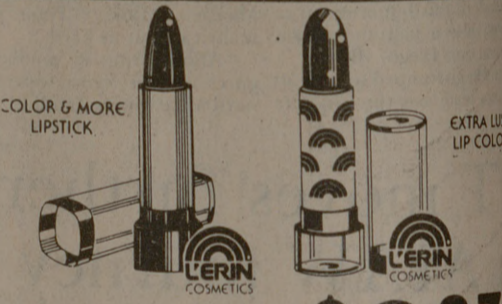
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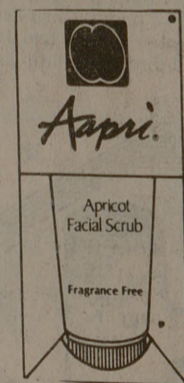
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