

# Death row

## Inmates say court ruling gives state 'green light' for executions

United Press International

HUNTSVILLE — Texas death row inmates said Wednesday the Supreme Court has given the state a "green light" for more executions by refusing to require proportionality review of death sentences.

"I think it's kind of a green light," said Thomas Barefoot, 39, convicted of the 1978 shooting of a central Texas police officer. "I think they'd like to get everybody killed off as fast as possible. But I don't think it's going to be no flood like some people think."

By a 7-2 ruling, the Supreme Court reinstated the death sentence for Robert Alton Harris, a California killer whose appeal was based on the so-called proportionality issue.

The court ruled death sentences do not have to be automatically reviewed to be sure they are proportional to penalties in other cases.

A last-minute appeal based on that same issue dramatically halted the Oct. 4 execution of Texas killer James David Autry. Autry, convicted of killing a convenience store clerk, lay strapped to a hospital cart and hooked up to intravenous needles for over an hour before he won a stay.

Autry, 29, who refused to meet reporters Wednesday, Barefoot, and Ronald Clark O'Bryan are considered the three Texas inmates closest to execution following the Supreme Court action.

"I think it moves everyone one step closer

because it eliminated one issue that had held everyone's cases up," said O'Bryan, 39, who was convicted of feeding his 8-year-old son poison candy on Halloween 1974 to collect insurance money.

"I know my appeals are getting fewer but I'm never going to give up," said O'Bryan, who maintains his innocence.

When asked if he fears death, O'Bryan said: "No. My son has died. My wife has remarried. My family has been broken up, and for a man like myself that's all but killing me."

Inmate Jimmy Vanderbilt, 31, a former Amarillo policeman condemned to die for the 1975 killing of a teen-age girl in Amarillo, predicted four to six executions would occur in Texas by the end of 1984 because appeals in those cases have been exhausted.

"It used to be when you got a (execution) date, it didn't count, it didn't mean anything. Now, when they set a date, it means something," said Vanderbilt, who spends his time studying death penalty cases. "I'm beginning to get nervous."

Billy Hughes, 31, convicted of killing a DPS trooper near Sealy, Texas, in 1976, said inmates on death row felt a chill upon hearing news of the Supreme Court ruling.

"I don't want to say the men are running scared or they're fearful, but I know they're terribly worried. I can see the worry in their faces," Hughes said.

# Japanese government OKs military spending increase

United Press International

TOKYO — The Japanese government bowed to pressure from the Reagan administration Wednesday and approved a fiscal 1984 budget that calls for a hefty increase in military spending.

The budget plan, approved in a special Cabinet session, earmarks some \$12.5 billion for defense spending — an increase of 6.55 percent or \$771 million over the 1983 Defense Agency budget, officials said.

The Cabinet's decision came on the eve of Foreign Minister Shintaro Abe's arrival in Washington for an eight-day official U.S. visit in which military spending was expected to be an important topic of discussion.

In contrast to the military spending increase, the total national budget grew by a mere 0.5 percent over the previous year to \$216.2 billion.

The Social Welfare Ministry received only a 2 percent budget hike, the Education Ministry a 0.8 percent raise and the Ministry of Public Works was hit with a 2 percent cut in spending power.

"We feel that this is comparatively a good victory for the Defense Agency," said a senior defense official, who declined to be identified.

"Our national welfare and education have been sacrificed," the official said. "The budget allocation for defense has been clearly conspicuously increased."

"There may be some criticisms but we believe the figure was needed to fulfill the target set in the national defense program outline," Prime Minister Yasuhiro Nakasone told reporters before the Cabinet approved the budget.

The budget proposal, which must be approved by the Diet, or Parliament, was worked out in a late-night session of hard bargaining between Defense Agency officials and a group of Liberal Democratic Party executives on Tuesday.

The Defense Agency had

sought a 6.9 percent spending increase. The hike approved by the Cabinet comes to 4.8 percent after inflation and represents 0.99 percent of the nation's projected GNP.

Diet approval of the budget for the fiscal year starting April 1 is virtually certain because the LDP controls both houses of the law-making body.

The spending hike, will allow the agency to purchase 17 new

F-15 Eagle fighters, eight P3C Orion anti-submarine patrol aircraft, three destroyers and three CH47 Chinook transport helicopters, officials said.

It will allow the agency to approach the level of purchases outlined in a five-year "mid-term defense program" adopted in 1983 to meet U.S. demands that Japan shoulder a greater share of the joint U.S.-Japan defense burden.

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# Portugal to decide on legal abortions

United Press International

LISBON, Portugal — Parliament opened a heated, closed-door debate on legalizing abortion Wednesday but Prime Minister Mario Soares shrugged off threats to his coalition and left the country to attend a conference.

Several leaders of the Social Democratic party, junior partners in Soares' 8-month-old coalition, have threatened to resign or called on the party to abandon the government if Parliament approves the Socialist abortion bill.

Abortion is a controversial issue in Portugal, an overwhelmingly Roman Catholic nation. Observers said the bill, limiting abortions to cases involving

risks to the health or life of the woman, deformed fetuses or rape, was almost certain of passage, given the declared support of the opposition Communist Party.

A Communist bill, allowing abortions for a wider range of social and economic reasons, was also under debate.

Before departing for Geneva for a Socialist International meeting on Middle East problems, Soares rebuffed threats to the government's future, saying both ruling parties were "more concerned with solving the economic crisis."

Observers interpreted Soares' trip as a move to defuse the "crisis atmosphere."

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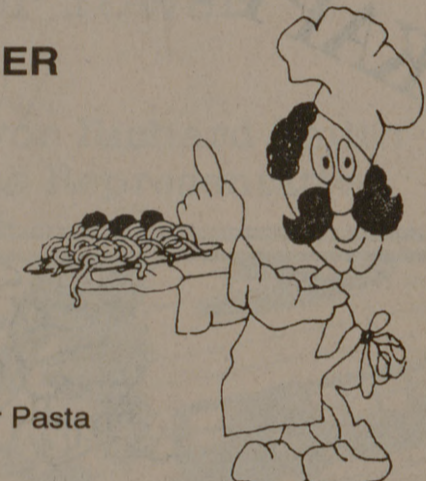
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