

World and Nation

Death toll rises in Soviet raids on Afghanistan

ISLAMABAD, Pakistan (AP) — Afghan rebel commanders said Thursday that Soviet and Afghan warplanes were killing and maiming hundreds of their men in nonstop raids on rebel positions in southeastern Afghanistan.

A senior commander called it the heaviest aerial bombardment in the Moslem insurgency against the communist Afghan government and said it was the first use of large-scale night raids in that area.

Rahim Wardak said about 10,000 troops were advancing behind the air cover, with tank and artillery support, against rebel positions in Pakia province near the Pakistani border. Insurgent leaders acknowledged Wednesday that Soviet commandos had captured and destroyed the main rebel base at Zhawar.

"This is the worst fighting we've ever seen. The air attacks are terrible," Wardak, a top commander of the National Islamic Front of Afghanistan, told The Associated Press.

Wardak, who returned from Pakia on Thursday, said Soviet and Afghan Su-22 jet bombers and MiG-

21 and MiG-23 fighter-bombers were dropping 500-pound bombs on rebels who had no air defenses.

Fighting was fiercest Thursday around the government-held town of Khost, Wardak reported. He said jets were hitting rebel positions in the surrounding hills and his men anticipated new ground attacks.

Wardak estimated insurgent losses at 150 dead and 300 wounded in the past few days, but the guerrillas generally understate their casualties. Other commanders indicated the figures were higher.

Afghanistan's official Kabul radio claimed more than 1,000 rebels had been killed. It predicted that the insurgents would be cut off from their supply and reinforcement bases inside Pakistan, where about three million Afghans live in refugee camps along the border.

The rebel leaders said Soviet and Afghan forces also suffered heavily, but they gave no total figures. Wardak claimed the Afghan army's 37th Commando Brigade of about 600 men had been wiped out since the offensive began this month.

Edwards' debts won't be used in second trial

NEW ORLEANS (AP) — Evidence that Gov. Edwin Edwards gambled away about \$2 million and paid off his debts with cash stuffed in suitcases won't be used in Edwards' second racketeering trial, U.S. Attorney John Volz said Thursday.

It was the second surprise announcement from the prosecutor this week. On Wednesday, he stunned observers by saying he would not call to the stand state employee John Landry, a major witness in Edwards' first trial which ended in December with a hung jury.

Edwards, his brother Marion, and their business associates, Gus Mijalis, Ron Falgout and James Wylie Jr., are accused of racketeering and fraud in connection with a \$10 million hospital investment venture.

In the first trial, Las Vegas casino executives and an FBI agent testified that Edwards' ran up \$2 million in debts at casinos during the early 1980s.

Most of the debts were paid off in cash, they said.

Defense lawyers said throughout the first trial that the gambling evidence had nothing to do with the alleged scam.

AT&T says long-distance rates will drop

WASHINGTON (AP) — American Telephone & Telegraph Co. on Thursday announced a \$1.5 billion long-distance rate reduction, which the company said would amount to an average 8.9 percent decrease in long-distance bills for its residential customers.

The plan, the largest single rate reduction proposed in the company's history, would take effect June 1 barring the Federal Communications Commission objections.

Under the AT&T proposal, the cost of daytime calls would drop by 11.4 percent. The price of weeknight calls before 11 p.m. (local time) would drop by the same percentage rate. Smaller reductions — 2.7 percent — are planned for calls after 11 p.m. and on weekends until 5 p.m. Sunday.

AT&T's chief competitor, MCI Communications, Inc., responded by saying, "We'll have a change by June 1 to remain competitive."

MCI spokesman John Houser said specific details of any MCI price changes would have to await a thorough study of the AT&T proposal.

A spokesman for GTE-Sprint, another long-distance company, said, "Although we need to wait and see what develops at the commission, we expect to continue providing service at less than AT&T's price of service."

Under the new AT&T plan, WATS lines, used by businesses which do a lot of long-distance calling, would cost 12.8 percent less in day and evening hours and 5 percent less late night and on weekends.

Carbon dioxide rise may threaten crops

WASHINGTON (AP) — The increasing amount of carbon dioxide in the air — which many fear threatens a greenhouse-type overheating of the Earth — may also endanger crops by drying out the soil in major agricultural areas, a new study says.

Mathematical models suggest that soil conditions could begin to resemble the dust bowl of the 1930s, when heat and drought ruined millions of acres of farms and drove Americans from the land.

As carbon dioxide and other gases increase in the atmosphere, the climate can slowly get warmer.

Shukuro Manabe, co-author of the report published in Friday's edition of Science magazine, said, "If that happens, then the possibility of

such a summer drought can become very large."

The study indicates that rising carbon dioxide levels could trigger a significant reduction in soil moisture in the grain belts of the United States and Canada, as well as in Siberia and Western Europe.

The report was written by Manabe and Richard T. Wetherald of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Geophysical Fluid Dynamics Laboratory at Princeton University.

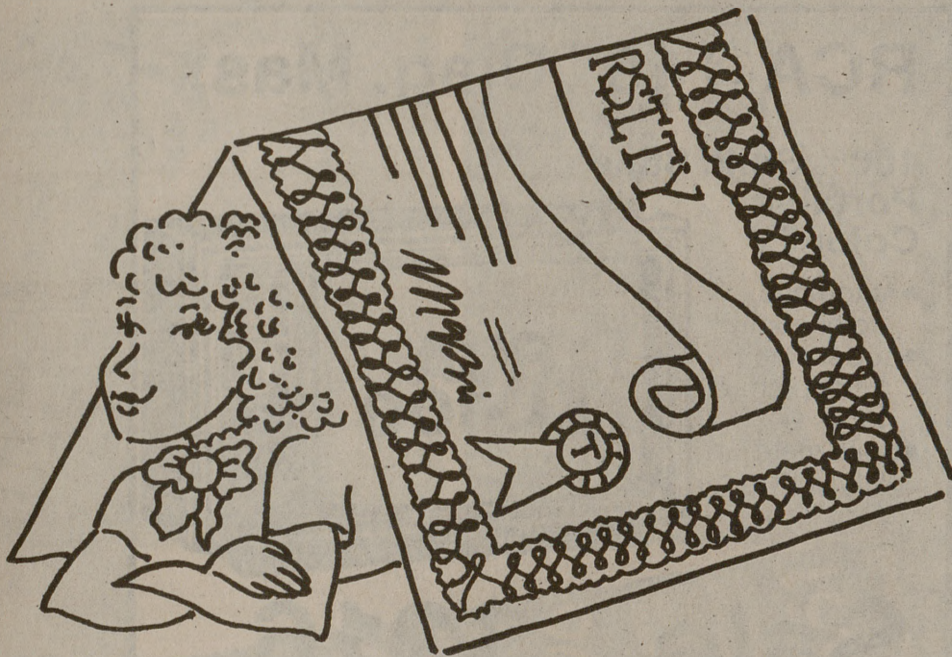
Carbon dioxide is a normal part of the air, and is a by-product of combustion. Scientists have measured increases in the levels of this colorless, odorless gas over the years as industrialization has increased.

This concentration has increased

most sharply with the growing use of fossil fuels such as oil and natural gas for energy, and as long as a century ago scientists began to speculate that the end result could be climate change.

The cause of the climate warming that led to the 1930s dust bowl conditions is not understood, Manabe said in a telephone interview. But if carbon dioxide and other gases result in a similar warming, the result could be the same, he said.

The widely accepted theory is that carbon dioxide in the atmosphere acts as a one-way screen. Sunlight passes through it easily, warming the Earth and oceans. But the gas absorbs the infrared radiation the planet reflects back into space, preventing the escape of some heat.



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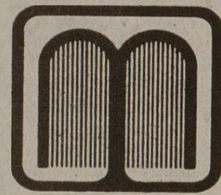
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