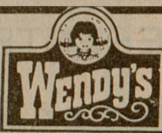


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WASHINGTON (AP) — Energy Department officials, declaring a need to "rectify past sins" in its operation of atomic reactors, on Tuesday announced that the introduction of new safety procedures would delay restarting the Savannah River Plant, which produces nuclear weapons materials. Energy Undersecretary Joseph Salgado also gave assurances that plutonium and tritium supplies are adequate to ensure that existing nuclear weapons would not degrade or be cannibalized to assure a continued strategic deterrent.

The three aging reactors at Savannah River, in Aiken S.C., have been shut down for safety considerations.

Construction of new reactors to produce nuclear weapons materials is not expected to start until the early 1990s. Salgado, addressing a midday news conference, said that Energy Department

officials have ordered engineers at the Savannah River Plant to start up the K-reactor in December during a four-week phased operation that should bring it close to full steam in early January.

Department officials also have decided to postpone restarting the plant's P-reactor, which experienced problems in August. In congressional testimony on Sept. 30, Salgado said the P-reactor could be restarted within 30-45 days, but department officials now have decided that it should not be brought back into operation until late 1989, he said.

The third facility at the plant, the L-reactor, is scheduled to be restarted in the first three months of next year, Salgado said.

All three reactors will be started slowly, using what Deputy Assistant Energy Secretary Richard W. Starosteki

described as a "phased" operation designed to test and assess each step before the reactor is brought to full power.

New operating procedures are needed to ensure safety at Savannah River, which has come under renewed scrutiny on Capitol Hill in the wake of internal memoranda detailing operating problems since the plant opened in the early 1950s, Salgado, Starosteki and other Energy Department officials said.

"We have a moral obligation to rectify past sins," Salgado said.

An Energy Department statement issued after the news conference said that the three Savannah River reactors are the nation's only source of the tritium needed for the nation's nuclear deterrent.

Plutonium, also produced by the reactors, has a longer half-life than tritium, and therefore does not pose as critical a problem.

"At present, all three reactors are of service for routine maintenance, accelerated safety upgrades," Starosteki said.

"The department is implementing a comprehensive program at the Savannah River Plant to enable the facility to produce some production of tritium without the stability margins of safety," he said.

"The program is designed to increase uncertainties about safety issues, improve operations, improve the department's technical vigilance and strengthen oversight," he said.

White House spokesman Martin P. Water said President Reagan had been briefed by his national security adviser Lt. Gen. Colin Powell, on the Savannah River situation and related matters.

"We feel the supplies of tritium will be maintained as production schedules are maintained in a safe manner," Water said.

Powerful beam puzzles physicists

"We've been trying to make it go away. We've been trying to say it's some mistake. But we can't," Dr. Guarang Yodh, physicist at the University of California at Irvine

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. (AP) — A powerful beam striking the Earth from a twin star system 14,000 light years away could herald a new type of particle that physicists said confounds the standard theories of physics.

The beam, carrying a million billion electron volts of energy, comes from a neutron star, half of a binary star system named Hercules X-1 in the constellation Hercules. Dr. Guarang Yodh, a physicist at the University of California at Irvine, said.

The neutron star is nearly the size of Earth's moon, but is extremely dense with a mass nearly double the sun's.

The other half of the star system, about 4 million miles from the neutron star, is a star similar to the sun.

The neutron star is a large, spinning magnet, generating massive electromagnetic fields and giving off powerful radiation.

The beam, first detected at Los Ala-

mos National Laboratory in July 1986, initially was believed to be electrically neutral gamma rays, which are high-energy light waves or photons.

The problem with that interpretation was that the beam hits way up in the atmosphere and produces a shower of particles, Yodh said Friday in a telephone interview.

Gamma rays are not supposed to do that, Dr. Darragh Nagle, a physicist at the Los Alamos lab, said.

"That's the thing that's interesting and puzzling about the finding," Nagle

said. "There is the possible presence of a new particle that is coming out of the study of a powerful neutral beam."

"It isn't the power of the neutral beam; it's this peculiar interaction in the Earth's atmosphere," Nagle said in a telephone interview.

Yodh said the discovery should lead to new insights about sources of energy in the universe and about the elementary structure of matter.

Yodh said scientists have come up with several explanations for the strange beam, which also has been detected by

observatories in Arizona and Hawaii. One explanation is that it is made of previously unknown particles.

"It is unexplainable by conventional theory, present-day knowledge," Yodh said.

Scientists delayed in publishing their findings because they have been checking their research and trying to come up with an explanation, he said.

"We've been trying to make it go away. We've been trying to say it's a mistake. But we can't," Yodh said.

Bush, Dukakis attack issues as prelude for final debate

Associated Press Michael Dukakis and George Bush sparred at a distance Tuesday over trade issues in a prelude to this week's prime-time debate. The Democrat vowed to stand up for American companies and jobs, while the vice president charged that his rival was guilty of "protectionist demagoguery."

"My opponent needs an issue and he's willing to scare people to find it," Bush said of Dukakis' recent emphasis on a need to regain American dominance in world economic competition.

Dukakis counterpunched a few hours later as he left Boston for the West Coast.

"I'm for more trade, not less trade. I want to export American products, not American jobs," he said.

Dukakis also took a fresh swipe at the Republican vice presidential candidate as new polls indicated Bush's ticketmate is

draining support from the GOP.

Dukakis said: "Dan Quayle asks us to believe that if he ever had to fill in for George Bush, America could get by on a right wing and a prayer."

Bush countered and defended his pick for vice president.

He said that Quayle had helped draft legislation that created jobs for the poor.

The two combatants in the race for the White House exchanged barbs as fresh polls charted a dwindling lead for Bush with four campaign weeks remaining.

The surveys showed Dukakis and running mate Lloyd Bentsen gaining ground since last week's vice presidential debate between Bentsen and Quayle.

Despite the fact that the polls don't show it, surveys by the Associated Press and others in recent weeks have made the indication that Bush holds a marked advantage in the Electoral College.

As of now, the race is likely to be de-

cided by the results in several large swing states.

Democratic party officials announced that two senior strategists had been pulled out of Florida in what seemed to be a concession that Bush's double-digit lead there could not be overcome.

The two were headed for Ohio, a swing state where Dukakis is viewed as trailing more narrowly.

Both candidates have set aside time over the next few days to prepare for their second and final debate of the fall campaign, set to begin at 9 p.m. EDT Thursday on the campus of UCLA.

In a speech near Boston before flying west, Dukakis mentioned several steps to improve America's ability to "take charge of our future," including a major effort to improve the nation's scientific and engineering capabilities.

"I want us to begin selling cars and computers and compact discs to the Germans and the Japanese and the Koreans, not arms to the ayatollah," he said.

Soviet scolds NATO for arms talks

MOSCOW (AP) — Premier Nikolai I. Ryzhkov scolded North Atlantic Treaty Organization nations on Monday for trying to extract concessions from Moscow in negotiations aimed at reducing conventional forces in Europe, Tass reported.

Ryzhkov's attack came in a speech at a Kremlin dinner honoring Austrian Chancellor Franz Vranitzky, who came to the Soviet capital on Monday for four days of talks with Soviet officials.

"Regrettably, some NATO countries'

delegations are still unable to overcome the temptation of pressing the socialist countries yet one more time in a bid to gain concessions," Ryzhkov said.

Eastern and Western European countries have been trying for years in Vienna, the Austrian capital, to agree on mutual cuts in conventional arms and troops on the continent.

Western countries, led by the United States, have claimed that purported Soviet superiority in these forces has become more of a threat now than the su-

perpowers are scrapping their medium- and short-range nuclear missiles worldwide.

Ryzhkov said the Vienna talks could be successfully completed soon if it were not for what he said was the West's intransigence.

Tass did not immediately report Vranitzky's speech or indicate whether he responded to Ryzhkov's charges about the conventional force talks.

Earlier in the day, the two met privately.

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