

Wednesday, July 12, 1989

Defense secretary introduces plan to overhaul Pentagon bureaucracy

WASHINGTON (AP) — Defense Secretary Dick Cheney, predicting he can save taxpayers \$30 billion by fiscal year 1993, outlined a complex plan Tuesday to overhaul the Pentagon's bureaucracy and tighten control over its massive arms-purchasing systems.

His proposals include paring the number of people involved in purchasing decisions by thousands and giving more authority to the undersecretary of defense in that area, thereby trimming some powers of the individual military services.

Cheney was quick to say he had no magic solution for ridding the Pentagon and the defense establishment of fraud and abuse, or making it more efficient. Nor will he be able to make his program work on his own, he said.

"There's no silver bullet here . . . We have a blueprint that we plan to pursue . . . to try to significantly improve the way we do business," Cheney said of his plan at a Pentagon press conference.

"If we're going to be successful, it will be because we got Congress to cooperate," he said.

His report was requested by President Bush five months ago as part of a major review spurred by the weapons-procurement scandals that rocked the defense establishment.

Weapons purchases account for more than \$60 billion of this year's \$305 billion military budget and involve more than a half-million civilian and uniformed employees of the Defense Department.

Cheney acted Tuesday to put some of the changes in place, in particular the realignment of his top-level Pentagon management team. Other steps require congressional approval, while others will need work "throughout my tenure at the department," the secretary said.

Even before its official release, the package stirred opposition in Capitol Hill, where some said it doesn't go into enough detail.

Cheney also seeks relief from some congressional oversight requests, complaining that Congress requires a "staggering" amount of reports, inquiries and testimony from the military.

To emphasize that point, Cheney and his dep-

uty Donald Atwood stood beside two high stacks of reports that Congress requested from the Pentagon during the past year. One of the reports cost \$1.9 million to produce, the secretary said.

"I'm convinced nobody ever reads the reports," Cheney said, evoking laughter in the audience. "It's make-work." Before taking top Pentagon job this year, Cheney was a House Republican leader.

Cheney also is suggesting that Congress amend fully a two-year defense budget law and establish select committees in both the House and Senate to review and rewrite the maze of federal procurement laws.

Cheney said that while more than \$80 billion in military and civilian jobs are involved in the process, much work is being done because of oversight requirements imposed by Congress. Savings "will depend a lot upon the effort and cooperation we get on Capitol Hill."

Air Force security policemen arrested for theft of jet engines

SALT LAKE CITY (AP) — Two Air Force security policemen were arrested in the theft of three F-16 jet fighter engines after an undercover sting identified dozens of people suspected of stealing military goods, the FBI said today.

Indictments have been returned against 12 other people, but the documents remained sealed in U.S. District Court and the FBI refused to name them.

The two-year investigation was aimed at the theft of military goods, "a very lucrative activity in the United States and, to some extent, in Utah," Robert Bryant, special agent in charge of the agency's Utah office, said.

Thefts of military equipment turned up by the investigation included sleeping bags, helmets, canteens, munitions and firearms, as well as the jet engines stolen July 3

from Hill Air Force Base, U.S. Attorney Dee Benson said.

None of the items included military systems or strategic weapons, he said.

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— Dee Benson, U.S. attorney

other states and other military establishments," Benson said. "Unfortunately, many of the participants are military policemen, and we find that especially disturbing."

There was no evidence that the suspects believed they were selling the jet engines to a foreign power, Benson said.

"It was just good, old-fashioned greed," Bryant said.

Benson identified the men arrested at a restaurant Monday night as Airman 1st Class Brian Roth of

Ohio and Senior Airman Danny Joe Stroud of Kansas. No hometowns or ages were immediately available.

Benson said he expected "many more" arrests in coming weeks.

Operation "Punchout," a joint effort of the FBI, the Department of Defense and the Air Force, targeted Hill and other unidentified military installations in the Salt Lake Valley, Bryant said.

The FBI established a storefront operation called "Military Surplus Brokers" in Roy, near the northern Utah base, which bought thousands of items stolen from all branches of the military, Bryant said.

He said the purchases resulted in the identification of more than 100 suspects throughout the United States who are involved in the theft and sale of stolen government property.

He said the government spent about \$80,000 to purchase equipment worth about \$600,000. Bryant said the two suspects had been given a down payment of \$10,000 toward a purchase price of \$300,000 for the three Pratt & Whitney engines, valued at \$2 million each.

The engines were reported missing last Wednesday by maintenance personnel returning from the Independence Day holiday, officials said.

North says he will appeal conviction

WASHINGTON (AP) — Oliver L. North said today he is appealing his conviction and sentence in the Iran-Contra affair, six days after the judge in the case announced that North would not go to prison.

After today's appeal, U.S. District Court Judge Gerhard A. Gesell issued an order saying North won't have to pay \$150,000 in fines until the matter is resolved.

North disclosed his intention in a one-sentence notice:

"Oliver L. North appeals to the United States Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia for the judgment of conviction and sentence entered by . . . Gesell on July 5," said the notice.

Last Wednesday, Gesell fined North \$150,000, placed him on two years probation and ordered him to perform 1,200 hours of community service. North was convicted May 4 of aiding and abetting in obstruction of Congress, of destroying documents and of accepting an illegal gratuity in connection with the Iran-Contra affair.

Twenty-two fires blaze across West 2 firefighters reported dead thus far

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Twenty-two fires burned out of control in nine Western states Tuesday, with one blaze in Nebraska growing to 100,000 acres of grass and pine and a fire in Utah briefly threatening a major power transmission line.

A blaze west of Denver destroyed more than 60 structures by Monday night, including an unknown number of homes.

Rain helped elsewhere, but thunderstorms in Arizona also led to the lightning death of a firefighter Monday, the Western fire season's second fire-related death; a firefighter in California was killed by a falling tree on Sunday.

Twenty-two fires that had charred about 113 acres were burning uncontrolled, down from 44 blackening 167,000 acres on Monday, the federal Interagency Fire Center in Idaho reported.

Fires were active in California, Arizona, New Mexico, Utah, Colorado, Nebraska, Wyoming, Idaho and Oregon. Information officer Debbie Shivers said 11 firefighters were at work throughout the West.

While rain moderated some fires in the Southwest, the beginning of the seasonal monsoon weather means more lightning storms in the dry West.

A brush fire in Utah threatened two power lines relay electricity in the West, prompting the temporary shutdown of a 345,000-volt line, but crews contained the blaze early Tuesday, an official said.

Valdez blamed for oil slick off California

SAN DIEGO (AP) — Oil inside the hull of the crippled tanker Exxon Valdez, washed away by the sea, was the likely source of a 10-mile oil sheen off the Southern California coast, a Coast Guard official said today.

Concern about the offshore oil slick and the discovery of five flaps of steel hanging from the bottom of the tanker will delay the disabled tanker's entry into San Diego Bay at least several days.

Preliminary results of test samples taken from the oil slick have not yet confirmed that the oil came from the tanker, said U.S. Coast Guard Cmdr. Jack Scarborough, captain of the Port of San Diego.

However, Scarborough said, Exxon officials agreed that the Exxon Valdez was the likely source.



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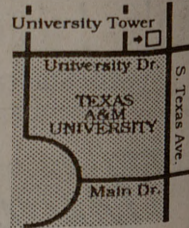
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