

Pentagon overcharges taxpayers

Audit shows \$9 million bills on NASA military contracts

HOUSTON (AP) — Auditors have found the Pentagon billed taxpayers for as much as \$9 million in overcharges on NASA contracts between 1985 and 1990, a newspaper reported Sunday.

In a copyrighted story, The Houston Post said an audit last September shows the overcharges stem primarily from an arcane billing system that had put an 18.5 percent surcharge on every NASA contract handled by the military.

The surcharge, which was first levied in 1985, was only applied to NASA contracts. Investigators say it was costing taxpayers about \$2 million a year before it was abol-

ished in 1990.

The Post, which obtained the information under the Freedom of Information Act, said investigators found the Pentagon was double-billing the space agency by charging NASA for administrative work done by clerks and supervisors.

Under the terms of an agreement between the space agency and Department of Defense, such

work is supposed to be included in a basic charge.

When NASA and the Pentagon first agreed to let the military administer space agency contracts in 1968, the basic rate was set at \$9 per hour.

By 1990, that rate had climbed to \$38.74 per hour, auditors found.

A NASA commission first questioned the costs of contract

administration in 1986, when taxpayers gave \$34 million to the Pentagon to handle NASA contracts. Since then, Pentagon billings have soared to more than \$60 million per year.

While NASA spends nearly cents of every tax dollar on some contracts for items ranging from paper to rocket systems, it spends little overseeing the contracts, auditors said.

"DOD has advised NASA management that no mechanism exists... to research the appropriateness of the surcharge billing," space agency officials told auditors.

Mandela urges black unification

PAARL, South Africa (AP) — ANC president Nelson Mandela on Sunday returned to the city where he had been freed to make a call for black unity.

Speaking to a crowd of about 5,000 at Paarl, about 30 miles outside Cape Town, Mandela said the Pan Africanist Congress and the Azanian People's Organization should join talks with the government on ending apartheid.

"We want unity. We want all black political organizations to speak with one voice," he said to cheers.

The PAC and Azapo have boycotted negotia-

tions, saying they are a ploy by the white-led government to extend apartheid. Nineteen black and white political organizations held their first round of negotiations Dec. 20-21 and are expected to convene again in April.

The government's position was strengthened last week when white voters overwhelmingly gave their approval to the continuation of negotiations, which are aimed at writing a new constitution to give the black majority voting rights.

Militant white groups that support apartheid also have boycotted the negotiations.

Yugoslav army attacks Croats

Serbian-dominated military bombards town with artillery

BELGRADE, Yugoslavia (AP) — A predominantly Croat town in ethnically tense Bosnia-Herzegovina came under heavy mortar and cannon fire from Yugoslav army positions Sunday.

The mayor of Neum, Ivan Bender, accused the Serbian-dominated army of trying to seize strategic points inland from the coastal town.

The army, in a statement to the Tanjug news agency, said its

troops were responding to attacks by ethnic Croats.

Neum is on a spit of land reaching into the Adriatic Sea between territory of neighboring Croatia, which was the scene of heavy fighting after that republic declared independence last June.

Croat and army officials have accused each other of sporadic violations of a U.N.-mediated truce that generally has held since Jan. 3.

The territory around Neum is

predominantly ethnic Croat and tensions have been high there as Bosnia's volatile mixture of Muslims, Serbs and Croats try to work out their relationship in a future independent republic.

Bender, reached by telephone, said the eastern part of the Neum district was under heavy fire from federal army forces.

He said three people had been wounded and that villagers on the outskirts of Neum fled into the center of town seeking shelter.

Israelis lift ban, Palestinians return to jobs

JERUSALEM (AP) — Tens of thousands of Palestinians returned to their jobs in Israel on Sunday after the army lifted a two-day-old order that had banned them from leaving the occupied Gaza Strip.

The order had been issued in response to a stabbing rampage in Tel Aviv's Jaffa section Tuesday in which a Gaza resident killed two Israelis and wounded 20, many of them high school students.

Tel Aviv Mayor Shlomo Lahat decided Sunday to station armed guards in all schools in the city at an estimated annual cost of about \$1 million, Israel radio said.

Meanwhile, in the occupied West Bank, Israeli soldiers killed a Palestinian fugitive wanted for torturing Arab villagers and attacking Israeli security forces, the army said.

Kurdish fighting continues in Turkey

CIZRE, Turkey (AP) — Turkish Kurdish separatists and security forces clashed violently for a second day Sunday in the worst fighting of the eight-year-old Kurdish insurgency. At least 45 people were killed over the weekend.

An 18-year-old Kurdish girl set herself on fire in the western city of Izmir to protest the killings of Kurds, police said.

Elsewhere, demonstrators shouted separatist slogans and waved the outlawed Kurdish flag.

In predominantly Kurdish southeastern Turkey, soldiers with armored vehicles blocked the road into the town of Nusaybin. Nearby, soldiers in green camouflage ponchos lay in muddy ditches under a driving rain, training their automatic weapons on the town.

Other soldiers, many wearing the blue beret of the army's elite special operations unit, perched with rifles atop concrete-block houses outside the town.

The army set up roadblocks throughout the southeast and placed several towns under cur-

few. Telephone service to much of the area was cut off.

Reporters saw a column of 10 military vehicles filled with soldiers heading toward Nusaybin from Mardin, farther north.

Authorities and news reports said Sunday fighting killed at least 15 people and wounded 67 others in southeastern Turkey.

Marxist guerrillas of the outlawed Kurdistan Labor Party, or PKK, had called for a general uprising to mark a Kurdish holiday on Sunday.

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