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Clinton axes military projects

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Clinton brandished his veto pen Monday and struck 38 projects from next year's military construction spending bill, including three Texas projects totaling \$22.5 million.

Using his line-item veto powers for only the second time, the president pared \$287 million worth of projects from the \$9.2 billion military construction package sent to him by Congress.

"The use of the line-item veto saves taxpayers nearly \$290 million and makes clear the old rules have in fact changed," Clinton declared in an Oval Office ceremony.

The biggest Texas hit is a \$10 million B-1 squadron maintenance unit at Dyess Air Force Base in Abilene. "Without this project, squadrons at Dyess AFB will be able to continue to operate using existing facilities," the White House said. An angered Rep. Charles Sten-

holm, D-Stamford, said the White House made a serious mistake in targeting Dyess.

"I think it's going to end up being rather embarrassing to them when it's over," said Stenholm, who was notified of the veto Monday morning.

Dyess is due to receive a new B-1 bomber squadron in 2000, Stenholm noted. Now, with Clinton's veto and under current Air Force plans, the new squadron won't have a maintenance unit until 2002.

Clinton also scratched a \$7.7 million project at Fort Bliss in El Paso. The money was earmarked for the second phase of a relocation of an ammunition supply point from the main post to McGregor Range.

And, he eliminated \$4.8 million for an aircraft corrosion control facility at Laughlin AFB in Del Rio.

Stenholm wasn't the only unhappy Texan. "The president's suggestion that

the three Texas programs he has vetoed are unwanted by the Pentagon, unnecessary or do not contribute to our national defense in the coming year is wrong," said Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison, R-Texas, a member of the appropriations panel that crafted the bill.

The three projects "have been identified as essential in the military's five-year plan," she added.

Laughlin's representative, Republican Henry Bonilla of San Antonio, said: "I hope the president will be as eager to cut wasteful bureaucracy as he is about needed safety improvements for our military."

Congress can override the line-item vetoes but would require two-thirds majorities in both chambers to do so.

The military construction package still contains \$110 million in spending for Texas projects, mostly to improve housing for military personnel and their families.

FBI charges three with espionage

WASHINGTON (AP) — Claiming to have cracked a spy ring that went undetected for two decades, the FBI leveled espionage charges Monday against a Pentagon analyst, her husband and another man. Investigators said the analyst bragged to an undercover agent how easy it was to steal secrets.

Recruited by East Germany during their student days at the University of Wisconsin in the early and mid-1970s, the three trained for years in the ways Soviet spycraft, sought position in and around government agencies and the access they gained to steal classified documents, the government alleged.

When the Cold War ended, the husband-wife team and the third person, an expert in Slavic languages, sought new opportunities spying for South Africa, according to the allegations.

Theresa Marie Squillacote, quoted in the allegations as claiming in joy after making contact last year with a man she thought was a South African official.

"All those years and I did not she is quoted as saying in an intercepted telephone call. In fact, the man was an FBI agent under cover.

Astronaut returns home after stay aboard Mir

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. (AP) — Space shuttle Atlantis returned to Earth on Monday, bringing home American astronaut Michael Foale after a tumultuous 4 1/2 months aboard Mir.

Atlantis swooped through a hazy sky and landed at Kennedy Space Center just before 6 p.m., one day late.

Thick clouds had prevented Atlantis from landing Sunday and kept Foale in orbit for a 145th day. NASA fretted over the clouds and wind throughout the afternoon Monday before finally giving the seven-member crew the go-ahead to land.

As soon as Atlantis rolled to a safe stop, Mission Control announced: "Welcome home. Excellent job."

Rhonda Foale gathered near the runway with her two children, ages 3 and 5, and about 400 other well-wishers. She waited cheerfully, as she has since May when her husband rocketed away to Russia's aging space station.

"I've had to be patient for so long that it didn't fluster me at all when they said it was going to be a day late," she said earlier Monday.

Foale, a 40-year-old British-born astrophysicist, moved from the battered Mir into Atlantis on Sept. 28, one day after the shuttle arrived with his replacement, a new computer, patches for holes punched in the hull by a colliding cargo ship, and other urgently needed supplies.

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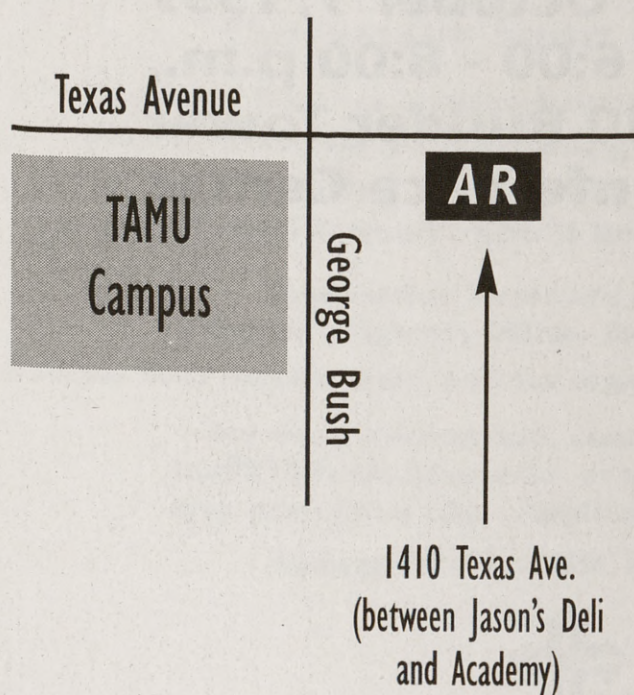
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