

US says Iceland was not testing site

WASHINGTON (AP) — The U.S. government has informed Iceland that, contrary to a magazine report last week, U.S. nuclear weapons were never deployed on the Nordic island during the Cold War.

Breaking with a long-standing American policy of neither confirming nor denying the locations of nuclear weapons, the Clinton administration told the Icelandic government that the Bulletin of Atomic Scientists' article published Oct. 20 was wrong in naming Iceland as among 27 nuclear deployment sites.

It has long been U.S. policy to obtain the permission of host governments before deploying nuclear weapons in their territory.

The Bulletin article — written by military historians Robert S. Norris, William Arkin and William Burr — was based on a newly declassified 1977 official Pentagon history of the custody and deployment of U.S. nuclear weapons.

Nine locations of weapons were listed in an appendix to the Pentagon report. Government censors blacked out the names of 18 other locations, but the Bulletin authors said they de-

duced from other publicly available documents that Iceland was among the 18.

"We may be wrong, but the evidence surrounding the nuclear history of Iceland continues to provide suspicions."

— William Arkin Military historian

"While we will not fill in the names of places that were redacted from the original document, we want to make clear that the Bulletin of Atomic Scientists' conclusion that the document indicated U.S. nuclear weapons were deployed to Iceland is incorrect," Robert Sorenson, deputy chief of mission at the U.S.

Embassy in Reykjavik, said in a telephone interview yesterday.

Jon Hannibalsson, Iceland's ambassador to Washington, was given that assurance the day the story appeared, Sorenson said.

"This is a dead issue" as far as the Iceland government is concerned, Hjalmar Hannesson, the director of political affairs at the Foreign Ministry in Reykjavik, said in a telephone interview yesterday. He said his government was assured "the name of Iceland is definitely not there on the list."

Arkin said yesterday: "We may be wrong, but the evidence surrounding the nuclear history of Iceland continues to provide suspicions."

The Bulletin's publisher, Steve Schwartz, said the Clinton administration's willingness to publicly deny the Iceland story while keeping secret other information about nuclear deployments of decades ago "points up the problems of the nuclear secrecy regime."

Arkin initially asked the Pentagon for the nuclear weapons deployment history in 1983, but the still-censored version was not released until May. "It's been a 16-year ordeal," he said.

S. Korean massacre under investigation

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Army is sending an investigative team to South Korea to begin the field inquiry into allegations of a Korean War massacre of civilians by U.S. soldiers.

The investigators, headed by the Army's inspector general, Lt. Gen. Michael Ackerman, plan one day of talks with their South Korean counterparts on Friday, defense officials said. They left for Seoul yesterday.

Kenneth Bacon, spokesman for Defense Secretary William Cohen, said the meeting will mark the start of the information sharing that Cohen promised President Kim Dae-jung in an Oct. 8 letter. Cohen told Kim the U.S. investigation would seek to uncover the truth "no matter where it leads."

On Sept. 30, The Associated Press reported accounts by American veterans and South Korean vil-

lagers that U.S. soldiers killed up to 400 civilians under a bridge at No Gun Ri, South Korea, early in the war. A subsequent AP report said that in addition to the No Gun Ri incident in late July 1950, the Army a short time later destroyed two strategic bridges as South Korean refugees streamed across, killing hundreds of civilians.

The Pentagon has said it will take a broad look into the matter, although it has not spelled out the scope, timing and guidelines of its investigation.

Prior to publication of the AP stories, U.S. officials said previous examinations of military records found no evidence of a massacre. The earlier inquiries were the basis for U.S. and South Korean rejections of requests from victims' families and survivors seeking acknowledgment of the killings and compensation.

Consumers losing faith

NEW YORK (AP) — Consumer confidence fell sharply in October for the fourth straight monthly decline, suggesting that the Federal Reserve is succeeding in cooling off the economy by raising interest rates.

The Conference Board said yesterday that its index of consumer confidence, a measure of people's willingness to spend, fell to 130.1 in October from 134.2 in September. The drop was bigger than analysts had expected.

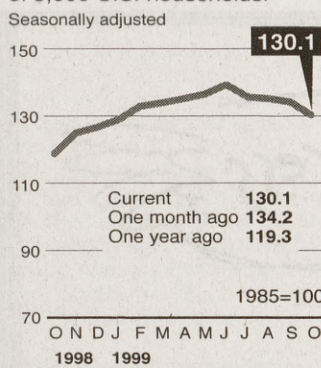
The index is now nearly 9 points below its peak of 139 in June, which was its highest reading in more than 30 years.

Consumers "still are feeling good about things, but they are not optimistic as they were earlier this year," Gary Thayer, chief economist at A.G. Edwards & Sons Inc. in St. Louis said.

Kathleen Stephansen, an economist at Donaldson, Lufkin & Jenrette Securities Corp. in New York, said: "Yes, consumer confidence is down, but it is not necessary the end of

Confidence down

Here is a look at the consumer confidence index from a survey of 5,000 U.S. households.



Source: The Conference Board

consumer spending."

Consumer confidence is an important economic indicator because consumer spending accounts for two-thirds of the nation's economic activity.

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