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GAO says Pentagon is lax on equipment

Washington (AP)—The Pentagon got a low grade from congressional investigators yesterday for the way it keeps tabs on more than \$170 million worth of ships, planes and other military property it leases at bargain rates or free to foreign governments.

"We found the financial management and monitoring of leased property is inadequate and congressional notification requirements are not being fully met," the General Accounting Office said in a report to Defense Secretary Caspar W. Weinberger.

"As a result, the Congress is not being provided information needed for effective oversight and thousands of dollars in lease costs are not being recovered," it added. "In addition,

there is little monitoring of the use of leased property and in some instances, the property has not been returned at the expiration of a lease."

The unreturned equipment is valued at nearly \$69 million, and the leases for the pieces expired as long as seven years ago. The equipment includes an oceangoing tugboat, a landing craft and an auxiliary repair dry dock, together worth \$5.3 million, lent to Chile rent-free in 1960 under a 15-year lease that was not renewed.

The GAO recommended that the Pentagon's Defense Security Assistance Agency and Security Assistance Accounting Center tighten their bookkeeping, rent-collection and supervision procedures.

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Habib Presents New Plan for Lebanon Talks

United Press International

Special U.S. envoy Philip C. Habib yesterday presented Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin with proposals to start Israeli-Lebanese peace talks.

Emerging from a conference in Jerusalem with Begin, Habib declined to make any substantive statement to reporters.

Begin's press secretary, Uri Porat, also declined to comment on the details of Habib's peace proposals.

[Lebanese officials told The Associated Press that Habib was proposing Israeli and Syrian forces withdraw nine miles from the Beirut-to-Damascus highway in the central Lebanese mountains as the first phase in withdrawing foreign armies from the war-weary nation.]

In Damascus, PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat opened a long-awaited meeting of his 66-member Central Council to seek a united stand on President Reagan's peace bid.

In a 10-minute opening speech before the meeting was closed to journalists, Arafat said, "What we say to Habib and [Israeli Defense Minister Ariel] Sharon is that this revolution is created to remain and it will continue to victory."

SOVIETS... Continued

"Starting the implementation of the MX program, Washington should know that this runs counter to one of the central provisions of the SALT I and SALT II accords—an obligation not to create additional silos for intercontinental missiles.

"Washington must also be aware that this step will not promote progress at the negotiations in Geneva," it said.

The statement described as "absurd" Reagan's so-called zero option at the Geneva talks on limiting medium-range nuclear arms in Europe. It said the plan envisages "the destruction" of Soviet medium-range weapons while "leaving intact" the similar weapons of Britain and France and U.S. forward-based "nuclear means."

It quoted Andropov as saying that American statements linking "readiness to normalization of relations with the demand that the Soviet Union pay for this by some preliminary concessions in various spheres sound, to say the least, not serious. We will not accept this."

The statement described as "positive in character" Reagan's proposal to improve the Moscow-Washington "hotline" and other confidence-building measures, but said it was more important to reduce the levels of arms on both sides than to improve communications.

"If for every 100 MX missiles we add 10 telephones linking Moscow and Washington, red ones or blue ones, does this make the missiles any less dangerous?" the statement asked.

Diplomatic observers here said Reagan's MX speech came at a particularly inopportune moment, at a time when the new Kremlin leadership was getting organized and following the visit here of Vice President Bush and Secretary of State George P. Shultz, which raised hopes for an easing of tension in Soviet-American relations

The English-language newspaper Moscow News said today that the meeting of Andropov with Bush and Shultz was intended as a "sign" to Washington that Moscow would like to arrest the steady deterioration in relations. It said recent American pronouncements indicated that the Reagan administration was turning its back on this opportunity.

Commenting on Reagan's statement that "it takes two to tango" and reported U.S. demands for Soviet concessions, the paper said: "Taking the president's analogy further, one might note that asking someone to dance is not generally done by a demand that he or she change their hairdo, let alone thinking. The partner is taken for what he or she is."

The statement in Pravda, which was also distributed by the government news agency Tass, was even more harsh. It accused Reagan of deliberately deceiving the American public by contending that the "road to peace was paved by new missiles, new nuclear charges, new planes and ships."

It said Reagan resorted to "rudest exaggerations and distortions" to depict Moscow as the initiator of the arms race. The editorial said Reagan showed "the naive television viewers colored diagrams and charts in which everything could be detected except the truth." It was an "irrefutable fact that the arms race has its roots in American soil," the statement said.

The statement asserted that Reagan "must be aware that the Soviet Union will not tolerate a lagging behind in questions which are vital for its security." It said Moscow had found it "necessary to mobilize additional forces and resources for the improvement of its armed forces" to meet earlier American challenges and would do so again.

Pravda gave detailed figures on U.S. weapons systems developed in the postwar period. It said that Moscow had proposed that both sides renounce the development of new weapons systems and that it had advocated measures to prevent "militarization of outer space."

But, it said, "none of these and similar proposals have found a positive response in the United States." It said the Russians were forced to build their Typhoon nuclear submarine to counter the American Ohio sub.

"Why should one spend innumerable billions for the creation and production of increasingly destructive systems of weapons when an opportunity exists to maintain security at lower levels?" the statement asked.

The editorial answered by asserting that Reagan had "plainly explained that the purpose of the deployment of the MX missiles and other armaments is to achieve an incontrovertible military superiority over the Soviet Union and to create prerequisites for ensuring an American victory in any conflict, including a nuclear one.

"Counting on a victory in a nuclear war is adventurism. It is doomed to failure. The Soviet Union does not intend to chase the United States in the creation of each new system of weapons or to imitate the United States. This does not mean at all that the Soviet Union will not find an effective reply to Washington if the United States begins realizing its plans."