**NAVY AWARDED $365 MILLION PACT For Eve Of Clinton Taking Office**

The Navy, acting at the 11th hour of the Bush administration, awarded a $365 million contract for a supply ship in an effort to preclude President Clinton from denying the supply vessel to Russia during the controversial and troubled troop pullout.

In recent days before President Bush left office, the Navy awarded the contract to the National Steel and Shipbuilding Co. in San Diego to build the AOE-44, the fourth last in a series. The deadline to select availability for the ship was at midnight Wednesday, but the Navy might not order another supply ship if the incoming Clinton administration carried through with its intention to cut the Navy fleet.

In a recent memo sent by Secretary of the Navy Desi Luskin to the 66 shipbuilders, the inspector general asserted that the Navy's contract award "was inappropriate and done to preclude giving you [Aspin] the Navy's option of considering the ship acquisition during the new administration budget review."

NASSCO declined comment. But a shipyard executive defended the award, saying it had been planned for nearly a year. Rep. Julian Dore (D-Calif.), a member of House Defense Appropriations Subcommittee, said the panel had strongly backed the Navy's action.

**4 REPUTED MEMBERS OF PALESTINIAN TERRORIST GROUP INDIENCED**

In a major crackdown on an alleged Palestinian terrorist organization in the United States, four reputed members have been indicted on racketeering charges, including the killing of a teenage girl from one to two years ago. The group was the cell of an organization best-known for terrorist activities overseas. A fourth defendant, a federal grand jury in St. Louis, marked the first U.S. legal action against the shadow Abu Nidal organization here.

The indictment, unsealed Thursday by a federal grand jury in St. Louis, entered the running light on alleged activities of the U.S. cell of an organization best-known for terrorist activities overseas. A State Department official, speaking on condition of anonymity, called Abu Nidal, a Palestinian whose real name is Sabot al-Banna, for more than 90 terrorist attacks since 1970 that killed or injured nearly 900 people in 20 countries.

Allegedly operating a "racketeering "enterprise" here since at least 1986, Abu Nidal's purposes included smuggling money to other members worldwide, helping develop terrorism and murder plans, recruiting Arabs as victims, and obtaining both light and heavy weapons, according to the indictment.

The four defendants charged by the indictment were Zein Isra, Saif Nijmeh and Luie Nijmeh, all of St. Louis, and Tawfiq Musa of tiny downtown.

**WEATHER**

April showers

By Michael Morgan

**WELCOME TO SPRING! The cold, damp, raw weather of yesterday and earlier this week, was in many ways typical of spring here in southern coastal New England. The Atlantic is still very cold, with ocean temperatures around 40°F (4°C), so that we get a persistent east wind in Boston, temperature take a tumble and low clouds, drizzle, and fog roll in. Winds today will remain out of the east, with a high of 59°F (15°C). More wind can be expected in the interior. Because we will still be under the influence of a large cyclic circulation, which will stock the air over New England, it will be quite windy. With cold air up in northern New England and eastern Canada, there is the risk of rain perhaps mixing with or changing to snow in northern sections.

Today: Mostly cloudy with a few showers. High around 45°F (7°C). Tonight: Clouds will continue to build and showers will increase. A thunderstorm is possible Thursday around 35°F (1°C).

Saturday: Mostly cloudy and continued cool. Showers likely. Showers may begin to mix with snow north and west of Boston. High 42-46°F (6-8°C). Low 30-33°F (-1°C).