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by John Neagle
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During a presentation before the Venezuelan congress on the evening of Oct. 9, Finance Minister Manuel Azpurua reported that over 30% of the $17.2 billion national budget for fiscal year 1987 will be absorbed by foreign debt service payments. Since only 42% of revenues will derive from oil sales, he said, other revenue sources must be exploited. Opposition congresspersons said there was no evidence of the possibility for economic recovery in the draft budget introduced by Azpurua. Socialist League Deputy David Nieves said the draft does not indicate how the large fiscal deficit will be covered. He noted that capital expenditures account for only 26.3% of the budget, adding that a country which invests so little in capital improvements will remain backward. In the draft budget, the ministries of finance, defense and interior account for 52.4% of all resources. Education is allocated 14.2%; public health, 6.7%; infrastructure and production, 6.6%; transportation, communications and environment, 4.3%, and urban development, 5.3%. If approved by the congress, the 1987 budget will result in 51% greater expenditures than the current budget. According to the political opposition, increased fiscal outlays are wholly unrelated to economic recovery. The additional resources, they argue, are to be employed only in debt service payments, military expenditures and other unproductive activities.

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