

## **Congressional Closeup** by Ronald Kokinda and Susan Kokinda

### **Dole introduces bill to soften War Powers Act**

Senate Majority Leader Robert Dole (R-Kan.) and three other Senate Republicans introduced legislation on April 17 that would relax restrictions on the President's ability to take effective countermeasures against terrorism.

An identical measure was introduced in the House by Reps. Joe Barton (R-Tex.), Duncan Hunter (R-Calif.), and Bob Livingston (R-La.).

The bill would exempt the President from the requirement contained in the War Powers Act that he consult with Congress in advance before initiating "deadly force" to respond to, or to preempt, terrorist activity. According to one interpretation, it would also permit the President to order the assassination of a foreign head of state under some circumstances.

The War Powers Act, approved over President Nixon's veto in 1973, mandates the President to consult with Congress before introducing American forces into "hostilities" and to report to Congress on the action within 48 hours. Under the proposed bill, the President would be required to report to Congress within 10 days after any anti-terrorist action.

Dole asserted there was no need for lawmakers to intervene before a President can launch an anti-terrorist strike. "Harry Truman used to say the buck stopped in the Oval Office. We want to get away from the situation where every senator and congressman feels he's got to add his two cents before the President can act."

In the aftermath of the strike against Libya April 14, several congressmen complained that President Reagan, by failing to consult adequately with Congress prior to the attack, had not fulfilled the War Powers

Act. Senate Minority Leader Bob Byrd (D-W.Va.) and House Foreign Relations chairman Dante Fascell (D-Fla.)—recently returned from a visit with Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachov—whined that Reagan had merely "told" them about the assault, rather than "consulting" with them. "The bottom line," Dole said, "is we want to avoid these pointless debates about whether consultations three hours in advance are enough or whether you need four or five hours or whatever."

Dole said the bill would "make clear that when we talk about terrorists, we don't just mean the bomb throwers. It's everybody in the network, up to and including governments like Libya's, which openly and aggressively espouse state-sponsored terrorism as an instrument of policy, and people, like Qaddafi, who masquerade as legitimate national leaders."

### **Senate panel rejects Helms protégé**

For the first time in this century, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee has rejected a President's nominee for an overseas ambassadorship. By a 9-7 vote April 10, the panel rejected the nomination of State Department official James Malone to be ambassador to Belize.

Committee Democrats, led by Sen. Ed Zorinsky of Nebraska and John Kerry of Massachusetts, attacked Malone for being an incompetent manager. Malone has been a protégé of Sen. Jesse Helms (R-N.C.). Ironically, Helms dropped his opposition to the appointment of Richard Burt as ambassador to Bonn last July, after receiving assurances that Malone

would be named to the Belize spot.

Helms blamed "anti-Reagan" officials at the State Department for secretly sabotaging Malone's appointment.

### **Senate targets Saudi arms sale**

The Senate is poised to disapprove the administration's proposed \$354 million arms sale to Saudi Arabia, but, according to Senate Foreign Relations Committee chairman Richard Lugar (R-Ind.), President Reagan is prepared to override the Senate's action, effectively clearing the way for the Saudi purchase.

Sixty-three senators have signed a resolution sponsored by California Democrat Sen. Alan Cranston (who seems to specialize in destabilizing regimes friendly to the United States, judging by his recent involvement in toppling Marcos), opposing the sale.

But, Lugar said April 17, Reagan will probably veto the resolution. Since two-thirds of the Senate is required to override a presidential veto, it appears likely that the sale will go through.

Beefing up Saudi Arabia's defense capabilities has taken on new urgency with threats by Iran to extend the Iran-Iraq war to other states in the region, including Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, a move that could threaten a substantial chunk of the West's oil supplies.

Lugar told a meeting of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee April 17, "All Senators had better begin to think about our interests" in defending Saudi Arabia and the Persian Gulf. "I realize there are many interests involved, Ours are paramount. This is fundamental to our foreign policy." Cranston and other foes of the sale

have charged that Saudi Arabia doesn't merit U.S. military aid, because it has done nothing to better relations with Israel.

## Anger at France spurs decoupling moves

France's refusal to permit American F-111s to use French airspace in the April 15 retaliatory attack on Libya, has set off a new wave of pro-decoupling sentiment on Capitol Hill. After the air strike, Rep. Dan Daniel (D-Va.) asserted that the United States should begin withdrawing its troops from Europe in reply to the limited support it has received from allies for the attack.

A senior Democrat on the House Armed Services Committee, Daniel said in a prepared statement, "Our next step should be to begin the gradual withdrawal of troops from Europe." Asked if his troop withdrawal suggestion was merely an angry reply to the allies, Daniel replied that he was deadly serious.

Rep. Les Hamilton (D-Ind.), head of the House Intelligence Committee, said that anger on the Hill could affect the level of financing Congress approves for NATO activities. Rep. William Hendon (R-N.C.) declared that he hopes "all future U.S. assistance goes the same way the U.S. bombers did—right around France." Rep. William Broomfield (R-Mich.) and Rep. Tom Lantos (D-Calif.) drafted a resolution condemning France, which did not make its way to the floor. And Rep. Bill Cobey (R-N.C.) is circulating two letters—one to French President François Mitterrand "gently chiding" him, the other to Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher thanking her for the United King-

dom's assistance—which have gotten approximately 80 signatures each.

Thus far, no legislation has been introduced implementing any of the threatened cuts in America's contribution to Western Europe's defense. Senate Foreign Relations Committee chairman Sen. Richard Lugar (R-Ind.) says he believes the flap will blow over.

But according to a source at the Senate Armed Services Committee, at least one senator has requested a legal judgment from the Senate's legislative counsel office, identifying possible areas of American assistance to NATO which could be cut or eliminated. The source commented that the area most likely to be cut, is the American troop level in Western Europe. "That would be pretty self-defeating though," he said. "We're not talking about limiting our commitment to defending Europe. If we cut back on troops there, the other American GIs would just become more vulnerable."

## Congress does Moscow's work in Washington

Congressional advocates of selling out U.S. strategic interests have been having going wild over the past few weeks. At issue is the question of America's continued compliance with the unratified SALT II treaty.

President Reagan must decide whether or not to dismantle two existing Poseidon submarines sometime in mid-May, when a new Trident submarine comes on line. Under SALT II, the United States must take Poseidon subs out of commission, or else exceed the treaty's limit on launchers.

Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger has long advocated that the submarines be dry-docked, so that they could be deployed again in a year, should the Soviets continue to violate the treaty. President Reagan is reportedly leaning in this direction, despite stiff resistance from Secretary of State George Shultz and senior administration arms-adviser Paul Nitze.

More than 150 House members, 16 of them Republicans, have sent a letter to the President urging him to abide by SALT II, and to dismantle the two Poseidon subs. Drafted by House Armed Services committee chairman Les Aspin (D-Wisc.) and Dante Fascell (D-Wisc.), head of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, the letter claims that if the United States does not comply with the treaty, the Soviets will be able to "spurt out ahead of us in strategic power," because they have "hot production lines" for adding new nuclear weapons to their arsenal.

The Soviets "can use existing production capability to more than double their strategic weaponry" over the next decade if SALT II is abrogated, the letter asserted. In a press release issued April 20, Aspin, in a classic case of psychological projection, charged that if the administration dry-docks the Poseidons, it would be "doing Moscow's work in Washington."

Similar arguments have been put forth by a number of senators, including Republicans Nancy Kassebaum (R-Kan.) and John Heinz (Pa.), who have both recently penned pro-SALT commentaries for the major media.

How could anyone in his or her right mind insist that the United States continue to honor a treaty, which the Senate refused to ratify, so strong were the doubts about its benefits even then, and which the Soviets have repeatedly violated?