

Exposed: new moves to cut American troops in Europe

by Nicholas F. Benton

Washington Post columnist Charles Krauthammer called it "Weinberger's Line," that "sickle-shaped line he drew on the night of the raid tracing the flight path of the U.S. planes that struck Libya." The head of that sickle, he noted, was in Britain, the base of the handle in Tripoli, and the arc extended out into the Atlantic, "repelled," he said, "by France, Spain, and Portugal."

The columnist predicted that the line defining the circuitous route that the April 14 U.S. air offensive against Libya was required to take around Western Europe will become a new political boundary within the next year.

Of course, calling it "Weinberger's Line" is a typical *Washington Post* deception. It is not the Libyan incident itself which poses a threat to the NATO compact. That case is being played up by the likes of Krauthammer only to turn public sentiment in the United States against the Europeans. The real danger to the Alliance lies in the budget process currently under way in the U.S. Congress: Gramm-Rudman.

Both the authors, Senators Warren Rudman (R-N.H.) and Phil Gramm (R-Tex.), have stated their personal intent to ensure that their legislation has the effect of cutting back on the U.S. commitment to the Alliance. Rudman lashed out March 18 before the American Defense Preparedness Association at the U.S. military's "country club on the Rhine," as he put it. Gramm, speaking before the American Association of Newspaper Editors in Washington April 9, repeated the same theme.

Now, in a climate of sanctimonious indignation at the failure of our European allies to have "been there" when we raided the "Mad Dog" of Tripoli, Rudman, Gramm, and their cohorts are demanding U.S. decoupling from Europe. Insider reports to *EIR* from Capitol Hill are that the Senate Armed

Services Committee will soon initiate debate on cutting back U.S. troops in Europe. The source said that 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.

Rumors abound that Sen. Sam Nunn (D-Ga.) is preparing to reintroduce the same legislation he authored two years ago for U.S. troop withdrawal from Europe. That bill, it should be recalled, failed to pass by a margin of only three votes, after a major personal lobbying effort against it by the President, and there were no Gramm-Rudman restraints then.

Sen. Charles Matthias (R-Md.) announced to the West German population that "economizing" on the U.S. budget this year will have consequences for NATO. Coming from Matthias, a man who spent years as a member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee cultivating a pro-NATO image, these remarks are an ominous sign. They were published in an exclusive interview in the West Germany newspaper *Bild Am Sonntag*.

Rep. Dan Daniels (D-Va.), a longtime member of the House Armed Services Committee, stated of the Libyan incident: "Our next step should be to begin the gradual withdrawal of troops from Europe." Asked if he was merely angry over the lack of European support, he retorted, "I'm, deadly serious."

Rep. Les Hamilton (D-Ind.), head of the House Intelligence Committee, chimed in with "anger on the Hill over the Libyan affair" line to justify what he predicted would be "reduced financing for NATO activities," and Rep. William Hendon (R-N.C.) declared: "I hope all future U.S. assistance goes the same way the U.S. bombers did—right around France."

The future of the 300,000 U.S. troops in Europe could be sealed long before any legislation is passed, however. Congressional inaction might have accomplished the trick even before this edition of *EIR* gets off the press. As of this writing, the Senate was coming within three days of forcing the Defense Department to lay off 500,000 personnel.

A law passed by Congress last year to chisel the military out of pension benefits as a cost-cutting measure included in it a May 1 deadline for congressional implementation of specific pension system revisions. Failure to meet the deadline would require the Pentagon to let go 330,000 active duty and another 170,000 reservists by Oct. 1.

The House passed the required legislation, but the Senate is "twiddling its thumbs," as one observer put it. The Pentagon has been sounding all the alarms at the Senate, but "they just haven't responded," one source said. Unless a last minute law, or postponement of the deadline, is passed, the die will be cast to eliminate almost one-sixth of all U.S. military forces (now 3.3 million including reservists).

Weinberger hits Gramm-Rudman

Whereas the Senate was bringing this technicality down to the wire, Weinberger pointed out in testimony to the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Defense that if the automatic sequestering provisions of Gramm-Rudman go into effect because of the failure of Congress to hit its targets for cuts in the Fiscal Year 1987 budget, the result will be the forced removal of 330,000 U.S. troops—more than 10% of the total including reserves, and almost the exact number the United States has stationed in Europe.

He said that if Gramm-Rudman's automatic provisions had applied to the military in the first round of cuts last March, 280,000 troops would already be gone. "We don't have that personnel exemption in Gramm-Rudman next year," he warned the committee. "If Gramm-Rudman should come into effect without that exemption, 330,000 people will have to be put out on the street."

Weinberger called such a development "a disaster as far as the military, as far as the national security is at stake, to say nothing of what it would do to the economy."

"There are a number of people who now feel that the defense effort must be relaxed, either because they feel it has gone on too long, or because the deficit is too high. Significantly, no one recommends that because the risk is diminishing," he said, "nor are they recommending it because a modern and responsive military capability is unnecessary."

He added, "What is really being asserted is that the United States cannot afford an adequate defense. And that, I think, we cannot accept. . . . People who argue that really are arguing that we must forego a significant increase in our safety, and I think the burden is on them to explain why."

The angry Defense Secretary continued, "Are we really prepared to cut American strength in ways that increase the risks of war? Those who judge that in order to reduce the

deficit the United States must underfund programs previously agreed to by the President and the Congress and just run higher risks should really stand up and say why this is so, particularly in view of the continuing Soviet expansion."

He said, "We are indeed preoccupied with deficits, and I understand all the pressures confronting the Congress. But I have to remind everyone that the risk does not go down as the deficit goes up. It is essential that we make sure that defense not be cut simply because it is easier politically to cut it."

"We can hope the Soviets will slow down as we do, but they never have. . . . I was told two or three times that we should measure the President's budget by what is politically acceptable to the Congress. . . . We have a situation in which almost everyone says that the budget isn't realistic. Nobody has bothered to examine the details of it or say why it isn't realistic, it's just that politically everybody thinks that whatever budget is submitted has to be lower than the previous one. And that is not a very good way to deal with the world as we see it."

He continued: "The risk of war is a risk that depends upon Soviet perception of our strength. . . . If they at any time perceive that we lack the will or the willingness to apply our resources or our very considerable strength to national security, then the risk of war increases enormously, and increases by our own act. So it is essential that we have the kind of insurance that will deter the Soviets from believing that they could have any advantage out of our own failure to provide for our own security."

Weinberger articulated the theory of the administration's defense strategy in an article in the Spring 1986 *Foreign Affairs* magazine, in which he presents his six-point doctrine for the use of U.S. military force, originally spelled out in a November 1984 speech at the Washington Press Club. He denounced the Robert McNamara approach of "limited war" that resulted in the Vietnam fiasco, and placed the development of the Strategic Defense Initiative at the head of a list of what he called "four new military pillars" of defense, which include 1) the SDI and nuclear deterrence, 2) conventional deterrence, 3) arms control (within the context of the first two programs), and 4) competitive strategies to keep the Soviets off balance by technological flanking maneuvers, as it were, to render obsolete areas of their defenses where they have invested heavily.

The doctrine is an optimistic one, based on the prospect that through the SDI, "American science and technology will achieve what appears to some to be an impossible dream," but retains the maintenance of an effective deterrence as the key to preventing war. "The central thread in the Reagan administration's policy is to combine sufficient military strength with such a clear determination to resist aggression that we discourage challenges," he said. And it's that doctrine which is most seriously threatened by the political implications of Gramm-Rudman.