

Gramm-Rudman haunts military reform debate

by Leo Scanlon

On May 7, the Senate passed the Goldwater-Nunn defense reorganization bill, and signaled a step-up in congressional efforts to shape and control the national security organization of the U. S. government. Behind the thin facade of "military reform," there stands the stated policy of the Military Reform Caucus, its leaders Gary Hart (D-Colo.) and Sam Nunn (D-Ga.), and its dupe, Barry Goldwater (R-Ariz.): Steer defense policy away from the SDI, and abandon our European allies to the Soviet Empire.

The Goldwater-Nunn reform bill is a somewhat more specific version of the recommendations contained in the Packard Commission report, but both measures have been roundly denounced by military professionals. Like the Goldwater bill, the Packard report targets the policy planning and procurement apparatus of the Pentagon, and would have no more importance than any of the numerous ill-advised schemes produced by the Congress in each session—if their proponents were not carrying the club of the Gramm-Rudman budget-cutting amendment, as enforcement.

The Goldwater-Nunn bill and the Packard Commission recommendations have their roots in the strategic policies imposed on the U.S. government by Robert McNamara, Henry Kissinger, and others who were persuaded that the United States would no longer be the premier industrial power in the postwar world, and would be unable to meet its political or military responsibilities as a "superpower." The war cry of McNamara was "cost-benefit analysis"; today we hear the more direct demand for austerity. The fundamental fact of the matter was described by Gen. Maxwell D. Taylor in 1960: "The determination of U.S. strategy has become a more or less incidental by-product of the administrative process of the defense budget."

McNamara and his policies are still hated among military professionals who today conduct vigorous doctrinal debate,

in the hope that vigilance will prevent a repeat of the disaster in Vietnam. This sentiment is expressed in the vehement and bureaucratically insightful attacks on the current round of reform measures which have come from the military quarters at the Pentagon. The bitter fact remains that there was no successful opposition to McNamara in the 1960s because no one fought the "post-industrial society" economic policies which made McNamara's reforms acceptable from a pragmatic standpoint. If Pentagon officials don't draw this lesson, and mount a charge against the Gramm-Rudman austerity, then Goldwater, Nunn, Packard, and the reformers will do to Europe what McNamara did to Vietnam.

Vietnamize Europe?

The demand for decoupling from Europe is the prime subject of every document ever produced by the "military reform movement." In 1978, a White Paper on Defense was issued by Sens. Robert Taft (R-Ohio) and Gary Hart, written by Taft's adviser, William Lind. Lind is now the military adviser to Hart, and is the guru of the "military reform caucus." He is also the central figure in a network of so-called conservative organizations associated with Paul Weyrich and the Heritage Foundation. These organizations, nominally in support of the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI), have recently begun to stump for Gary Hart and his critiques of U.S. military policy. Therefore, Hart's 1978 document is worth quoting at some length because it situates the real issues in the current debate very precisely.

"Only a few years ago the United States could contemplate a world in which American power far surpassed that of any adversary, a world in which our economic resources and our military capabilities seemed endless. . . . Shortages of basic commodities and slackening industrial production have cut into our wealth, and domestic problems have claimed an

increasing share of our resources. Rising prices have added to the cost of our armed forces. . . . Strategic realignments in Asia, the Middle East and elsewhere, have shown that America can no longer afford to play a predominant military role throughout the world.

"Any discussion of committing funds and manpower must begin with the basic reality that resources are limited. . . . Every member of Congress is aware of the need to make choices . . . in allocating resources. . . . Responsibility also extends [to] the allocation of resources among competing groups within the defense establishment itself.

"The Congress has attempted to carry out its duty . . . by setting manpower levels for the different services and by funding, or refusing to fund, the research, development, and procurement of specific weapons systems. Nevertheless, it has generally failed to exert firm influence on our defense posture. . . . The Congress thus has both a legal and a practical obligation to debate new options for strategy and force structure. . . . This is particularly important in relation to Congress's attempt to recover its legitimate role in determining foreign policy. Congress has, in recent years, made a determined effort to restore the constitutional place of the legislative branch in setting foreign policy."

The authors then identify the Guam Doctrine as the turning point in U.S. postwar policy—and so it was, announcing the end of the U.S. commitment to our allies in Southeast Asia.

paper:

"The Department of Defense has apparently adopted a European continental strategy. . . . It is focusing the bulk of its interest on the problems of land warfare in central Europe."

That is the substance of the debate over military reform from 1978 until today. Hart developed this theme in subsequent papers, attacking those weapons systems which are necessary to pursue global war, such as the aircraft carrier and heavy cruisers, the 82nd Airborne Division (which he proposes to eliminate, since infantry divisions designed to fight in Europe are archaic), and high-technology electronic warfare weapons, especially aircraft fighter platforms designed for anti-air and anti-cruise missile missions relevant to the European battlefield. Consistent with their opposition to the SDI, Hart and his Heritage Foundation backers propose a stripped-down military which could never threaten Soviet land armies in Europe.

The most lurid expression of this strategy comes from the Romanian-born Edward Luttwak, identified by Admiral Watkins as one of "those critics with foreign accents who have never served their country. . . ." Speaking on behalf of the Georgetown CSIS, Luttwak proposes that the United States must adopt the corrupt model of the Roman Empire as a model for its military strategy in the global confrontation with the Soviet Union. Luttwak's hatred of republican military strategy is common to all the so-called reformers.

By utilizing the power of the Congress to reorganize the

defense department structure, and putting the Gramm-Rudman clout behind their de-coupling policy, Hart and his colleagues intend to impose their policies on the Executive branch. To see how the Packard Commission and Goldwater bill facilitate this intention, one must sketch the process which shapes military policy.

Chaotic process

Ever since Robert McNamara reorganized the Pentagon and imposed his "Planning, Programming, and Budgeting System" or PPBS, cost-benefit analysis has been applied to every aspect of military procurement, with results that have grown more disastrous by the year. McNamara's reforms created a situation in which none of the subheads of the Pentagon's Five-Year Plan are matched with the actual ap-

The 'structural reforms' don't address a single real issue—they are entirely oriented to "political" concerns, and premised on the austerity assumptions of the Gramm-Rudman Congress. From that standpoint, the Goldwater-Nunn and Packard Commission reports are just more of the same old music from McNamara's band.

propriations subheads used by Congress for the appropriations for DoD and the services. As a result, a sniping war goes on daily in the halls of Congress, as staffers alter nearly every line of the budgets submitted by the military. Each alteration requires questions answered and studies re-done. Not surprisingly, the paperwork demands this puts on the staffs of the services and the Joint Chiefs has increased 1,200% in the last decade. The reformers turn around and point to this as evidence of Pentagon inefficiency, and propose to radically re-structure the staff apparatus which present the military's needs to the Congress.

In turn, this chaos hits the service Secretaries and chiefs of staff of the individual services, who are responsible for training and equipping the armed forces; their staffs are unable to make any long-term plans, since the budget they develop, based on the "Defense Guidance" document prepared by the secretary of defense and the Defense Resources Board, may or may not have any relation to the budget passed by Congress.

Likewise, the requests of the Unified and Specified Commanders, the flag officers who are responsible to deploy forces in battle, are subject to the same anarchic process.

These commanders report directly to the secretary of defense and the President, and can be ordered into battle by those authorities only. Their budget requests, for staff, training missions, and so forth, are submitted through the Joint Chiefs. (The Chiefs of Staff, of course, do not have the authority to deploy troops—they are responsible to convert their intimate knowledge of their services' capabilities, the requirements of the unified and specified commands, the budget process, and national policy into sound military advice to the President, through the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.)

The sly proposal of Goldwater-Nunn, to make the field commanders directly responsible for their own budgeting, would vastly increase the control Congress has over the direct fighting forces in the field, and would in no way "increase the authority of the field commanders" as its proponents claim.

Weapons procurement

The big control lever that everyone fights to have a hand on, naturally, is weapons procurement. Here the political implications of policy choices are very direct. On the big issues, like funding the SDI, the effect of the budget on the implementation of the policy is transparent. On most issues it is not.

The Packard Commission report begins with a statement describing this political guerrilla war:

"Today, there is no rational system whereby the Executive Branch and the Congress reach coherent and enduring agreement on national military strategy, the forces to carry it out, and the funding that should be provided—in light of the overall economy and competing claims on national resources . . . planning must be . . . fiscally constrained, forward looking, and fully integrated. . . ."

In typical bureaucratic fashion, the report then suggests a series of "modifications . . . in our defense establishment," most of which are vaguely in line with reforms already carried out by Secretary Weinberger which have streamlined the internal functioning of the Pentagon.

There are two points, considered controversial, which open the door to Congress's real intentions. The first is the matter of elevating the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff to the post of principal military adviser to the President. This is opposed by the chiefs for the simple reason that it destroys the deliberative value of the current system, in which policy disagreements among the chiefs must, by law, be presented to the President. Likewise, a single military adviser is subject to greater "political" pressures than the corporate Joint Chiefs.

The more interesting element of the report, is a proposal to create a new organization designed to centralize control over acquisitions and procurement. This would be accomplished by the creation of an undersecretary of defense for acquisition, who would have the same authority as a service Secretary. Although sketchy in the commission report, the proposed organization is in the direction of a paper presented in 1985 by James P. Wade, assistant secretary of defense for

acquisition and logistics.

Wade proposed to create, either directly, or by steps, an "acquisition corps" modeled along the lines of the Foreign Service—based on education, experience, and examination. The corps should have a pay scale and employment conditions (subject to demotions, firings, etc.) comparable to private industry. Military officers who become part of the corps would be on a "career track" independent of their particular service promotion boards, and would be a new service. There would be established a "Defense Acquisition University" encompassing all the existing acquisition-related defense schools and specializations such as contracting and acquisition, logistics, quality, program management, systems engineering. It perhaps should be named "McNamara U."

The concerns of critics of this and related, less radical proposals, are that the attempt to remove acquisition authority from the services, only opens the process up to greater congressional meddling and further reduces the input of the services and field commands into the process of weapons design—which, of course, is what Hart, Lind, Luttwak, and other opponents of the military want to do.

The Goldwater-Nunn proposals carry this and many other issues to a grave extreme, with such proposals as the above-mentioned elevation of the Unified and Specified Commands to direct responsibility for planning and budgeting—a move which would eliminate the staff of the Joint Chiefs, and would also make the Chiefs of Staff and service Secretaries ceremonial positions. What Goldwater and Nunn don't mention is that this proposal could not function at all—now. Of course, such a radical move could function *once* the PPBS and acquisition process are isolated entirely from the military, as the Packard Commission and Wade proposals suggest: The commands would then be directly at the mercy of the congressional budget process, and the nation would be at the mercy of Gary Hart and his Soviet friends. At last we would have an "enduring agreement between Congress and the Executive."

Finally, this whole scheme leaves out any consideration of the subject of defense industrial base policy. What industries are we actually going to have left to procure from? What country are they going to be in? To what extent are we going to be dependent on foreign sources for raw materials? And what policies do we have, to secure a thriving base of smaller contractors and sub-contractors? This is the real basis of determining how effective acquisitions will be. The "structural reforms" don't address a single real issue—they are entirely oriented to "political" concerns, and are premised on the austerity assumptions of the Gramm-Rudman Congress. A real re-organization would scrap the heritage of McNamara, by placing the SDI on a crash footing, and using the resulting relationship between national labs, contractors, and the military as a model for the rest of the defense industry. From that standpoint, the Goldwater-Nunn and Packard Commission reports are just more of the same old music from McNamara's band.