

Congressional Closeup by Kathleen Klenetsky

Senate panel decimates budget for SDI

The Senate Appropriations Committee voted Sept. 16 to impose crippling cuts in Strategic Defense Initiative funding, after Sen. Ted Stevens (R-Alaska) gave up his fight to protect the administration's original request of \$4.8 billion.

Stevens's defense subcommittee had okayed the full \$4.8 billion the week before, although \$1.2 billion of that would have been available only under certain contingencies. But, facing nearly unanimous resistance to that figure from the full, Republican-dominated Appropriations Committee, Stevens finally agreed to eliminate the contingency fund.

Sen. William Proxmire (D-Wis.), a savage foe of the SDI, could hardly contain his joy over the Appropriation Committee's final decision, crowing that it was "a victory, because the President had asked for so much more."

But to some members, even that massive cut was not enough. Sen. Bennett Johnston (D-La.), who, despite being an official of the pro-defense Coalition for Peace through Strength, has been waging an anti-SDI battle this year that would do the Kremlin proud, proposed two amendments, one to reduce the SDI budget to \$2.95 billion, and another to bring it down to \$3.2 billion. Both were narrowly defeated, leaving the SDI with \$3.4 billion.

Funding for the anti-missile program is expected to drop even lower, to approximately \$3 billion, in House-Senate conference.

The Sept. 17 *Washington Post* gloatingly reported that if appropriations are kept at that level, as a number of senators and lobbyists predict, the administration's five-year SDI plan

would total \$15 billion, less than half of what the administration is seeking for the program through fiscal 1991.

Fred Wertheimer, president of Common Cause, part of a key anti-SDI coalition, said the \$3.4 billion compromise means that the program is "headed for a status quo," rather than steadily increasing funding.

House backs covert aid to Savimbi forces

The House of Representatives rejected a proposed cut-off of covert military assistance to rebels fighting the Soviet-backed regime in Angola, after a heated debate Sept. 17 that ended in a 229-186 vote.

The House defeated attempts by House Intelligence Committee chairman Rep. Lee Hamilton (D-Ind.), and a coterie of leftists and liberals, to prohibit all covert aid to Jonas Savimbi's UNITA forces, and to require a congressional vote to permit overt assistance.

Rep. Bob Stump (R-Ariz.), played a key role in turning back Hamilton's proposal, charged on the House floor Sept. 16 that it would have "impose[d] a new form of the Clark amendment." The Clark amendment, offspring of ultraliberal former Sen. Dick Clark, was enacted in 1975, and halted all U.S. covert assistance to UNITA for a decade.

Stump called on the Congress to "defeat the Democrats' dangerous effort to establish a country-specific restraint on the President's ability to protect U.S. interest through effective aid to the forces of freedom. . . . The President . . . cannot protect and advance American interests if the Congress so shackles his conduct of for-

eign policy."

Stump's key co-sponsor was Rep. Claude Pepper, a liberal Democrat from Florida, who broke ranks with the party leadership to support continued assistance to UNITA. He asked: "Are we going to stop all covert aid all over the Earth? Who's more meritorious than those people over there in Angola?"

Those opposing American assistance tried to portray UNITA as nothing more than a South African asset. "UNITA is a proxy for South Africa and exists only because of massive South African backing," contended Hamilton. "Support for Savimbi is support for South Africa."

Hamilton's bill to choke off the aid was contained in the 1987 intelligence bill. The House approved the Stump-Pepper amendment deleting the aid-cutoff provision.

Congress seeks Pentagon reorganization

Congress finished and sent to the President Sept. 17 the most sweeping military reorganization bill in 40 years, which will complete the destruction of the Defense Department initiated by Robert Strange McNamara during the 1960s.

A key provision of the legislation calls for making the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff the sole ranking military adviser to the President, and would correspondingly downgrade the role of the other service chiefs in military policy.

The bill also places much greater decision-making capability in the hands of theater commanders, eliminates 17,000 Defense Department jobs, and drastically curtails the Na-

vy's historically independent operating role.

Heads of all the military services have protested the legislation, charging that it would make a "hash" of the defense structure. One of the most outspoken critics has been Marine Corps Commandant General P. X. Kelley, who reportedly charged last winter that the proposals would cause "significant degradation in the efficiency and effectiveness of the defense establishment—to the point where I have deep concerns for the future of the United States."

The bill's impetus came from the military reform movement, a joint project of the Georgetown Center for Strategic and International Studies, the Heritage Foundation, and the Congressional Military Reform Caucus—an unsavory coalition of liberals like Sen. Gary Hart (D-Colo.) and self-styled defense conservatives.

Defense Secretary Weinberger also had serious reservations about the bill. But President Reagan was convinced by David Packard and J. Peter Grace that the bill would help the military by knocking out "inefficiency," and is expected to sign the bill into law.

House passes its own anti-drug bill

Eager to jump on the war on drugs bandwagon, the House of Representatives enacted a far-reaching omnibus anti-drug bill Sept. 12 by an overwhelming 392-16 vote. Though it contains some good provisions—such as the death penalty for certain categories of drug-dealers—it also includes dangerous elements, especially its recommendations for indiscriminate use of the military.

With elections less than two

months away, most of the liberal Democrats were striving to be counted among the most strident opponents of drugs.

There were a few exceptions: Rep. Pat Schroeder (D-Colo.) called the bill a case of "piling on" (a football term for an illegal assault on the ball carrier after he is down). Rep. Don Edwards (D-Calif.) called it "panic and hysteria." Rep. Barney Frank (D-Mass.) said it was "the legislative equivalent of 'crack,'" while Rep. Peter Rodino (D-N.J.) termed the bill "an attack on the Constitution." All of these legislators were co-sponsors of major marijuana decriminalization legislation in 1979.

There are some dangerous boobytraps built into the bill that will present major problems for the administration. The most dangerous is the repeal of the so-called "posse comitatus" law, which prevents the military from making law-enforcement arrests (see *Eye on Washington*, page 67).

Despite Pentagon objections the House voted in favor of two amendments to the bill that compel the use of military personnel in anti-drug activity. One, by right-wing Republican Duncan Hunter (R-Calif.), mandates the President to deploy military troops to the U.S.-Mexican border within 30 days of the passage of the bill, and calls on the military to make arrests in the case of "hot pursuit." The other repeals "posse comitatus" in cases where the attorney general requests the military forces and the defense secretary agrees.

The Hunter amendment was supported by an odd coalition of liberal Democrats and "Rambo" Republicans, and passed by a vote of 237-177. Rep. Tommy Robinson (D-Ark.) epitomized the joining of liberal and right-wing forces on the vote, when he argued for the amendment by quoting

"My friend, the gentleman from New York . . . Mayor Ed Koch," who said, "Give me the Army, the Navy, the Air Force."

In other words, in the name of the War on Drugs, the liberals, with the help of KGB-controlled elements on the right, are seeking to seize control over the deployment of U.S. forces—to use the War on Drugs as the pretext to attack President Reagan's defense deployment, and to bring the troops home from Europe onto North American soil.

House Democrats are crowing that they've pulled one over on the administration. House Majority Leader Rep. Jim Wright (D-Tex.) said gleefully, "There is no way the President can veto this bill and still convince the American population that he is serious about the War on Drugs."

Senate clears plan to sell naval petroleum

A proposal to sell off the Naval Petroleum Reserve at Elk Hills, California, won Senate approval Sept. 17 as part of an \$8 billion appropriations bill for the Interior Department and related agencies.

The sale is a central element of the administration's broad plans for "privatizing" the federal sector by transferring federal activities and assets to private business.

The bill orders that the installation be sold by June 30, 1987, if possible, for an initial payment of at least \$200 million.

The House had previously rejected the proposal on the grounds that trying to unload the petroleum reserves during the current oil glut would result in low bids.