

Congressional Closeup by Ronald Kokinda

Defense bill stalls over Levin-Nunn amendment

Senate Republican backers of the Strategic Defense Initiative prevented consideration of the Defense Authorization bill with a filibuster on May 13. It was the beginning of what is expected to be a months-long struggle over the interpretation of the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty and the extent of the SDI program.

SDI backers are attempting to remove an amendment sponsored by Senators Carl Levin (D-Mich.) and Sam Nunn (D-Ga.) which would restrict work on the SDI to the so-called narrow interpretation of the ABM Treaty. The Nunn-Levin amendment would only allow more advanced testing or development of SDI systems if approved by both House and Senate.

The Defense bill is being held hostage by Nunn who has promised that the restriction will be included in any defense spending bill. If separated out as a bill by itself, Nunn and other opponents of a more aggressive SDI program fear that the Senate would sustain a presidential veto. Senate Minority Leader Robert Dole (R-Kan.) and 33 other senators have written to Reagan promising to sustain a veto.

Ranking Armed Services Committee member John Warner (R-Va.), condemned the Nunn-Levin provision as "a unilateral constraint on the United States on a military program which both the United States and the Soviet Union are now pursuing." It "would impose on the United States a restrictive interpretation of the ABM Treaty to which only the United States and not the Soviet Union would be bound."

Warner and other Republicans pointed out the blatant unconstitutionality of the amendment. It "would permit an unacceptable intrusion by Con-

gress into the President's jurisdiction to conduct our nation's foreign affairs," including ongoing arms-control negotiations in Geneva, and the President's treaty-making powers. Senators also objected that the provision for a veto by either house clearly violated the Senate's constitutional responsibility to advise and consent on treaties.

AIDS legislation blocked in committee

Reps. Dan Burton (R-Ind.) and William Dannemeyer (R-Calif.) took to the House floor on May 11 to continue to educate their colleagues on the threat of the deadly AIDS virus, and strongly condemned the leadership of several House committees for refusing to schedule hearings on legislation they have introduced.

"We cannot even get a hearing on these bills because the committee chairmen do not agree with our position," Burton said. "All I can say is if we are correct, then it is criminal what these people are doing. And if we are not correct, at the very least it ought to be investigated."

Burton devoted a considerable degree of time to the need to determine whether transmission of AIDS was occurring in ways other than the assumed routes of sexual and blood contact. Burton outlined the work of Dr. Mark Whiteside where 50% of the cases of AIDS in Belle Glade, Fla., had no known cause. "I called Dr. Whiteside," Burton said, "and he said that he believed indeed that mosquitoes were a contributing factor to the spread of the virus in Belle Glade."

Dannemeyer noted that his bills

had been referred to several committees including Energy and Commerce, Judiciary, Armed Services, and Post Office and Civil Service. "None of them have been set for hearing by any of the committees," Dannemeyer said. "We are being stonewalled. They do not want to hold any hearings on these bills at all."

House rejects U.S. troop pullouts

The House acted on two amendments to the Defense Authorization bill on May 8, rejecting proposals to pull U.S. troops out of any NATO country or South Korea, thus dealing a blow to advocates of U.S. decoupling from our allies.

An amendment by Rep. Bill Richardson (D-N.M.) denying the use of funds for any purpose which would result in the reduction of U.S. troop levels in any NATO country below FY87 levels, was approved by voice vote.

"As far as the allies' not needing the U.S. like they used to," Rep. Beverly Byron (D-Md.) argued, "Let me remind my colleagues that our military is not forward deployed for reasons of charity. Rather, we are forward deployed because it is in our own best interest to be near the likely site of future conflicts. If we pull back, not only will we be sending a terrible political signal, we will also be hurting our military capability to respond in a crisis."

Byron warned: "If we terminate or reduce that support—especially at a time when we may withdraw intermediate nuclear forces from Europe—we are, indeed, inviting disas-

ter." Byron also stated, "I can assure you that the worst possible way to negotiate conventional arms reductions is by making unilateral concessions."

An amendment offered by Representative Mrazek (D-N.Y.) directing the DOD to develop a five year plan to reduce U.S. troop strength in Korea was also rejected by voice vote.

The negative-growth defense level of \$289 billion passed by the House, however, will hit operations, maintenance, and personnel somewhere.

Debt ceiling raised, **G**ramm-Rudman **f**ight delayed

The United States narrowly avoided becoming another Brazil and defaulting on its obligations as the House and Senate passed a temporary increase in the debt ceiling which is expected to allow the government to continue to borrow for another 60 days.

A major fight over reimposing the automatic sequestration mechanism of the Gramm-Rudman-Hollings budget deficit law, which threatened to torpedo the debt ceiling extension, is now also delayed until mid-July.

On May 13, the House passed H.R. 2360 to raise the debt ceiling temporarily by a vote of 296 to 124. Gramm-Rudman advocates in the House, led by Reps. Buddy MacKay (D-Fla.) and Rod Chandler (R-Wash.), agreed to the short-term extension with the understanding that a permanent deficit reduction plan would be reached by July. They demanded that a Commission, similar to the one which cut Social Security, be established to reach such an agreement.

An amendment sponsored by

Ways and Means Committee Chairman Dan Rostenkowski (D-Ill.), and backed by the Reagan administration, to permanently raise the ceiling to roughly \$2.6 trillion, was strongly rejected on a 259 to 162 vote. On April 23, MacKay had won a vote to impose a Gramm-Rudman-like across the board cut of 21% in the FY87 supplemental appropriation on a 263 to 123 vote.

On May 14, the Senate also passed the extension on a 58 to 36 vote. Senator Phil Gramm (R-Tex.) agreed not to bring up his amendment for automatic cuts after reaching an agreement with the White House. Gramm said he now had White House backing to use the long-term debt extension as a vehicle to press for Gramm-Rudman and other budget reforms.

House continues **a**ttacks on SDI

The House continued consideration of the FY88 Defense Authorization bill in mid-May, considering a number of amendments on the SDI which would further cripple the program.

The SDI funding level was cut to \$3.1 billion, half a billion below this year's level, when an amendment sponsored by Rep. Charlie Bennett (D-Fla.) was approved by a vote of 219 to 199 on May 12. The duplicity of House Armed Services Committee chairman Rep. Les Aspin (D-Wisc.) was very apparent. After reducing the Armed Services Committee figure of \$3.8 billion to \$3.6 billion in the Aspin substitute, Aspin then voted for the \$3.1 billion level in order to set the basis for compromise with the Senate's \$4.5 billion level.

Passage of the Bennett amendment followed defeat of several other proposed funding levels. An amendment by Congressman Hefley (R-Colo.) for a \$4.05 billion level of funding was defeated by a vote of 129 to 286. Representative Rowland's (R-Conn.) amendment for a \$3.55 billion level was rejected by a 207 to 213 vote.

SDI was also constrained by Representative Hertel's (D-Mich.) amendment, accepted by voice vote, prohibiting the deployment of any element of an ABM system unless specifically authorized by law. An amendment by Representative Buechner (R-Mo.) was also adopted by voice vote, which reaffirmed the right of the United States to defend and protect its citizens and territory from ballistic missile attack.

A more serious restriction on U.S. collaboration with its allies on SDI came with the adoption of an amendment by Rep. Les AuCoin (D-Ore.), which prohibits foreign firms or governments from receiving SDI research or development funds unless the Department of Defense certifies that the work cannot be done in the United States at an equivalent cost. It passed by a vote of 229 to 187.

Attempts at early deployment of SDI were overwhelmingly rejected. An amendment by Rep. Jack Kemp (R-N.Y.) that sought to require the Defense Department to begin full-scale testing of SDI systems and components to achieve operational capability by 1993 failed on a 121 to 302 vote. A similar amendment by Rep. Jim Courter (R-N.J.) to allocate \$300 million for the deployment of an SDI system that could protect against accidental launches of ballistic missiles was rejected by a 121 to 297 vote.