

# 'Burden-sharing' means U.S. deserting Europe

by Kathleen Klenetsky

The release Aug. 7 of a widely publicized congressional report on defense "burden-sharing" should serve as fair warning that proposals for drastically reducing the U.S. military commitment to Western Europe and Japan not only remain very much alive, but are gaining widespread political support.

Since Sen. Sam Nunn (D-Ga.) introduced his infamous amendment four years ago calling for the withdrawal of American troops from Western Europe, proponents of such alliance-dismembering have tried to cloak their real intentions in a debate on whether U.S. allies are shouldering their fair share of the Western defense burden.

Despite ample evidence to the contrary, the just-released report says they're not.

Produced by a House defense subcommittee created expressly to focus on the burden-sharing issue, the report is clearly designed to lay the grounds for the removal of American forces from key strategic areas around the globe. The panel's chairman is Rep. Pat Schroeder (D-Colo.), a super-liberal who has in the past introduced measures to slash U.S. troop strength in Western Europe by 50%; and its members include some of the most bitterly anti-defense members of Congress, including Rep. Ron Dellums (D-Calif.)

Its main finding is that "European members of NATO must prepare to defend the European continent without a large-scale U.S. commitment of ground forces in the future."

The report argues that, since U.S. economic strength has "declined significantly" relative to Japan and Western Europe, these countries will either have to start financing a large portion of the costs of keeping U.S. troops in their countries, or Washington will sharply reduce its military presence—and, by implication, its defense commitment to them.

As an executive summary of the report puts it: "The Panel states in the strongest possible terms that Europeans had better be prepared to defend their own territory without a large-scale U.S. ground commitment, because that commitment cannot be guaranteed forever. . . . U.S. interests in Europe and the Far East are not as great or as immediate as the interests of the Europeans and Japanese in protecting their way of life. If the allies believe that their defense posture is adequate and that their way of life is not threatened, the Panel

believes that the American taxpayers may not be prepared to continue spending as heavily on the defense of those areas in the future."

Although the Schroeder panel intends to spend another half year at least exploring specific ways that "Europeans could better defend themselves," its interim report does make some specific recommendations. For example, it calls for a "zero-based" study of U.S. military commitments and bases overseas to "assess and prioritize" U.S. interests in various regions of the world, and "realign and possibly withdraw U.S. force levels in some locations overseas according to changing U.S. interests, the ability of our allies to defend themselves with less direct U.S. military assistance and relative changes in the [Soviet] threat."

Implementation of the major thrust of the House subcommittee report could come long before the panel completes its work. The Senate defense appropriations bill—voted up 94-4 Aug. 11—contains a tough burden-sharing package sponsored by Sens. Bennett Johnston (D-La.) and Ted Stevens (R-Alaska). The package orders the secretaries of state and defense to conduct a review of U.S. long-term strategy overseas, to determine what level of U.S. troops deployed abroad is "necessary," and ways to get Europe and Japan to cough up more money for defense. The results of the review must be submitted to Congress by March 1, 1989. It also places a limit on American troop deployments to Japan and Korea (at approximately current levels), and a ceiling on spending for U.S. military personnel stationed overseas. The last provision requires the allies to pay the difference if deployment costs exceed 1988 levels.

"This is the toughest action Congress has taken yet in terms of getting the allies to do more," a congressional aide told *EIR*. He also expressed confidence that the Johnston-Stevens amendments will survive intact when the bill goes into House-Senate conference.

## Europeans alarmed

Coming in the wake of the disastrous INF Treaty, which raised grave questions about the seriousness of Washington's commitment to defend Europe against Soviet attack, congressional moves in the burden-sharing arena have further unsettled America's allies. According to the July 31 London *Sunday Times*, British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher was alarmed enough about the Johnston-Stevens amendments, that she launched "an intensive European lobbying campaign in Washington" against them.

Her efforts do not seem to have worked. President Reagan has not spoken out against this ally-bashing, although he vetoed the Senate defense appropriations bill earlier this month, citing national security. Indeed, several congressional sources report that while Pentagon personnel have raised doubts about the wisdom of this ganging up on Washington's allies, the administration secretly favored the Johnston-Stevens package.