

## Partisan fight over Tower is symptom of Bush malaise

by Leo Scanlon

In a surprise turn of events in the already bizarre hearings on the nomination of Sen. John Tower to the post of Secretary of Defense, the Senate Armed Services Committee on Feb. 23 voted 11-9, on straight party lines, to turn down a presidential cabinet choice for the first time since 1945. The President now finds himself facing an uphill battle to secure the nomination, in a Congress which is increasingly ruled by partisan faction, and dominated by a Democratic Party which has measured the inadequacies of the Bush budget proposals, and is calculating on the coming crisis to break the Republican hold on the White House.

Party politics are the symptom and not the cause of the current problems of the President, however, and numerous sources—ranging from congressional staff to the British intelligence journal *Private Eye*—have hinted that the sabotage of the Tower nomination got a boost from “moles” within the Bush administration itself—notably the Kissinger crowd around Brent Scowcroft.

A coincidence which hints at what is really going on, is the fact that the first mention of “problems” with the Tower nomination appeared in the same issue of the *New York Times* which leaked the fact that National Security Adviser Brent Scowcroft was reorganizing the NSC to centralize strategic policymaking in his hands. Scowcroft, a Kissinger protégé who was until recently the head of the Washington, D.C. office of Kissinger Associates, has also been charged by Bush with carrying out a sweeping review of strategic policy. Scowcroft’s goal is to make sure that no forces emerge from in and around the Pentagon, who would oppose his zero-increase defense budget and his program of dumping the Strategic Defense Initiative.

Tower spared no opportunity to prove that he knew which way the policy winds were blowing, and would be a team player no matter what. As he told his interlocutors at his confirmation hearing, “Nothing is sacred. . . . I understand

that we must live within constraints. I am not such a mindless hawk that I would come to you and ask you for a substantial increase in defense expenditure, when I know that it is not going to happen.”

According to high-level military circles in Washington, many conservative, anti-Kissinger groups had hoped to rally around Senator Tower, in much the same way that Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger held the flag for patriotic circles who found themselves cut off from President Reagan. The senator’s main asset, in this view, is his reputation as one of the meanest and toughest of the breed of pragmatic (i.e., controllable) politicians.

Unfortunately, it has been an axiom of the Bush transition that such factional politics would not be allowed in the cabinet. In fact, it was the emergence of this approach which brought the tenure of Caspar Weinberger to an end last year.

### Trial by slander in the Senate

The unprecedented vote by the Armed Services Committee culminated a hearing process which was unparalleled for viciousness and pettiness, prompting Sen. Robert Dole (R-Kan.) to declare that the mud-slinging “is about to rip this place apart.”

A review of this business begins with the decision of President Bush to nominate Tower, after a prolonged search for a suitable nominee and key deputies. The first hearings, on Jan. 27, were amicable and followed by fulsome praise for Tower by his former colleagues on the Armed Services Committee. The only item which remained was the standard FBI background check into some matters which had been raised, and buried, during the time he led the U.S. delegation to the arms control talks in Geneva.

Those reports, which had circulated in a low-key fashion for some time, were drawn from investigations done by security specialists who were called on to examine an alarming

pattern of "sexual recruiting" efforts by Soviet agents frequenting the bars and hang-outs of the American delegation. One particularly compromised individual, Air Force Col. Robert Moser, came to the attention of State Department Security officer Berne Indahl and Air Force Office of Special Investigations officer Brian Hess.

Colonel Moser had been involved in numerous extramarital liaisons in Geneva, including with known KGB sex-pionage agents, and had even admitted to purchasing hashish in preparation for one of his trysts.

It was not these actions which brought Moser to the attention of the authorities. That was accomplished by a disgruntled secretary, Deborah Baker, who had gone to Colonel Moser with complaints about two colleagues, Kimberly Garvin and Brenda Hudson, secretaries detailed to Tower and his family. Baker complained to Moser that she found the two "nasty and uncooperative." Moser allegedly told her that they were protected by Tower, and there was nothing he could do. Apparently unsatisfied with this response, Baker filed charges of sexual harassment against Moser, then let loose on Garvin and Hudson. According to the OSI summary, she said, "Ambassador Tower did show special attention to his secretaries. . . . I have on one occasion watched Ambassador Tower chase Kim around in the office." This snipe, and similar remarks attributed to Moser, are the entirety of the substance behind the lurid stories of a "sybaritic senator grabbing and pinching nubile secretaries."

Following standard practice, military investigators catalogued each of the comments, and left them as "raw file" material. Sen. Sam Nunn (D-Ga.), chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, reviewed the material some time ago and said, "I think these things have not checked out. There is no corroboration on a number of these." Nonetheless, the report was introduced to the confirmation hearings on Jan. 31.

## Enter, Paul Weyrich

The confirmation hearings launched a process that would be summed up by Sen. Malcolm Wallop (R-Wyo.): "These were voices in the dark, some of whom failed lie detector tests, some of whom would not put their names to their allegations and some of whom were crazy." There was one accuser of Tower who spoke in the light, did not take a lie detector test, and did put his name to his allegations. His name is Paul Weyrich, guru of the New Right.

Weyrich testified that "over many years I have encountered the nominee in a condition lacking sobriety, as well as with women to whom he was not married." (Weyrich admitted that he did not know whether Tower, who is divorced, was married at the time of these alleged sightings!) Weyrich further said that he was concerned whether Tower, as chief of the Pentagon, would undertake needed military reforms—the issue stressed by the White House in all budget negotiations, but not a concern for conservative political organiza-

tions. "I have grave doubts that he will," he intoned.

The testimony of this individual became the focus of a press campaign which revived every innuendo which could be drawn from the old OSI summaries. Two days later, on Feb. 1, this effort was boosted by a scurrilous column penned by Kenneth Adelman, a former official of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency (ACDA), who joined in with vague allegations about the "judgment" displayed by Tower's "activities" in Geneva.

This time, Nunn did not stop the slanders, but fed them, putting the nomination on hold while the FBI was sent to check out rumors about the nominee.

The FBI delivered a report to the White House on Feb. 10; its contents were dismissed by the President as groundless; the report went on to Congress, and the President left for Japan.

By now the Democrats were in a feeding frenzy, fueled by the absurd catalogue of rumors collected by the FBI, not a single one of which could be verified! The one officer who was with Tower 14-16 hours a day, six days a week during the arms talks told *Defense News* that he could categorically deny all the rumors then circulating—but he was never questioned by the FBI!

## The real 'smoking gun'

Who really started the ball rolling? Paul Weyrich? He is a populist, an advocate of the idea that conservatives should support the social policy and military reform politics of none other than liberal Democrat Gary Hart! Several weeks ago, when numerous conservatives expressed their concern about being cut out of the Bush administration, they were told by C. Boyden Gray, "ethics adviser" to the President, "If you want to see us, talk to Paul Weyrich."

Desperate for influence in an administration which has no need for his direct mail constituency, Weyrich is making himself useful to someone in the White House.

Would the President tolerate dirty tricks against Tower, being run out of his own entourage? It is true that the Tower Commission did Bush a very big favor, by keeping his name out of the Iran-Contra mess. Specifically, according to informed sources in Washington, Tower accepted redacted versions of State Department cable traffic which allowed his fortuitous oversight to occur—when he had the authority to demand all the names and dates. It is also true, as some Washington insiders point out, that if Ronald Reagan is called to testify in the Oliver North trial, he will have no immunity, even for actions committed while he was President, and no immunity against perjury charges—unless George Bush asserts executive privilege over the entire matter. Tower's favors might then become very big liabilities.

These are speculations, but the way these sources see it, Bush, like unfortunate predecessors in similar circumstances, is now playing deep in the court of that master of intrigue, Henry Kissinger.