

Congress moves to withdraw from Asia

by Leo F. Scanlon

Congressional budget moves to kill funding for construction at key Asian air bases, are confirming the worst fears of analysts who are predicting a ratchet reduction of American military presence in the Pacific. Both houses of Congress have killed a \$13 million request for construction at Clark Air Force Base in the Philippines, and a site, rumored to be Kunsan AFB, in South Korea—thereby ending Air Force plans to station F-15 E strike aircraft at both bases.

The strategy behind the budget decision did not originate with Congress alone. Although Sen. Sam Nunn (D-Ga.) and Rep. Patricia Schroeder (D-Colo.) remain firm advocates of a collapse of U.S. military presence in those areas where Kissinger-type “regional agreements” are being reached with the Communist powers, the major patron of the policy is National Security Adviser Gen. Brent Scowcroft—the man from Kissinger Associates.

The present cuts are outlined in a report prepared by Scowcroft and former top Navy official (now a Kissinger Associate) R. James Woolsey, containing recommendations to implement the administration’s plans for 0% growth in defense spending. The so-called “American Agenda” report proposes to reduce the Navy to a continental defense force with minimal expeditionary capabilities. Long-range, flexible aircraft carrier battle groups would be replaced by smaller ships, and remaining carrier groups would operate closer to base at significant “savings,” but at the cost of being unable to respond rapidly in a crisis region. “The increasing difficulty of maintaining bases overseas for land-based tactical aircraft suggests the importance of keeping naval tactical air in the force structure, even if it is not deployed forward,” is the language the report uses to describe these cuts.

Strategic umbrella being folded in Korea

The F-15 E wing which will be removed from Korea is particularly significant, as it is a nuclear-capable wing, charged with crucial strike missions against the Asian mainland. The loss of this deterrent in the face of the unrest in China and the abiding insanity of the North Korean regime is only one of several follies being planned in the Pentagon. According to *Defense Daily*, the Joint Chiefs of Staff has prepared a memo

outlining three scenarios for the complete withdrawal of U.S. combat forces from Korea by 1995. Option One would bring back all military units headquarters staff, command, control, and communications capabilities, and intelligence units. Option Two would keep all American air assets intact, but remove the 2nd Infantry Division from the Demilitarized Zone, rebasing them in central Korea. Option Three would keep the air bases intact, but remove all American ground units to other areas in the Pacific.

Gen. Louis C. Menetery, commander of U.S. forces in South Korea, told the Aug. 13 *New York Times* that he sees an end to the need for U.S. troops in Korea in the mid-1990s. Menetery cited “trends” in Korea which would make this possible, including completion of Korean modernization plans, continued economic growth in the Republic of Korea, and restraint of North Korea by the Soviets and China. Menetery told the *Times*, “If those trends continue, there should be stability on the peninsula without the United States being part of the equation in the mid-1990s.”

Philippines on the block also

The decision to cut the F-15 E wing from Clark AFB will send a signal which will be read loud and clear by the anti-American activists which dominate the Aquino government. The decision to withdraw naval forces from Subic Bay, which has been masquerading as a budget matter for several years, has fueled the hopes among pro-Soviet networks for a complete retreat by the U.S. fleet. The reorganization of the Air Force tactical deployment, coupled with an impending shortage of naval tactical fighters, will likely lead to a situation where U.S. tactical fighter forces are de facto out of the Eastern Pacific basin.

The fighter wing which is scheduled to be removed from the two bases was originally based in Europe. Congressional cuts in the U.S. contribution to the restationing costs for an F-15 E wing, forced to move from Spain to Italy, have threatened to bring that unit stateside, further reducing the nuclear umbrella in Europe. From the standpoint of normal strategic considerations, the Navy would be expected to replace the tactical strike wing with an aircraft carrier stationed in the area. The Bush budget has cut the Navy to 14 carrier groups, putting an enormous strain on any plans to operate at high tempo in the Pacific. The current budget will produce a “tremendous shortfall” in all-weather attack aircraft by the mid-1990s, say Navy officials, and the advanced replacements for the current generation strike fighters are likely to be delayed until early in the next century.

A senior naval source told *EIR* that the situation is reflected in the bizarre logic of U.S. naval arms control and regional matters agreements being reached with the Soviets—“we’re only offering proposals we intend to impose on ourselves.” The strategist warned that the real effect will be to secure a major goal of Soviet postwar strategists—the end of U.S. naval presence in the Indian Ocean area.