

## **Congressional Closeup** by William Jones

### **Helms attacks Kissinger policy in Lebanon**

In statements on the Senate floor on Nov. 8, Sen. Jesse Helms (R-N.C.) attacked the treacherous policy of the United States government toward the government of Gen. Michel Aoun, pinning the blame for the treachery on U.S. acquiescence to the Kissinger-authored U.S.-Soviet condominium.

"The State Department . . . for over 15 years has allied itself with the Soviet Union's ally Syria. This policy was created by Henry Kissinger as part of a process toward a United States-Soviet condominium over the Middle East. For the Department of State, Prime Minister Aoun's crime is that he stands for a free and sovereign Lebanon," said Helms. "The State Department imposed the Taif agreement on Lebanon under the guise of an Arab-supported and sponsored initiative. . . . In addition, the State Department and the Soviet Union imposed René Moawad on Lebanon through the Soviet's puppet Syria."

### **Congress votes to raise debt ceiling**

The House voted 269-99 on Nov. 6 to agree to the Senate amendment increasing the statutory limit on the public debt, thereby avoiding a government default. The vote came shortly before the deadline set by Treasury Secretary Nicholas Brady for preparing for auctions to refinance \$13.8 billion in debt falling due on Nov. 9.

The Senate approved the measure by voice vote after efforts to force a compromise on catastrophic health insurance and an attempt to remove Social Security trust funds from deficit calculations, were abandoned. Sen. John Heinz (R-Pa.)

amendment onto the bill which would remove the Social Security surplus from the budget since it masks the real size of the deficit. After a promise from Senate Majority Leader George Mitchell (D-Me.) that the issue would be voted on as soon as possible, Heinz withdrew the amendment.

The legislators succeeded in beating the debt default deadline, but there was a great deal of nervousness before it occurred. "This is a very difficult night for the United States," said Rep. Bill Frenzel (R-Minn.). "We have never defaulted, and we're getting close to it. This is a genuine crisis."

The debt bill raises the government's borrowing limit from \$2.8 trillion to \$3.1 trillion for FY 1990 which ends Sept. 30, 1990. Without the ceiling, the government would have been unable to repay owners of about \$13.8 billion worth of Treasury securities that fell due on Nov. 10. Because of the failure to raise the federal debt limit, the Treasury had on Nov. 1 suspended the sale of U.S. Savings Bonds.

### **Conferees approve China sanctions**

A House-Senate conference committee agreed on Nov. 7 to impose further U.S. sanctions against the People's Republic of China in response to the bloody suppression of the pro-democracy movement.

Among the sanctions adopted were a ban on arms sales, a ban on the sale of U.S. satellite and police equipment, an end to all nuclear cooperation, a bar on further liberalization of export controls, and suspension of U.S. overseas investment insurance.

The sanctions were adopted just after President Bush said there were "enormous geopolitical reasons" for

the United States to have relations with China.

The House adopted the China sanctions on a 418-0 vote. The Senate adopted a slightly different version of sanctions July 14 by an 82-10 vote. The conferees adopted Senate language permitting the President to lift the sanctions if he deems this action "in the national interest." The House offered a somewhat tougher standard requiring that any lifting of sanctions be "in the national security interest."

### **Watchdog committee created for CIA**

The Senate on Nov. 7 approved legislation by a 64-34 vote which would create an independent watchdog committee over the Central Intelligence Agency. The inspector general would be nominated by the President and confirmed by the Senate instead of reporting only to the director, as is done now.

President Bush strongly opposes the Senate plan, which is seen as an outgrowth of the Iran-Contra debacle. "We had the potential [during Iran-Contra] to have a government within a government, selling assets and using the money to run operations with no trail, no trace, and no one would know," said Sen. William Cohen (R-Me.), vice chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee and a member of the special panel that investigated the Iran-Contra affair, in support of the proposal.

The House version of the measure would leave the current organization of the CIA inspector general untouched, but full access to its investigative reports would be required. The House version would tempt a veto, administration sources say.

## **Bush says he is being blocked by Congress**

The Congress is "blocking everything I try to do," President Bush said in a press conference on Nov. 7. Bush urged the press to "get on" Congress for sabotaging all the legislation he is trying to get through.

With an air of desperation, Bush noted the morass in which much of his proposed legislation—the clean air bill, the drug bill, the ethics legislation—has become bogged down, lamenting that the Congress should "support the President as he tries to move this country forward in these areas and not let them dominate debate by blocking everything I try to do." Bush decried the "partisan shift" on Capitol Hill.

## **Pentagon hurt by Gramm-Rudman cuts**

In testimony before the Senate Armed Services Committee, senior military officials told Congress that they would be forced next year to cut 229,000 active duty men and women from the armed forces—roughly 10% of all U.S. military personnel—if the current budget-cutting dispute between the White House and the Congress is not resolved.

Defense Department Comptroller Sean O'Keefe said that budgetary pressures and deficit-reduction requirements facing Congress may result in defense cuts totaling \$150 billion or more from the five-year spending plan President Bush outlined in January. O'Keefe said the cuts, which fall most heavily on personnel accounts, would include an estimated 62,000 man reduction in the active duty Army, 76,000 from the Navy, 80,000 from the Air Force, and

11,000 from the Marines.

Secretary of Defense Richard Cheney on a talk show on Nov. 9 said that sequestration without additional funds being allotted for "reprogramming," would be equivalent to "unilateral disarmament."

## **Republican congressman threatens to bolt GOP**

Republican National Committee chairman Lee Atwater narrowly averted a major embarrassment when he succeeded in keeping a Republican congressman from bolting to the Democratic Party by getting him a key seat on a major committee.

Rep. Arthur Ravenel Jr. (R-S.C.) was prevented from acquiring a seat on the House Merchant Marine and Fisheries Committee by a powerful Republican member of the panel. The Democrats were willing to get him the seat if he would switch to the Democratic Party. This development led to frantic maneuvering by Republican National Committee chairman Lee Atwater in order to keep Ravenel in the fold.

House Minority Leader Robert Michel (R-Ill.) hastily called a meeting of the GOP Committee on Committees to give Ravenel a seat that had been created just a few days earlier when the committee was enlarged.

## **Judiciary Committee fears FBI kidnap powers**

In hearings before the House Judiciary Subcommittee on Civil and Constitutional Rights on Nov. 8, representatives of the Justice Department faced congressional criticism for their new legal opinion which allows the Presi-

dent to order the seizure of terrorists or drug traffickers abroad without the consent of the nations where they are seized.

The legal adviser to the State Department, Abraham Sofaer, also expressed concern over delegating such powers, since it could have an "adverse impact on our bilateral relations with the country in which we act."

Subcommittee chairman Don Edwards (D-Calif.) called such a policy "kidnaping," referring to the fact that the Iranian parliament had cited the Justice Department opinion to say that "they have the same right to come into the United States to arrest their fugitives without our knowledge and kidnap them." Edwards commented, "Maybe the department needs more experience; it needs an education about how the government is supposed to work in a free society."

## **Senators targeted in savings and loan probe**

Five Senators, four Democrats and one Republican, have been implicated in the investigation of the collapse of Lincoln Savings and Loan and the activities of its chairman Charles Keating.

The Senators are accused of intervening with the Federal Home Loan Bank Board at two 1987 meetings to withdraw a rule curbing high-risk investments by savings and loan institutions. Notes provided by former federal bank regulator Edwin Gray to the House Banking Committee indicate that Sen. Dennis DeConcini (D-Ariz.) told bank regulators that Lincoln promised to make less-speculative investments, and asked the bank board to withdraw the direct-investment regulation.