

Congressional Closeup by William Jones

Pressler targets Surinam for 'Haiti treatment'

In comments on the Senate floor on Jan. 28, Sen. Larry Pressler (R-S.D.) warned that Surinam could be the next target for U.S. economic and other sanctions. Pressler warned of the danger of a military coup in that South American country, similar to that which overthrew the renegade regime of Jean-Baptiste Aristide in Haiti.

Pressler intimated that the Surinam military is supporting itself with revenues from the drug trade, which would give further political cover to impose sanctions or launch an invasion.

Pressler has written a letter to President Bush saying that he should "send an unmistakable signal that a military coup is completely unacceptable, and that any coup will be opposed vigorously and effectively." In the case of a military coup, Pressler recommended the immediate imposition of economic sanctions.

Pressure rises for U.S. to recognize Croatia

More resolutions have been introduced in Congress calling for recognition of the independence of Croatia and Slovenia. Over 40 nations have already recognized the two nations.

Sen. Claiborne Pell (D-R.I.) and Senate Minority Leader Robert Dole (R-Kan.) introduced a resolution on Jan. 7 calling for recognition. Pell expressed concern that the United States was "behind the curve," and that other countries, particularly Germany, were taking a leading role. Pell observed that had the United States acted at an earlier date, much of the bloodshed which has occurred in Croatia

could have been avoided.

Pell pointed out that EC recognition of the two countries did in fact bring the Serbs to the negotiating table, contrary to claims that recognition would encourage the Serbs to fight. "I believe," said Pell, "the European Community's push for recognition of Slovenia and Croatia played a part in the cease-fire's holding. Regrettably, the United States can claim little responsibility for these positive developments."

Intelligence chiefs hit nuclear proliferation

In testimony before the Senate Armed Services Committee on Jan. 22, both CIA head Robert Gates and the head of the Defense Intelligence Agency, Gen. Thomas Clapper, said that they would be reorienting their intelligence activities to concentrate on the "danger" of nuclear proliferation.

As both Gates and Clapper indicated, this will involve closer monitoring of all technology transfers because of the so-called dual-use (civilian and military) nature of most high-technology equipment. Clapper said that these "include technologies associated with nuclear power, pesticides, chemical fertilizers, and vaccines."

This is a part of the policy of the Bush administration to place tighter restrictions on all export of high-technology products to Third World countries, a genocidal policy of "technological apartheid" toward the Third World.

Clapper said that he would "seek to sharpen the [intelligence] community's ability to conduct sophisticated assessments of our potential adversaries' military capabilities." Mooting

further regional instability in the Mid-east, Clapper warned of the "resurgence of Iraqi and Iranian military power and nuclear proliferation."

In addition, Gates indicated that the intelligence community would be spending more time in monitoring "economic intelligence"—the trade patterns of U.S. allies. The intelligence community "will focus more sharply on the dynamics of the international economy and the implications of the technological revolution." With the Cold War over, the U.S. will now be viewing its former allies in Europe and Asia as economic adversaries.

Stokes moves for release of House Kennedy files

Rep. Louis Stokes (D-Ohio), the former chairman of the congressional committee that investigated the Kennedy assassination, announced on Jan. 21 that he would ask Congress to order the release of all government documents on the slaying, in an effort to dispel public suspicions that the government was involved in a conspiracy to kill the President. Stokes said the release of the documents could strengthen evidence that mob figures were involved in the assassination.

The committee files could be released only if the House votes to do so. Secret material held by other government agencies, however, can be made public only with the approval of the House, the Senate, and the President. Prospects for such approval are highly unlikely.

Stokes said that FBI transcripts of conversations of several mafia leaders before the assassination had been reviewed by the committee, but were

returned to the FBI, and copies were not in the committee's files. Also of interest, said Stokes, would be the CIA files on Lee Harvey Oswald's defection to the Soviet Union in 1959 and his 1963 trip to Mexico City.

A senior aide to Senate Majority Leader George Mitchell (D-Me.) said that Mitchell supported the fullest possible disclosure of government documents related to the assassination.

Leahy seeks conditions on Israeli loans

Sen. Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.) is expected to introduce a resolution which, under the guise of penalizing Israel for its policy of expanding settlement in the Occupied Territories, is in reality a way to let the Israelis continue without suffering a cutoff of aid from the United States. The Israeli settlements are in direct violation of official U.S. government policy.

In the face of Israeli intransigence, and with Palestinians warning that there can be no further progress on the Mideast peace talks as long as the Israelis continue establishing new settlements, the Bush administration has been trying to come up with a compromise that would maintain a semblance of a "peace process," i.e., keeping the Palestinians at the negotiating table without forcing the Israelis to stop their settlements. The Leahy bill reportedly represents that compromise.

The central issue is the \$10 billion in loan guarantees wanted by the Israelis to finance the immigration of Jews from the Soviet Union to Israel. Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir, facing the breakdown of his coalition and new elections, has refused to cease

settlement activity.

The political clout of the American-Israeli Public Affairs Committee on Capitol Hill has been somewhat curtailed this year because of the economic crisis, which has meant that critical eyes are focused on every dollar appropriated in foreign aid, whoever the recipients might be.

The Leahy resolution would restrict loan guarantees in the first year to \$2 billion, from which would be deducted any money which Israel spends to settle immigrants in the Occupied Territories. Such a compromise seems to be satisfactory to Shamir, who would continue to receive aid without curtailing the illegal expropriation of Arab land.

Infrastructure needed to lower deficit, group says

At a Capitol Hill press conference Jan. 23, Sens. Howard Metzenbaum (D-Ohio) and Paul Simon (D-Ill.) were joined by economists Ray Marshall and Marcus Alexis, who laid out the Coalition for Democratic Values' plan for reviving the U.S. economy. They stressed that investment in infrastructure was necessary for recovery and sustained economic growth.

Their specific proposals were pitiful, however: a \$150 billion defense cut to finance a \$100 billion spending package over a five-year period for infrastructure and human services, job training, and health care.

Ray Marshall said, "To reduce the deficit, you have to have growth." Marcus Alexis agreed, saying, "Growth will generate revenues, the program will have a positive effect on the deficit."

Marshall opposed lowering workers' wages and decried the current

trend of doing so. He said that one can always find someone with lower wages, so that this cannot be the basis for competition. We need the "high-wage, high-productivity option," he said. He noted that productivity has gone down so much, that it takes three times more labor now than in the 1950s to do the equivalent work. Half of the slowdown of productivity is the failure of public investment, he said.

Simon attacked the notion of a consumer-led recovery, saying that when we invest in infrastructure, we can determine where the money is directed, whereas we can never be sure what consumers will do with their money. The largest portion of our debt, he said, is due to the high interest rates.

Ways and Means extends jobless benefits

The House Ways and Means Committee approved on Jan. 28 a \$2.7 billion measure to provide an additional 13 weeks of benefits to an estimated 2 million unemployed workers. The extension would be financed with \$2.2 billion in revenues which are said to have gone unspent in the last fiscal year, and \$500 million from changing the method of paying corporate estimated taxes.

Previous extensions, legislated last year, met with considerable opposition from the White House, which considered them too costly. But the increasing economic decay, symptomized by rising unemployment, and the President's falling popularity have led to a change of heart on the part of the White House. President Bush said he will support the new extension and would sign the bill before a scheduled Feb. 7 congressional recess.