

Neo-con ballistic missile defense aimed at Clinton foreign policy

by Marsha Freeman

For the past month, an uproar has been created internationally by the announcement on Jan. 20 by U.S. Defense Secretary William Cohen that the United States would be increasing its funding for ballistic missile defense (BMD) programs, long a high-profile issue of the Republican Congressional majority. While it might appear from newspaper coverage that President Clinton has acquiesced to the GOP agenda, which would destabilize U.S. relations with Russia, China, and other nations, in fact different forces within the administration are still battling out what the policy will be, and the President has stated that he has not made any decision about deploying any missile defense system, either nationally or in a regional theater.

As Lyndon LaRouche explained in "The New ABM Flap" (*EIR*, Feb. 26), the program that has been put forward by the Republican majority is not a defense policy at all, but a political provocation designed to poison the President's hard-fought initiatives to establish a working relationship with the Russian leadership, and to develop a partnership with China.

The BMD proposal put forward by the Republicans — for both a National Missile Defense and regional Theater Missile Defense — and that which is under consideration in the Defense Department, bears virtually no resemblance to the 1983 Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) that LaRouche designed and President Reagan announced on March 23.

Emasculating the SDI

When the Republican Party took control of the Congress after the November 1994 elections, and began promoting its ballistic missile defense program, President Reagan's SDI had long-since suffered lethal blows. The purpose of the SDI, as announced by Reagan, to make nuclear missiles "impotent and obsolete" through the development of technologies based on "new physical principles," such as lasers and other directed-energy systems, had been under attack from the day President Reagan announced it.

"Star Wars," as the press ridiculed it, was attacked from the "left" as wrecking the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty (ABM) with the Soviet Union, even though the President had invited the Soviets to join with the United States to develop the SDI.

The anti-nuclear, anti-technology faction in the scientific

community simply asserted that the technology proposed would never work. And the fiscally conservative "right" asserted that even if it did work, it would be much too expensive to deploy anyway, never understanding that the industrial-economic resurgence that would result from the mobilization to develop SDI would, like the Apollo space program, return many times to the economy the resources invested in it.

By the time President Clinton came into office in 1993, the SDI program was no longer "strategic," but had been changed in 1991 by President George Bush to focus on defense against limited strikes (because there no longer was a Soviet Union), in a concept dubbed G-Pals. The more advanced space-based directed-energy technology programs had been stripped bare by a Congress that refused to fund them, and what was left were the 1960s-era kinetic kill systems of trying to hit a missile by smashing it into another vehicle. In 1993, then-Clinton Defense Secretary Les Aspin formally changed the name of the Strategic Defense Initiative Organization, the office set up under Reagan, to Ballistic Missile Defense. A proposal by the Russian government for joint development of the "Trust" BMD system, was turned down by the White House.

The 'Gingrich SDI'

With the Republican majority in the Congress in 1994 came a revival of proposals to deploy ballistic missile defense by new Cold War "Third Wavers," who claimed that the United States was imminently vulnerable to ballistic missile attack, either launched accidentally from Russia, or by a "rogue" state.

Less than a month after the 1994 elections, Sen. John Kyle (R-Ariz.) announced that there would be a "legislative assault" in the new Congress on the ballistic missile defense issue, with the intent of forcing the United States to unilaterally break the ABM Treaty with Russia. The ringleader on the House side was Rep. Curt Weldon (R-Pa.), who had lots of propagandistic support from former Pentagon Cold Warrior Frank Gaffney's Center for Security Policy. But the Gingrichites pushing this flight-forward BMD program ran smack up against the "Contract on America" fixation with balancing the Federal budget.

In February 1995, the House of Representatives voted

down legislation that called for the deployment of space-based defense systems, because the majority felt it would break the budget. Even cheaper, ground-based systems were given low priority. The press noted that it was the first split in Gingrich's Contract on America phalanx.

By the spring of 1995, the Russians responded to the Gingrich proposals with concern over the GOP attempts to overturn the ABM Treaty, and although Rep. Duncan Hunter (R-Calif.) and others joined the Weldon bandwagon, no legislation was passed that year.

In early 1996, Defense Secretary William Perry proposed a cut in the fiscal year 1997 funding level for BMD programs, that would result in a slowdown of the Army's Theater High-Altitude Area Defense program (THAAD) and the Navy's Upper Tier system to be based aboard Aegis ships, which was in conflict with the Defense Appropriations Act that had been passed the Congress the year before.

Immediately, Perry and the administration were accused of leaving the United States vulnerable to Chinese missile attack. Gaffney raved in a March 10, 1996 press release that Congress's sense of urgency for developing a BMD was underscored "by the Chinese ballistic missile attacks currently under way against Taiwan," during the Taiwanese elections. Gaffney further repeated, while President Clinton was preparing his summit with Chinese President Jiang Zemin, the ridiculous assertion, made into front-page news by his co-thinkers at the *Washington Times*, that Beijing had stated that "an attack on Los Angeles would be the up-shot of the United States' interference in this so-called 'internal' dispute" between China and Taiwan.

In 1996, Representative Weldon introduced H.R. 3144, which called for a national missile defense to be in place by the year 2003, to defend against "rogue" states and accidental launches. But that proposal was not long for this world, either.

Soon after, the Congressional Budget Office released a report saying that such a defense would be "astronomical" — more than \$40 billion — in cost. This sent the budget balancers into the stratosphere. After it was explained to the analysts that only a kinetic kill, off-the-shelf technology system should be considered, the CBO revised its estimates down to \$4-14 billion. But the bill had already been tarred with the brush of exorbitant cost.

In response to all of this activity over the BMD issue, President Clinton announced in 1996 that the policy of his administration was to continue R&D for ballistic missile defense systems to the year 2000. At that point, he said, a decision to deploy would be made, on the basis of assessing the threat to the United States, the technical readiness of a deployable system, and cost.

By 1997, the industry publication *Aviation Week* reported that the Republicans had lost steam on missile defense. A bill introduced by Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott (R-Miss.) in January was filibustered by opposing Democrats, and was never voted on. President Clinton had indicated that he would

veto any bill that mandated that a BMD system be deployed, because it would take that important decision out of the hands of the President. Lott admitted afterward that the American people did not support the program.

But the neo-cons, led by Gaffney, kept up their drumbeat for anti-China, "rogue state" missile defense. When the bogus campaign to tar the Clinton Presidency with charges of illegal campaign contributions from Chinese interests to influence the administration's policies was launched, it was one more charge added to the list of offenses the President had supposedly committed by increasing U.S. "vulnerability" to the Chinese.

So, too, with the charges made over the past year, led by Rep. Chris Cox (R-Calif.), that the United States has compromised national security by selling commercial communications satellites to China and by buying launches on their Long March vehicles. Before anyone had ever heard of Monica Lewinsky, Gaffney and his crowd called for the President to be impeached for endangering national security, by cozying up to the Chinese.

In 1998, things fared no better for the BMD lobby. On Sept. 9, the Senate rejected a bill by Sen. Thad Cochran (R-Miss.) calling for the deployment of a national missile defense "as soon as technologically possible." (The year 2000 deployment provision had been dropped previous to this bill, since the consistent test failures of the THAAD system made that date unrealistic.) The GOP was joined by only four Democrats in voting to end a filibuster on the bill, far short of the two-thirds required.

Deployment decision postponed

Anticipating that the Republicans would this year, once again, make missile defense an issue, the administration decided to take the initiative. Also, last summer, a blue-ribbon commission appointed by the Congress and led by former Reagan Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld had issued a report criticizing and revising the estimates of potential threat to the United States that had been made by the intelligence agencies in the administration.

The Commission to Assess the Ballistic Missile Threat reported in July that it was their belief that the threat to the United States from "rogue" states could be less than the ten years the administration had earlier estimated. They stated that intelligence capabilities to assess threats is eroding due to budget cuts, that warning times are being reduced, and that nations do not have to spend time developing their own capabilities, because they could just buy them from countries such as Russia and China.

In late December, the Cox Committee, investigating harm to national security by satellite and launch trade with China, issued a 700-page report, which is still classified, calling for draconian measures to be implemented to cripple high-technology trade between the United States and "Communist" China, the Cold Warriors' new "enemy image."

The *New York Times* reported on Jan. 7 that the administration was going to add perhaps \$7 billion to the BMD budget over the next five years to “head off growing criticism from Republicans in Congress that Mr. Clinton was not doing enough to defend the nation from a missile strike.” On Jan. 20, Defense Secretary Cohen made the expected announcement, that \$6.6 billion would be added to the BMD budget *over five years*. He said that the “limited capability we are developing is focused primarily on countering rogue nation threats and will not be capable of countering Russia’s nuclear deterrent.”

Not stressed in the press coverage was the fact that the bulk of the announced “new” money is for fiscal years after the year 2000, *if* a decision is made to deploy. That is, it is a not an immediate infusion of funds into the program. It was also announced that the administration was now officially putting off any possible deployment for at least two years (to 2005 rather than 2003), because of technical problems in the systems. It was clear that the President and others in the administration did not expect the announcement to be seen as drawing a line in the sand with Russia and China.

However, during the Jan. 20 press briefing, Cohen said that the system the Pentagon envisions, of a ground-based anti-missile missile defense, might call for adding a new ground-based radar site, which would violate the ABM Treaty. At that point, he said, “we simply have the option of our national interest indicating we would simply pull out of the Treaty.”

The Russian reaction was immediate. The Russian State Duma (lower house of Parliament), said such a move would be the end of the possibility of passing the second Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty (SALT II). The Russian government indicated that such a unilateral action by the United States would constitute a strategic threat to Russia, and harm the international strategic balance. The Chinese, knowing full well that the same lobby pushing the campaign finance scandals, and the attempt to stop all high-technology trade with China, would try to get President Clinton to go along with theater missile defense for Taiwan, likewise attacked the proposal.

The day after Secretary Cohen’s press conference, National Security Council arms control specialist Robert Bell “clarified” Cohen’s statement, saying that the U.S.-Russian ABM Treaty was the “cornerstone” of strategic stability. This was also stated by Presidential National Security Adviser Sandy Berger. But, the whirlwind of international media hype was already in action. And now, the Clinton administration is in the position of having to explain its policy to the Russians and the Chinese, who are consulting among themselves on how to respond to this situation.

The linkage between these supposedly motherhood-and-apple-pie issues of national security through stopping trade and engagement with China, and protecting the United States and its allies from missile attack, was made clear in a speech by China-basher Representative Cox, delivered to a sympathetic audience in London on Feb. 18. Speaking to the Euro-

pean-Atlantic Group, Cox recognized the British contribution to “the empowerment of individuals, the eclipse of statism and planning,” i.e., making developing nations “free” to be looted by international financial institutions. British “empiricism and pragmatism have been amply vindicated,” he said.

Cox’s admiration for the world’s only remaining empire was followed by his warning of the threats posed to America and its British “cousins” by North Korea, Iraq, Russia, and China, underscoring the need for ballistic missile defense.

There will be an increasing number of political destabilizations by the neo-cons over the next month, leading up to Chinese Prime Minister Zhu Rongji’s visit to Washington in early April. Two reports by the Pentagon that were mandated by the Republican-controlled Congress in last year’s Defense budget bills, in order to stir up trouble in U.S.-China relations, have been sent to the Congress. One report deals with security across the Taiwan Strait—the vulnerability of Taiwan to Chinese military action (see article that follows)—and the other is on the possibility of regional Asian deployment, including for Taiwan, of U.S. missile defense systems.

Although both reports are still classified, there has been no want of newspaper headlines in periodicals such as the *Wall Street Journal*, accusing the Chinese of aiming hundreds of missiles at Taiwan, and calling for theater missile defense to protect it.

According to the Feb. 22 issue of *China News*, published in Taiwan, the Pentagon sent high-level officials to Beijing and to Taipei to brief Chinese officials on what the United States is considering for theater missile defense, and to receive their input, in order to try to avoid making the report provocative.

Satellite export license denied

But, shooting itself in the foot, the Clinton administration announced on Feb. 23 that it would deny Hughes Space and Communications a license to sell a commercial communications satellite system to the Asia-Pacific Mobile Telecommunications consortium, because the enterprises that make up the 51% Chinese ownership of the company, are connected to the People’s Liberation Army.

While administration spokesmen from the White House, Pentagon, and State Department all denied that this signalled any change in U.S. export policy toward China, industry officials report that this is the first time a satellite export license has been denied, and bodes ill for the future of U.S.-China aerospace and other high-technology trade.

An increasing number of nations are recognizing that it is not technology transfers, or missiles from China, or “rogue states” that are the strategic threat, but rather, as LaRouche makes clear, the economic death-wish of international financial institutions for the developing nations. The White House has precious little time to reverse its support for disastrous “free market” economic policies, if it hopes to maintain partnerships with Russia and China.