

Congressional Closeup by Kathleen Klenetsky

Congress mimics Moscow in attack on defense

Demonstrating total disregard for the security of the United States and its allies, the U.S. Congress chopped, lopped, and amended the 1987 defense authorization bill so brutally, that the end result might well have been fashioned by the Soviet Presidium.

In their handling of the bill during the first weeks of August, the Senate, and the House even more so, not only slashed general defense spending levels, as well as allocations for certain key technologies. They also tried to restructure the entirety of Reagan administration strategic and arms-control policies, through a series of amendments that would completely reorient the Strategic Defense Initiative, force the U.S. to impose a nuclear-test moratorium on itself, require U.S. compliance with the discredited, unratified SALT II treaty, ban testing of anti-satellite weapons, and other dangerous idiocies.

The overall spending levels allocated by the Congress testify to the utter stupidity and downright treachery prevailing on the Hill. Whereas President Reagan had proposed a \$320 billion military budget—representing a tiny 3% increase over 1986 defense spending levels—the Senate voted 86-3 to cut that down to \$295 billion, while the Democratic-controlled House went even further, reducing military spending to a measly \$286 billion.

Contrary to last year, when the administration acquiesced in massive defense budget cuts, the White House is threatening to veto the more egregious assaults on the defense bill.

At the White House briefing Aug. 13, Larry Speakes sharply criticized the House's actions on the defense bill. "Steps that would reduce our defense modernization, specifically SDI, are the wrong actions taken at the wrong time," said Speakes, adding that President Reagan would seriously consider vetoing any measure aimed at forcing him to abide by the 1979 SALT treaty. "We would regard this as a serious step toward trying to control the President's conduct of foreign policy by the legislative branch. . . . A veto would certainly be recommended to him."

In an Aug. 14 statement, the White House charged that the House bill "threatens to reduce our national security and undercut the delicate and sensitive arms-control negotiations now under way."

The statement also charged that the bill "has the effect of tying the President's hands when we should be strengthening his hand for negotiations with the Soviet Union. It affects the prospects for real reduction in nuclear weapons," and is "an improper vehicle to legislate foreign policy," which "gives the Soviets many things they want without the necessity of negotiation."

Two Senate-approved amendments have caused particular concern to SDI backers. One, sponsored by Trilateral Commission member John Glenn (D-Ohio), and passed 64-33, prohibits foreign governments and firms from receiving contracts for research and development of the SDI unless the defense secretary certifies that the work "cannot be reasonably performed by a U.S. firm."

Glenn reached hypocritical heights in motivating the measure. "I say it's time we support ourselves," he declared. "At a time when we're cutting back on our own research efforts in our own country [and] our own universities are crying for help in this country . . . we're going to curry favor with our allies who won't share their burdens to begin with and we're going to give them our research money."

Glenn's ostensible concerns ring hollow, when viewed against his consistent opposition to SDI funding. One could safely wager that what he really aims to achieve with his amendment is not protection of U.S. technology, but the destruction of allied support and participation, deemed crucial to the SDI's success, as Secretary Weinberger emphasized on the "Today" show Aug. 13.

The second troublesome amendment, sponsored chiefly by Sen. Sam Nunn (D-Ga.), an agent-of-influence of the Trilateral Commission circles of Henry Kissinger and Zbigniew Brzezinski, directs the President to restructure the SDI so that its major focus would be on defending U.S. missiles and command centers rather than populations.

This contradicts Reagan's oft-stated goal for the SDI, namely, to defend the U.S. and allied *populations* against nuclear attack. In the days immediately preceding the Senate action, Reagan and Weinberger both went out of their way to assert as clearly as possible, that SDI is not a terminal defense program. But the Senate, true to form, decided that no defense is better than defense.

'Strangle the SDI in its crib'

The system which came under the most brutal attack from the KGB loyalists on the Hill was, as expected, the Strategic Defense Initiative. Both houses conducted days of acrimonious debate over the system, which holds the potential for defending the West's population against a nuclear holocaust.

Voting 239-176 on Aug. 12, the Democratic-controlled House gouged more than \$2 billion out of the administration's \$5.3 billion SDI request for FY87, in effect freezing the budget at this year's level. Amendments to slash the program's budget to \$1 billion (proposed by superliberal California Democrat Ron Dellums), and to restore the funding requested by the administration, were both defeated.

Attacks on the system bordered on the rabid. "It is time to strangle 'Star Wars' in its crib," screeched Rep. Ed Markey (D-Mass.), during floor debate Aug. 12. "If we don't," he continued, "we will rue the day when we missed this opportunity. It's time to take Star Wars out of the heavens and put it on the table in Geneva."

New York Rep. Bob Mrazek, one of Markey's ultraliberal colleagues, argued that Americans think under Reagan's vision of the SDI they could step outside after dinner and watch "the pinball wizards of the 'Star Wars' program blast Soviet warheads out of the sky." "We're talking," he continued, "about the biggest pork-barrel project in the history of the world. It will set in motion a whole new nuclear arms race between the United States and Soviet Union."

Although funding for the SDI fared somewhat better in the Senate, where

it received \$3.95 billion, that body placed restrictions on the program's functioning which could prove more devastating than outright budget cuts.

Going back to the SALT II treaty

The House passed another amendment which could have an even more deleterious impact on the conduct of U.S. strategic policy, and members were so intent on doing so that they didn't hesitate to step wholly outside the U.S. Constitution's separation of powers (what else from a body that passed Gramm-Rudman!). The measure, approved 225-186, bars funds for deployment of any nuclear weapons that violate limits of the 1979 SALT II treaty. Republican Minority Leader Robert Michel of Illinois characterized the votes as reflecting "an attempt by critics to dismantle [Reagan's] foreign policy, amendment by amendment."

Washington Democrat Norman Dicks said the vote to force Reagan to stay within SALT II "may be the most important arms-control vote in this decade."

The Senate passed a non-binding resolution urging the administration to continue compliance with the treaty.

Chemical weapons were another major defense system that took it on the chin. By a one-vote margin, House members knocked out of the defense bill \$68 million for the new binary chemical weapons program Reagan had requested. "This fulfills a long held Soviet objective for a chemical-free zone in Western Europe," said Illinois

Republican John Porter.

Differences between the House and Senate versions of the defense authorization bill must go to conference. That means there is still time for the American people to force Congress into undoing at least the worst damage.

Banning nuclear tests and ASATs

Congress wrought intense damage to U.S. national security in other areas as well. On Aug. 8, the House voted 234-166 for an amendment to impose a one-year test ban on all but the smallest U.S. nuclear weapons. The moratorium, strongly opposed by the Reagan administration, would take effect Jan. 1, 1987.

On the same day, the Senate endorsed a non-binding amendment to the defense bill which calls upon Reagan to resume negotiations on a comprehensive test ban treaty with Moscow, and to submit two other more limited treaties for Senate ratification.

Sen. Ted Kennedy (D-Mass.), a chief sponsor of the test-ban resolution, roused himself from a drunken stupor long enough to say that the amendment represents the first step toward a comprehensive test ban. "It will not end the arms race," he said, "but it does play an important role in putting a brake on the proliferation of weapons systems."

That is a cover-story for treason. What a test ban would actually do—and this is the reason Moscow has been promoting it like crazy—is stop the testing of U.S. nuclear weapons essential to SDI, in particular, nipping in the bud development of the x-ray laser.