

Congressional Closeup by Ronald Kokinda

Senate completes defense bill

The Senate passed the defense authorization bill by a vote of 56-42 on Oct. 2, containing arms control measures that only the House had dared approve in the past. These measures include development restrictions on the Strategic Defense Initiative based upon a narrow interpretation of the ABM Treaty, and prohibitions against the administration exceeding nuclear launcher limits prescribed by the 1979 unratified SALT II Treaty.

The Senate voted 57-41 on Oct. 2 to force compliance with the SALT II treaty despite the fact that it is unratified. Sen. Jesse Helms (R-N.C.) also outlined how the Soviet Union has violated the overall treaty and three of the chief nuclear launcher sublimits.

The funding level of \$303 billion for defense also faces compromise with the House's lower figure of roughly \$289 billion; is contingent upon Reagan accepting tax increases; and, as a final blow, could face up to \$8 billion or more in additional automatic sequestration under the Gramm-Rudman budget cutting schedule, which Reagan reluctantly accepted in order to raise the debt ceiling and avoid a national default.

While Reagan has threatened to veto the bill over the SDI and SALT constraints, Senate Majority Leader Robert Byrd (D-W.V.) and Armed Services Committee Chairman Sen. Sam Nunn (D-Ga.) said they would insist on keeping the constraints. "These issues are not going to fade away with a veto," Nunn said. Byrd added, "Sooner or later he's going to have to sign a bill that pays for the men and women who defend this country."

The vote on the SALT limits, and the 58-38 vote on restricting SDI, indicate that a veto could be sustained.

Other unilateral arms control constraints were rejected during consideration of the bill. Attempts by Sen. Mark Hatfield (R-Ore.) to limit underground nuclear testing and to prevent the assembly of binary chemical weapons were defeated by votes of 61-36 and 53-44, respectively, on Sept. 24. The Senate also rejected an attempt by Sen. John Kerry (D-Mass.) to impose a ban on Anti-Satellite (ASAT) testing by a vote of 51-47 on Sept. 22.

Ratification of INF pact questionable

Growing Senate concerns over reliable verification of an imminent U.S.-Soviet treaty on Intermediate Nuclear Forces (INF), especially in light of massive Soviet cheating on past treaties, is putting Senate ratification of the proposed INF treaty into questionable status.

Sen. Jesse Helms (R-N.C.) offered an amendment to the defense authorization bill which expressed the sense of the Senate that "no treaty on intermediate nuclear forces should be concluded unless verifiable, nor signed until the President has certified to Congress that the U.S.S.R. is no longer violating the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty."

After reviewing President Reagan's statements to the Congress on June 3, 1986, that there is a "growing strategic imbalance between the U.S. and U.S.S.R.," that the Soviets now have a "first strike capability" which is "seriously eroding the stability of the strategic balance" (which has resulted in a "loss in the survivability of U.S. strategic forces"), Helms warned that we should "not condone or forgive Soviet violations . . . by signing a new arms control treaty in the face

of an expanding pattern of Soviet violations."

Defeated 62 to 28 on Sept. 24 as opponents condemned the amendment as a "treaty-killer," it nevertheless came close to the 34 votes necessary to block treaty ratification.

Over 20 Republican Senators privately wrote the President the week of Sept. 27 that it would be "a grave mistake" to seek INF approval before the five-year review of ABM violations. They accused the administration of blocking the review, due this fall, because it would endanger INF ratification and embarrass Gorbachov on his summit visit. The Senate had adopted an amendment to the Defense bill by Sen. Dan Quayle (R-Ind.) by unanimous vote on Sept. 16 asserted that the Soviets are in violation of the ABM Treaty, violations discovered by satellite means which will not be able to detect INF violations.

Other concerns include the threat to NATO which the INF treaty poses. The Senate adopted by voice vote another Quayle amendment that U.S. troop commitments should remain at "existing levels" provided that all basing agreements remain in effect. It also unanimously adopted an amendment by Sen. Robert Byrd requiring the Secretary of Defense to study an INF treaty's impact on nuclear deterrence in Europe and the maintenance of NATO's flexible response strategy.

Commission for Third World debt proposed

Senator John Kerry (D-Mass.) introduced Sen. Joint Res. 193 on Sept. 30 to establish a national bipartisan commission on Third World debt. Reps. Robert Garcia (D-N.Y.) and Walter Fauntroy (D-D.C.), chairmen of the House Banking subcommittees on In-

ternational Finance, Trade, and Monetary Policy, and International Development Institutions and Finance, respectively, introduced the identical resolution in the House.

Kerry said that a bipartisan commission was necessary "to forge a consensus on an issue that for the last five years has cast a cloud over international financial relations, has stymied economic growth and development in Third World countries, and has threatened the political stability of emerging democracies."

Sponsors strongly emphasized the damage that the debt crisis has done to the U.S. economy. "It is estimated that as many as 1 million [U.S.] jobs may have been lost as a result of the debt crisis," Representative Garcia said. "The debt crisis has severely inhibited the growth potential of that market."

Kerry added, "The debt crisis means less growth, less sales, and less jobs. It also means instability in credit markets, thereby making it more difficult for businesses to obtain credit for plant expansions, farmers to obtain needed credit, and consumers to finance purchases of homes and automobiles." Kerry referred to estimates that "debt related austerity" in five developing countries—Brazil, Mexico, Argentina, Venezuela, and the Philippines—"reduced U.S. exports to these countries by \$5 billion and increased exports from them by almost \$9 billion, thereby reducing employment in the U.S. by more than 200,000 full-time jobs in nonservice industries."

Kerry noted that the ratio of debt to exports of the debtor nations, "a measure of ability to service debt," increased from 270 to 338 while there was a net outflow of capital from debtor nations of \$30 billion to creditor nations. The crisis, he said, "is not amenable to piecemeal solutions."

The proposed commission would

consist of 17 members, 7 to be appointed by the President and 5 each by the House Speaker and Senate Majority Leader, and would submit its report within a year.

Modeled explicitly on the Greenspan commission which cut Social Security, the commission would document and analyze the impact of the debt crisis on both the Third World and the United States, review the debt proposals contained in the trade bill, and "develop concrete recommendations for resolving the debt crisis."

Congress moves to halt Saudi arms sale

Led by Robert Packwood (R-Ore.) and Alan Cranston (D-Calif.) in the Senate and Mel Levine (D-Calif.) and Lawrence Smith (D-Fla.) in the House, forces are lining up to block a proposed sale of arms to Saudi Arabia of a dozen F-15 fighters, 1,600 Maverick air-to-ground missiles, and upgrades for M-60 tanks which the administration is expected to formally submit to Congress shortly.

On Sept. 28, 64 Senators wrote the President warning against the sale because of alleged Saudi "lack of cooperation with U.S. forces in the Gulf." The Pentagon and other administration spokesmen have said repeatedly that Saudi cooperation has been satisfactory.

The letter also complains of Saudi support for the PLO and failure to offer "minimum cooperation" to U.S. efforts in the Middle East peace process.

A similar letter from the House had 225 signers, and organizers said they expected to have 291 shortly, the two-thirds necessary to override a certain presidential veto of congressional disapproval.

A recent proposed sale was withdrawn after 67 Senators objected. The sales success will hinge this time on the 2 or 3 votes of 34 necessary to sustain a veto.

Soviet perestroika will aid military

The Joint Economic Committee Subcommittee on National Security Economics held several hearings beginning on Sept. 10 to review Soviet economic reforms, and was told by the Defense Intelligence Agency that Gorbachov's perestroika will aid Soviet military capability.

"We do not believe that Mikhail Gorbachov has launched his modernization program for altruistic reasons," the DIA witness said. "His program is aimed . . . at assuring the long-term security of the nation." Should the reforms be successful, the DIA spokesman said, the "U.S. will be facing a substantially stronger Soviet Union, economically, politically, and militarily, in the 21st century."

The DIA spokesman said that "all these changes [of reform] would not impact negatively," but more likely, "the result could be a more effective military." If economic growth rates are boosted, the DIA estimated that the military share of Soviet GNP would remain at roughly 15-17%. "If the disruptive nature of the economic adjustments prevents growth from accelerating, the military's share could increase. In any case, we do not believe the military will suffer any diminution in capabilities."

A CIA witness told the JEC that if the reforms have not produced "dramatic results" by the mid-1990s, "this could be the catalyst that finally allows his [Gorbachov's] critics to unite and depose him."