

Congressional Closeup by Kathleen Klenetsky

Congress takes action on China's arming of Iran

The Senate voted unanimously Oct. 22 in favor of a resolution which urges the United States to hold up all transfers of military technology to China, until it agrees to support an arms embargo against Iran.

The resolution was prompted by growing concerns over Beijing's ongoing sale of weapons to Iran, especially Silkworm missiles. Chinese-made Silkworms have proven to be a most dangerous weapon in the Iranian arsenal, and have been deployed in force against non-belligerent shipping in the Gulf, including the Oct. 15 attack on the American-owned tanker *Sungari*.

Citing administration sources, the *Washington Times* reported Oct. 28 that China has resumed arms sales to Iran, and may be on the verge of supplying a new batch of Silkworms to Teheran. The paper also reported that on Oct. 27, Iranian spokesman Ali Safavi announced that Iran was transporting more Silkworms to the Faw peninsula in preparation for new attacks, and also boasted that 100 Iranian soldiers had been secretly trained in China to operate them.

Besides calling for the United States to "review all transfers of United States military-related technology" to the P.R.C., the Senate measure says the administration should make a "strong representation" to Beijing that the continued transfer of Silkworms "may seriously jeopardize United States-China relations."

Rep. Gerald Solomon (R-N.Y.) introduced an identical resolution to the House of Representatives Oct. 27. "The carnage" of the Gulf war "has gone on long enough," Solomon said, "and China should stop being a party to it."

Budget negotiations: at a dead end?

Budget negotiations between Congress and the White House were headed nowhere—at least nowhere constructive—as *EIR* went to press. Congress got the White House to agree to its demands for a "budget summit," which is supposed to work out an agreement on how to cut an additional \$23 billion from the FY 1988 budget, in order to avoid the Gramm-Rudman automatic sequestration process, but the ensuing hours of meetings had yet to produce any significant result.

After a four-hour meeting on Oct. 29, the best that White House Chief of Staff Howard Baker could say about the negotiations, was that, "I feel good about them." Sen. Pete Domenici (R-N.M.), felt compelled to warn that, while "I feel a little more optimistic . . . we're a long way from a conclusion."

On the same day, the House passed a \$23 billion deficit reduction package of its own—partly to put more pressure on the White House to accept Democrat demands for a tax hike, but also in anticipation that the budget summit process would break down in a dispute over tax hikes, or how much spending to cut from various programs. House Speaker Jim Wright (D-Tex.) hailed the House measure, which included \$12 billion in new revenues, as "honest-to-God deficit reduction."

That is baloney, as Wright well knows. The ratcheting stock market collapse which began Aug. 25 has wiped out massive amounts of tax revenues. The budget deficit which will result is beyond anyone's imagining. For Congress and the White House to play around with cutting the budget is a useless, irresponsible, and dangerous game.

Wright actually has a somewhat

better understanding of what's at stake in the Wall Street debacle than many of his colleagues. In a statement issued Oct. 20, Wright stated that the "unprecedented plunge in the stock market" reflects the country's "severe economic problems." The most challenging problem "is the bubble of debt" both public and private. "The only way these debts can be repaid is for the American people to produce at least as much as we consume."

Another serious problem, said Wright, "is the erosion of America's industrial strength. We have allowed the marauding acquisition of companies to substitute for the basics of manufacturing and producing. Speculation has replaced real investment and America's competitive edge has been blunted."

If Wright really believes that, why doesn't he do something about reversing the nation's slide into the post-industrial society?

Rep. Brown may probe x-ray laser charges

One of the Strategic Defense Initiative's bitterest foes is about to take up the cudgels against one of the program's key components: the x-ray laser.

California Democrat George Brown wants to investigate charges leveled by the Southern California Federation of Scientists, charging that Dr. Edward Teller and his collaborator, Dr. Lowell Wood of Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory, have consistently lied about the potentialities of the x-ray laser. The Federation's charges are reportedly based on information supplied by, among others, Ray Woodruff, a scientist who used to work at Livermore on the program.

According to his office, Brown, together with Rep. Charles Bennett (D-Fla.), held "private and confidential" talks with Woodruff in Washington Oct. 23.

Brown—who travels in the circles of Carol Rosin, a Washington-based conduit for Soviet disinformation against the SDI—might want to exercise some caution: Two years ago, similar charges were leveled against Teller and Wood. But an investigation carried out by the General Accounting Office exonerated the two men completely.

House Appropriations adopts arms-control steps

Anyone hoping that Congress's insanity on defense issues might run into snags in Rep. Jamie Whitten's House Appropriations Committee must be sorely disappointed. On Oct. 29, the panel approved a defense appropriations bill for FY 1988 which contains severe restrictions on the development of U.S. military capabilities, and a direct challenge to the President's constitutionally mandated authority to make treaties.

The restrictions would halt final-stage tests of anti-satellite weapons; require adherence to the defunct and unratified SALT II Treaty; halt all but the smallest tests of U.S. nuclear weapons; and block tests of SDI systems that violated the "narrow" (i.e., Russian) interpretation of the ABM Treaty.

Those same four provisions are included in the defense authorization bill passed by the full House; while the Senate endorsed two of them—those requiring compliance with SALT II and the restrictive reading of the ABM Treaty—in its Pentagon authorization measure.

The full House is expected to take up the defense appropriations bill in early November. President Reagan has already vowed to veto any bill containing these provisions.

Specter proposes post-Irangate CIA 'reform'

Sen. Arlen Specter (R-Pa.) has introduced two related bills that would revamp the post of Director of Central Intelligence, give Congress greater say-so in covert operations, and send government officials who lie to Congress to jail.

Specter introduced S.1818, the "National Security Reform Act," and S.1820, the "National Intelligence Reform Act," on Oct. 27, motivating both on the basis of the Irangate experience. The two bills aim at greatly increasing Congress's involvement in intelligence activities; they fail utterly to address the key question of the intelligence community's overall mission.

S.1818 would require the President to provide written findings in cases where he wishes to authorize the CIA to expend funds for covert activities. Many of the subsequent problems that arose in the Iran arm-for-hostages fiasco, he argued, stemmed from the fact that the President's finding was first made orally. "This specific provision," Specter claims, "would preclude any future argument that the delivery of arms to Iran was legally justified, after the fact, by a retroactive finding or that other entities or actors were not bound by the same limitations affecting the CIA."

The measure requires that Congress be informed within 24 hours after the President authorizes a covert operation. In addition, it establishes an Independent Inspector General for

the CIA, on the grounds that currently, the IG is usually appointed internally, which "is not conducive to objectivity." The measure "would greatly increase the independence and credibility" of the post, Specter says, by making the IG a permanent, statutory official, who would be appointed by the President and would also require Senate approval. To increase accountability to Congress, the bill requires the IG to submit semi-annual and special reports to the Intelligence Committees, as well as to the DCI.

The bill also provides for a mandatory jail sentence for any officer or employee of the United States "who provides false information" to any committee or subcommittee of the Senate or House.

Specter's second bill concerns mostly the office of DCI, and is directed at severing any connection between intelligence gathering and analysis, and operations.

It would divide the DCI into two separate posts: one responsible solely for advising the President on foreign intelligence matters; and supervising all intelligence-gathering matters; the other charged with managing the agency and carrying out covert activities.

"We cannot afford to have two secretaries of state, two foreign-policy makers who may be attempting to move the country in different directions, one overtly and one covertly," Specter argues. "The problem is particularly acute when the DCI is a foreign-policy activist. Director William Casey was not the first DCI who desired to be involved to some degree in the formulation of implementation of foreign policy, nor is he likely to be the last. Recognizing this, we should take steps to ensure . . . some structural separation of the DCI's current function."