

ful and not be swept off our feet," he warned.

Senate beefs up AIDS testing in VA hospitals

Despite bitter opposition from liberal quarters, the Senate approved legislation Dec. 3 that would require the Veterans Administration to offer AIDS testing to all of its 280,000 hospital-ized patients under the age of 40.

The provision, added to an omnibus bill providing new benefits to veterans, was sponsored by Sen. Jesse Helms (R-N.C.), who has offered other AIDS testing measures in the past.

The amendment radically modifies the original legislation, which had specifically prohibited any widespread HIV testing program in VA hospitals. Helms's proposal struck down this provision, and replaced it with one requiring the VA to make the AIDS test available on the basis described above.

Most of the opposition came from the usual suspects—people like Sen. Alan Cranston (D-Calif.), who adamantly opposes widespread AIDS testing, especially any program that has the faintest whiff of not being strictly voluntary. In statements on the Senate floor, Cranston decried what he called a "disconcerting trend—the rush to test as some sort of mystical cure for two of our nation's major health problems, AIDS and drug abuse."

But several veterans organizations, including the Disabled American Veterans, also opposed the measure, partly on grounds that money to finance the testing program would come out of the VA's already restricted budget, and not from additional appropriations.

Senate panel bars Stinger sales to Bahrain

The Senate Appropriations Committee has approved two amendments to the FY1988 foreign aid bill that are certain to sour relations between the United States and two strategically important nations: Bahrain and India.

The panel voted Dec. 3 to bar the sale of Stinger anti-aircraft missiles to any nation in the Persian Gulf for the next year, a decision which would block a planned sale to Bahrain. In doing so, the committee ignored pleas from Defense Secretary Frank Carlucci and Joint Chiefs chairman Adm. William Crowe, who met with committee members for more than an hour to urge them not to enact the ban.

The administration representatives reportedly stressed that Bahrain has quietly supported American interests in the Mideast for four decades, and that the country had been particularly helpful to the current Persian Gulf escort deployment. Bahrain has requested the Stingers on the grounds that it needs them to protect its oil installations from Iranian attack.

But the committee voted in favor of the prohibition, sponsored by Sen. Dennis DeConcini (D-Ariz.)

In the case of India, the panel approved a measure the same day, to prohibit the sale of U.S. high-tech items to India, unless India curtails its nuclear weapons development.

The Indian government scored the move. A senior official told the *New York Times* that the action was "completely unacceptable," and, if enacted into law, relations with the United States would "suffer across the board."

The official also warned that the panel's action had already bolstered Indian political factions who oppose improved relations with the U.S.

"There is no dearth of critics of our policy," the official said. "Now people will be saying that we're back to square one with the United States."

Science chairman decides to shelve SDI

The Soviet Union has won an important ally to its campaign to destroy the Strategic Defense Initiative, under the guise of American-Soviet collaboration in the "peaceful uses of space."

House Science, Space, and Technology Committee chairman Rep. Robert Roe (D-N.J.), clambered on board the bandwagon, after a Dec. 3 meeting with Roald Sagdeyev, who, in addition to heading the Soviet Space Research Institute, has been among the principal Soviet lobbyists against the SDI.

At a joint press conference the same day, Roe declared that he wants to shelve the SDI and instead join hands with the Soviets on a joint Mars mission. A common effort to explore Mars, he said, could shift the focus on space away from "Star Wars" to a mutual "Star Trek."

"The rewards and benefits to mankind in space are 10,000 times better than the destruction of mankind in space," Roe said, as Sagdeyev stood by smiling. The committee chairman also disclosed that he had urged President Reagan to discuss the prospects of a joint mission to Mars with Mikhail Gorbachov at the summit.

The Soviets, along with their sympathizers in the United States, notably "nuclear winter" pseudo-scientist Carl Sagan, have been carefully promoting the joint Mars mission as an alternative to the "militarization of space" through the SDI program.