

Bush team digs its own grave, dumps the SDI

by Leo Scanlon

When Lyndon LaRouche was asked what political consequences would flow from the judicial frame-up and jailing of himself and six associates, he said that if he were brought down by these foul means, the Bush administration would not be far behind. Right on schedule, not two weeks after the jailing of LaRouche—an act which enjoyed the tacit or explicit approval of the incoming administration—the “Bush team” has crashed into a series of policy blunders, has yet to secure congressional approval for its cabinet nominees, and is demonstrating vacillation on the very national security issues which many hoped would be the strong suit of this administration.

Three times during the first weeks of February, administration spokesmen were asked by this magazine: “Where do you stand on the Strategic Defense Initiative?” and the three different answers demonstrate that the program is a bargaining chip. Worse yet, it will be bargained not against Soviet weapons systems, but against congressional budget plans!

EIR's Nicholas F. Benton asked Office of Management and Budget director Richard Darman about SDI funding, during Darman's press briefing prior to Bush's State of the Union message on Feb. 9. Darman said that funding would remain the same as in Reagan's budget for the time being, but it was conditional on the outcome of a review of the program that was scheduled to get under way soon.

On Feb. 11 in Ottawa, Canada, Benton asked Bush during a brief press conference if the SDI were indeed conditional on the outcome of a review. Bush, who was walking away from the microphone at the end of the press conference, shook his head.

Then, on Feb. 14, Benton placed these two contradictory responses before White House spokesman Marlin Fitzwater during a daily White House briefing. “Which one is true?” Benton asked. Fitzwater said that Darman's response was the correct one, because “The President wants to keep his options open.”

The contradictory remarks indicate the problems already besetting the technocratic team of policymakers, which is being bushwhacked by the developing economic breakdown. The haste behind the jailing of LaRouche in the Alexandria, Virginia “rocket docket” betrayed the hopes of the Bush team

that by silencing the voice of “dissent” on economic policy matters, they would buy the time to put “the team” together, before the crisis hit.

The jailing of LaRouche was not the only indication of the administration's fear of addressing emergency economic measures needed to put military and budgetary planning on a sound footing. Darman has made it clear to Congress, for example, that he is willing to accept Gramm-Rudman sequestering—automatic budget cuts—in order to head off a budget blow-out. In that context, as he said, the SDI is “conditional” upon the commitment to subordinate defense policy to overall budgetary strategy. For its part, the Congress has repeatedly cut the SDI budget, and leading defense staffers say that the aim is to bring the SDI funding down from the administration proposal of \$5.6 billion to less than \$4 billion, and to bring the program back to the status it held when each of its components was funded line by line.

As defense policymaker Fred Iklé stated in a congressional seminar last year, the strategy is to fund SDI research, and use deployment as a threat.

That concept is the classic view of the arms control Establishment, and the Kissinger group in particular, and it is Kissinger hand Brent Scowcroft, who is conducting the policy review referenced by Darman. This review was promised by President Bush before his inauguration, and the appointment of an august group of Establishment regulars to his cabinet was supposed to speed the results and prepare the new administration to aggressively engage Gorbachov at the bargaining table.

Major policy decisions stalled

In December 1988, Bush announced that he would delay the resumption of talks on a treaty to halve the superpowers' stocks of long-range nuclear weapons beyond the Feb. 15 date set by the Reagan administration, and has since pointed out that he is unable to deal with these and other arms control matters until his team completes its policy review.

The White House has also put on hold its commitment to meet a congressionally mandated February deadline for deciding whether to back the MX or Midgetman mobile nuclear missiles. The Reagan defense budget predicated major sav-

ings on a plan to eliminate the Midgetman—a pet project of NSC director Scowcroft. Since the Midgetman program represents a commitment to as much as \$50 billion eventually, this one decision will shape a major part of the administration's budget strategy.

Similarly, it has been leaked that the Joint Chiefs of Staff is rewriting its annual net assessment, in order to bring the document into line with the budgetary strategy of the new administration. The "net assessment" shapes the overall budgetary strategy of military planning and procurement of-ficers.

The picture which emerges is of an administration obsessed with budgetary concerns, and unable to push any decisive policy. The Soviets have taken full advantage of this by tossing out mock "concessions" on arms policy, each of which has been designed to further stymie the administration. Gorbachov's phony troop and equipment reduction proposals have fueled European resistance to Washington's absurd demand that the defense of the United States be paid for by the allies.

At the same time, the subordination of SDI and other weapons modernization plans to U.S. budget management measures has cut the political floor out from plans to station upgraded (short-range, nuclear) Lance missiles in Germany—and the issue blew up in the face of Secretary of State James Baker during his European tour in mid-February.

Finally, the Soviets have tossed out a revised set of figures purporting to present an accurate picture of the NATO/Warsaw Pact balance, and which claim that the two blocs have near parity in troop and armor strength. A cute political ploy, for unless the Bush-men come out and call Gorbachov a liar, they will have no defense against the budget slashers in Congress, who are using the Russian claims of parity to justify U.S. defense cuts.

SDI on the chopping block

The Bush administration is preparing to deflect the defense budget issue by reviewing major programs, and the lineup is led by Defense Secretary designate John Tower, who pledged to subject the Reagan budget proposal's 50% increase in SDI funding to close scrutiny, a position which was echoed by Bush himself on Jan. 26. Tower further stated that he considered a full SDI missile defense program "unreasonable," and expressed support for limited deployment, within limits defined by the ABM Treaty.

But this policy has not spared Tower from one of the most brutal campaigns of innuendo and calumny ever conducted by the Congress and the news media.

It is not surprising that the allegations against Tower have come exclusively from disgraced State Department and military figures, who admit to have been compromised themselves by Soviet "sexpionage" operations, which targeted the U.S. arms control delegation led by Tower in Geneva. It is also typical that the one officer who worked with Tower 14-

16 hours a day, six days a week, not only denies categorically all of the innuendo about Tower's alleged debauchery, but reports that the FBI never even interviewed him on the matter!

The final nail in the SDI coffin was provided by Brent Scowcroft, who led the "Presidential Leadership Choices" project of the Washington, D.C. Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), which was issued in November. In the document, Scowcroft, Kissinger, and numerous officials of the Carter administration counsel that the national interest would not be served by the deployment of an SDI system that goes outside the ABM Treaty allowances for systems to protect ballistic missiles, not population.

Scowcroft has repeatedly told Congress that he thinks that an anti-missile shield is "impossible" and a "gamble" which the United States should avoid. "There is just absolutely no doubt that the SDI cannot continue along the lines that Ronald Reagan wanted it to. It's impossible," he told the *Washington Post* last month.

The Johns Hopkins Foreign Policy Institute, under the direction of Carter Defense Secretary Harold Brown, provided another forum for Scowcroft to polemicize against the SDI. A report signed by the NSC director called for "a program of research and technological development [not systems development] applicable to defense against ballistic missiles and airbreathers . . . [which should] . . . avoid spectaculars carried out for their own sake." The program should "emphasize ground-based terminal defense of mobile or hard points . . . divert some of the funds thus made available to high-technology conventional force initiatives . . . not make any decision on full-scale engineering development of a multi-tier SDI system before the early 1990s at the earliest," and so on.

With this heavy weight lined up against the SDI, it is no wonder that a political mediocrity like Sen. Sam Nunn (D-Ga.) could emerge, apparently leading the Congress into support for his Accidental Launch Protection System (ALPS), a rehash of 1960s technologies and strategies.

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