

# Bush follies imperil U.S.-Japan alliance

by Linda de Hoyos

The refusal of the George Bush administration to sign the agreement with Japan to co-produce the FSX fighter-plane, has endangered the government of Japanese Prime Minister Noboru Takeshita, and with it the continuing smooth functioning of the Japan-U.S. security alliance.

In mid-March, Bush announced that he wanted to add "qualifications" to the FSX deal that had already been agreed to by the Reagan administration. The pact must go through congressional approval. As of April 15, the pact still remains in the hands of the U.S. administration, under minute negotiation.

This equivocation was understandably taken as a gross insult by Tokyo, since Japan had originally negotiated the joint venture under pressure from Washington!

The Reagan administration had demanded that Japan not proceed with plans to develop its own jet-fighter, but join with the United States in a joint venture to upgrade the U.S. F-16. Japan agreed, only to then be met with betrayal from Washington. Japanese defense chief Kichiro Tazawa stated upon his return from Washington April 4, "It is unfair that the United States is raising objections to the project just because its administration has changed. I expected the United States to act as a superpower." On April 11, Tazawa, stating that he believes the disagreement on the FSX will drag on for months, canceled a scheduled trip to Washington.

On the FSX, the "Jap-bashers" propaganda line is that the United States is risking giving away to Japan crucial high technology, and that Japan should be satisfied with purchases of the F-16. But the United States would be the biggest loser if the FSX deal completely unravels. Far from being a "give-away" to Japan, the U.S.A. will greatly benefit from Japanese technologies shared in the project, especially in the areas of computers and ceramics. In addition, as former Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger has pointed out in columns during April, the FSX means U.S. jobs, and money to U.S. industry, with the additional benefit of both nations upgrading their defenses with a new, more advanced jet-fighter.

## The real consequences

In foggy-minded Washington, the FSX incident has all the appearances of being yet another of the many disputes between the United States and Japan, albeit one of the more acute and one that hits the U.S.-Japan military alliance. However, in Tokyo, the fact that the United States has returned

Japan's favor with a slap in the face has almost succeeded in bringing down Takeshita's government.

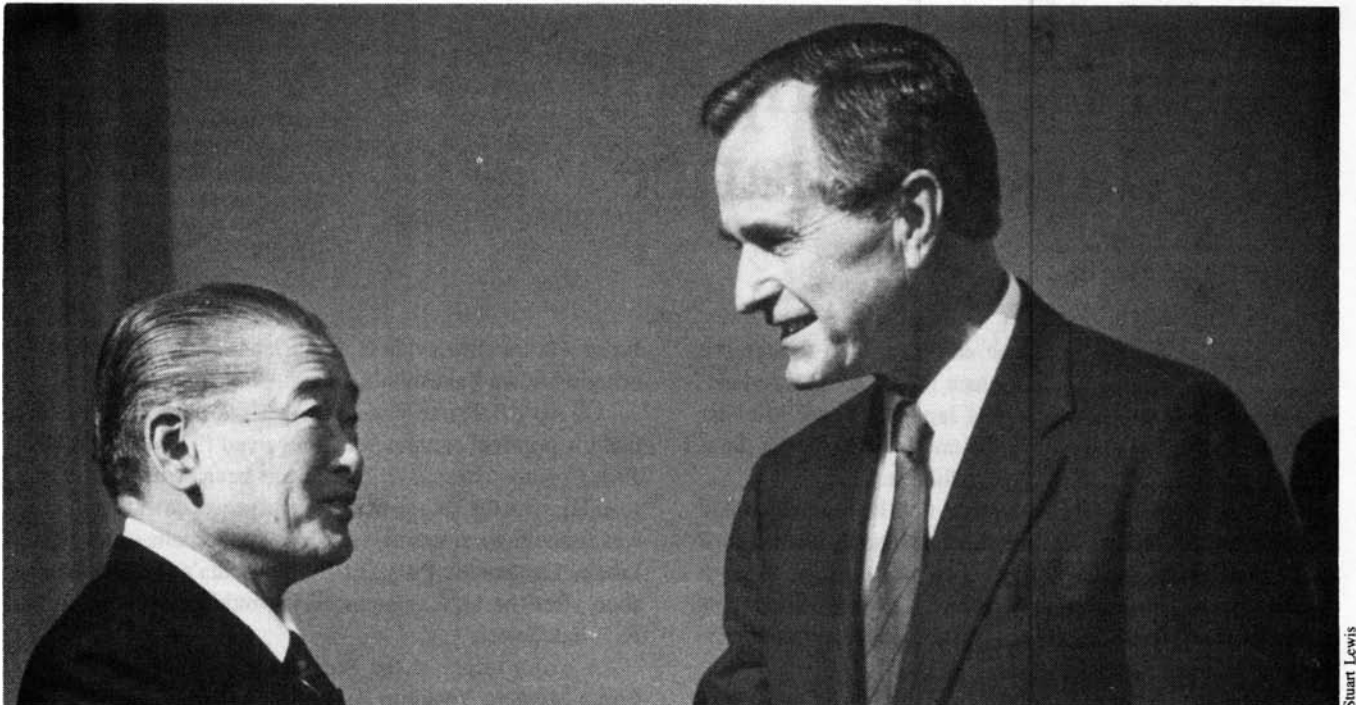
On April 8, Prime Minister Takeshita was forced to admit that his political campaign had received funds from the Recruit Cosmos company. Recruit has been at the center of a scandal, with the charge from federal prosecutors that Recruit was funneling monies to the leading politicians of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP). Takeshita's disclosure came soon after the U.S. announced it would be holding up the FSX indefinitely.

A major target of the Recruit scandal has been former Prime Minister Yasuhiro Nakasone, known in Japan for his strong adherence to the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty—even at the cost of propping up the U.S. dollar—for a strong Japanese security defense posture, and for his belief that, as an economic superpower, it is time for Japan to take its place in the world. Amid rumors that his arrest may be imminent, Nakasone has been prohibited from leaving the country, and forced to scuttle his plans to form a private think tank on foreign policy. Nakasone has refused to testify before Parliament on his relations with Recruit.

On April 14, former foreign minister and current secretary general of the LDP, Shintaro Abe, who would otherwise be next in line for the prime ministership, was forced to admit that his wife has been the recipient of funds from Recruit. The scandal, which merely "exposes" the traditional method by which Japan's political campaigns are funded, has thus succeeded in damaging the credibility of the three heavyweights of the ruling party.

However, appearing before the Parliament, Takeshita refused to obey demands from the opposition that he step down from office, stating that it is his responsibility to lead the process of reform of the electoral process. In retaliation, the opposition parties have instituted a boycott of Parliament, and debate is now proceeding on the next fiscal budget without the opposition's presence, presaging what could be a full-blown governmental crisis.

No sooner had Takeshita admitted a relation to Recruit, than the four leading opposition parties of Japan—the Japanese Socialist Party, the Buddhist Komeito, the Democratic Socialist Party, and the Social Democratic Federation—announced that they had formed an electoral coalition, and demanded that Takeshita dissolve his government and call new elections.



George Bush with Noboru Takeshita in Washington Feb. 1. The U.S. administration's refusal to sign the agreement with Japan to co-produce the FSX fighter-plane has put a cloud over Takeshita's government, and the Japan-U.S. security alliance.

The prime minister's popularity is reportedly at an all-time low of 9%.

The *Asahi Shimbun* was the first to voice the proposition that an opposition coalition might come to power in Japan—an event that would be tantamount to a political revolution, since the LDP has governed Japan since the end of World War II

lead such a coalition, has as its official doctrine that Japan should become an unarmed neutralist nation, and break its alliance with the United States. The JSP, however, has said that it will not dismantle the Japanese Self-Defense Forces, and will not break the U.S.-Japan focus more on environmental issues.

Recruit is not the only source of discontent with the Takeshita government. A 3% consumption tax added to most commodities beginning April 1 has fueled nationwide anger at the LDP, and Japan's farmers—who form a large part of the LDP base—are up in arms over Japan's concessions to the United States on agricultural trade.

### **Recruit scandal: made in U.S.A.**

The Recruit scandal, which has resulted in the arrest of 13 top executives and politicians and police raids on government offices, has thus proven to be more potent than the Henry Kissinger-orchestrated Lockheed scandal of 1976 directed against then Prime Minister Kakue Tanaka. In case, the investigation was launched by leaks appearing in the pro-appeasement *Asahi Shimbun* with coordination from the *New York Times*, and the probe has been directed by the

same special prosecutor who ran the Lockheed scandal. *The Recruit scandal is thereby the concoction of the same forces in the United States who have pressured the Bush White House to back down on the FSX.*

The source is British intelligence, which has been allied with the Mitsui-arrayed interests in Japan, against the Mitsubishi financial nexus, the latter being the chief Japanese contractor for the development of the FSX and Japan's participation in the Strategic Defense Initiative.

The British intelligence signature on the Recruit operations came through in the April 12 reporting in the *Financial Times* of Prime Minister Takeshita's appearance before the Japanese Parliament. "Instant soundings on his performance yesterday suggested that many people were unimpressed," the *Financial Times* opined. "Some complained that they could not understand what Mr. Takeshita had been saying. The prime minister is often accused of being vague and inscrutable in his speaking habits. . . . No plausible challenger to Mr. Takeshita is yet available. However, the prime minister's gamble does not appear to have paid off."

The *Financial Times* speaks for the same same British interests who are interested in forcing Tokyo to stop its support of the U.S. dollar—a service Tokyo has delivered to George Bush over the past year—to make way for the full International United States itself. Such is the eventuality the George Bush administration is now courting with its irrational stalling on the FSX.