

Congressional Closeup by William Jones and Leo F. Scanlon

Administration officials deny Soviet threat

The leading intelligence and military officials of the Bush administration told the Senate Arms Service Committee that a reduced Soviet military threat will justify large cuts in the defense budgets. The hearings were held during the week prior to the Jan. 30 release of the defense budget, which envisions cutbacks in global troop strength, closing of domestic and foreign military bases, and the shutdown of weapons production lines.

Director of Central Intelligence William Webster told the panel, "Overall, the conventional threat to the United States and our alliance partners in Europe has decreased as a result of changes in Eastern Europe and Soviet force reductions." He added that Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachov's military reductions in Eastern Europe have caused a decline in Soviet and Warsaw Pact strength, and "probably lengthen the time it would take for the Soviets to mobilize for any large-scale attack in Europe."

The CIA chief identified Fidel Castro as the Latin American leader most likely to undertake actions which will be in conflict with U.S. interests.

Brig. Gen. R.J. O'Lear, intelligence director of the U.S. European Command, and the director of the Defense Intelligence Agency each testified that they shared this assessment of a reduced Soviet threat.

Former Reagan administration official Richard Perle told the committee, "We should reduce force structure to reflect the lessened Warsaw Pact threat." He advocated unilateral reductions of U.S. troops in Europe, deeper even than the Vienna CFE negotiations call for.

Perle's disarmament plan includes

"skipping the next generation of weapons systems" and scrapping the Midgetman and MX strategic missiles. The Strategic Defense Initiative, he opined, should be "reoriented to R&D with deployment of a limited system" in the near term.

Relishing his role as the saboteur of the SDI program inside the Reagan administration, Perle told the astonished senators, "I never thought we could produce a perfect defense," and said that despite his "hardline" public posture, his present views do not represent any change of heart. With regard to the Soviet ability to continue production of new generations of strategic weapons systems, Perle revealed, "I never believed it then, and nobody believes it now."

His fundamental point is that "the canonical threat against which a defensive NATO alliance has long been poised is no longer credible."

A note of caution was sounded by Edward L. Warner of the Rand Corporation, who said, "We have great difficulty validating or disproving Soviet claims of purely defensive exercises. I would not [exclude], however, that modern, maneuver-oriented . . . operations involve basic 'building bloc' operations at the tactical level that are common to both offense and defense." He added that the restructured ground forces will be "balanced, versatile combined-arms formations" capable of drawing on the enormous stockpile of pre-positioned material stocked in the East bloc.

He further pointed out that projections of Soviet strength reductions are valid "assuming that the Soviets do not significantly increase artillery strength"—which is exactly what they are doing. Under conditions of long mobilization, Warner warned, "the

Warsaw Pact would . . . retain a substantial portion of its very considerable current advantage."

A more cautious—and realistic—note was sounded by Chief of Naval Operations Carlisle Trost, who told an industry association: "Some of the louder voices being heard that are calling for very large, and in my opinion unreasonable, unwise, and premature cuts, are those of former senior defense officials who imply by their comments that current defense planning is not keeping touch with the rapidly changing world. . . . I think it is they who may not fully appreciate the complex and uncertain threats that our forces face today. . . . There is a point . . . below which this nation will not be able to maintain the necessary military force levels of a superpower."

DoJ won't pursue charges against Rep. Frank

In response to queries by the *Washington Times*, the Justice Department and Jay Stephens, U.S. Attorney for the District of Columbia, refused to comment on why they are not prosecuting Rep. Barney Frank (D-Mass.) for felonies which he admits having committed. Frank has confessed to buying services from male prostitutes and employing a man whom he knew to be a working prostitute. The prostitute, Steven Gobie, was running his service out of Frank's Capitol Hill apartment.

The lack of action on the part of the Justice Department in the Frank case contrasts with the "sting" against Washington, D.C.'s black mayor, Marion Barry. Some suspect that the long-term investigation of Barry was based on racism. Barry, who was photographed taking cocaine in a Wash-

ington hotel, was charged with a misdemeanor, whereas the Frank admissions could constitute a felony.

John Banzhaf, a George Washington University law professor and legal activist, is seeking Frank's prosecution. "The only big difference that I can see is that one is white and one is black," said Banzhaf. "I'm the first white guy to stand up and say that this does raise the suspicion of racism." He has been joined by the Conservative Caucus and two Washington Baptist ministers, Rev. Cleveland Sparrow and Rev. John Martin.

Substitute sought for discredited Gramm-Rudman

With most recent calculations by the Congressional Budget Office indicating that the Congress will miss the Gramm-Rudman deficit target of \$100 billion, attempts are being made to scrap the discredited legislation, and formulate a believable austerity package.

At its inception, the Gramm-Rudman-Hollings budget law was lauded as the "definitive" solution to the growing federal budget deficit. Cutting the deficit in turn was seen as the general panacea to the growing U.S. economic crisis. It gradually became apparent, however, that a variety of bookkeeping ruses was being utilized in order to create merely the appearance that the deficit was being reduced. Even such finagling did not succeed in squeezing the budget into the iron corset of Gramm-Rudman-Hollings.

A new proposal by House Budget Committee chairman Leon Panetta (D-Calif.) would essentially replace Gramm-Rudman. Abandoning the au-

tomatic, across-the-board cuts of Gramm-Rudman, the Panetta proposal represents a pay-as-you-go budgeting system that promises more modest but less illusory annual reductions in the federal deficit. It would require any spending increases or tax cuts to be offset dollar for dollar by additional revenue or other spending reductions, except for Social Security expenses and increases in other mandatory benefit programs driven strictly by demographic changes.

Knowledgeable sources in the House Budget Committee calculate that the Panetta bill would result in real deficit cuts of about \$18 billion in the first year, about half what Gramm-Rudman-Hollings requires. Panetta's bill would also require the President to specify how to pay for spending increases or tax reductions, and mandate that any deficit-cutting measures continue to result in saving over a five-year period.

Another alternative plan has been floated by the Senate Budget Committee chairman James Sasser (D-Tenn.). The Sasser plan would also eliminate the automatic spending cuts of Gramm-Rudman.

As the economy continues to plunge more deeply into depression, it is most likely that all such stop-gap measures to shore up the economy, without a fundamental reorientation of economic policy, will end up on the same shoals of conceptual bankruptcy as their Gramm-Rudman predecessor.

Dole seeks to cut aid to embattled allies

Robert Dole (R-Kan.), the Senate Minority Leader, has proposed a 5% cut in aid to Turkey, Egypt, Pakistan, the

Philippines, and other states, "now that the Cold War is over," under the pretext of using these funds for such purposes as rebuilding Panama.

On Jan. 19, at a press conference preceding his meeting with Prime Minister Turgut Özal of Turkey, George Bush said he was "very pleased" with the Dole plan. The President expressed "delight that somebody understands that it is the President that ought to set these priorities" (rather than the Senate).

It is not expected that Israel will have any trouble maintaining the current level of U.S. aid. That cannot be said for Turkey, Egypt, and other states now targeted for U.S.-Soviet destabilization.

Cheney imposes ban on military buildup

Defense Secretary Richard Cheney, who is scheduled to propose force-structure and weapons cuts to Congress when he presents his fiscal 1991 budget, on Jan. 24 declared a moratorium on most new military construction projects for the next three months. Military and congressional officials said the prohibition on new contracts is likely to affect much of the \$8.5 billion construction budget approved for the current fiscal year.

In a memorandum to Pentagon officials on Jan. 23, Cheney said that he ordered the moratorium "in light of the coming changes in the force structure and disposition of the U.S. armed forces." The new order was issued less than a week after Cheney ordered a military-wide freeze on civilian hiring for the remainder of this fiscal year, which ends Sept. 30.