

## Congressional Closeup by William Jones

### Senate whittles down SDI to point defense

The Senate has approved \$4.6 billion in funding for the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI), which is \$550 million less than that requested by the White House, but \$1.1 billion more than that approved by the House. Amendments by Sens. Tom Harkin (D-Iowa) and Dale Bumpers (D-Ark.) to cut funding were defeated.

An amendment by Sen. Albert Gore (D-Tenn.) to prevent any SDI deployment was defeated in a 60-39 vote. The main dispute is between those who want to prevent any deployment of an anti-missile system and those who want some form of deployment of a limited, ground-based SDI system.

The limited program has been a hobby horse of Senate Armed Services Committee chairman Sam Nunn (D-Ga.), who proposed in 1988 the revamping of the SDI into a ground-based system to protect against an accidental missile launch. This concept was reiterated by President Bush in his 1991 inaugural address, where he spoke about "refocusing" the SDI for the sake of "providing protection from limited ballistic missile strikes." The Nunn committee appropriated \$1.5 billion for an initial deployment of 100 interceptor missiles by 1996, and calls for U.S.-Soviet negotiations for a more elaborate system.

Further deployments would be in violation of the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty. Statements from Soviet military leaders indicate that they would be prepared to renegotiate such a treaty to the extent that the U.S. rejects the notion of a total ballistic missile defense system.

The Nunn proposal was opposed by roughly two-thirds of the Democrats, who wish to maintain the ABM Treaty. But 21 Democrats joined 39 Republicans to defeat the Gore

amendment. The Nunn proposal is now virtually assured to become a part of the Defense Appropriations bill. While the Nunn proposal would continue research into space-based interceptors, the administration's "Brilliant Pebbles," the only space-based element left in the SDI, would be placed on hold.

### House votes to close U.S. military bases

The House voted on July 30 to approve the recommendations of the Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission, which would shut down 25 major military and naval bases and nine smaller facilities in the United States. The vote was 364-60.

Among the bases to be closed are the Philadelphia Naval Shipyard; Long Beach Naval Station; Fort Ord, California; MacDill Air Force Base in Tampa, Florida; and Loring Air Force Base in Maine.

The House also voted 412-14 to mandate the commission to consider foreign as well as domestic bases. On the same day as the House vote, the Pentagon announced that it was considering closing 72 U.S. military sites in Europe and reducing U.S. military presence at seven more. The 72 European sites include large installations in Germany such as the Tempelhof Central Airport in Berlin, Cooke Army Barracks in Göppingen, Wharton Army Barracks in Heilbronn, and O'Brien Army Barracks in Nuremberg, employing a total of 10,381 servicemen and 874 civilians.

About 150,000 troops, or roughly half the U.S. forces in Europe, are expected to depart the continent by 1995. Of those, between 82,600 and 86,000 are due to leave by 1992. German par-

liamentarians have been coming to the United States, visiting members of the Armed Services Committee, to encourage them not to close the bases.

Secretary of Defense Richard Cheney has argued against the Congress having any say in the closing of foreign bases, hoping to keep that prerogative in the hands of the Defense Department. But congressmen, under heavy criticism for cutting bases in their own districts, feel that they have to target U.S. foreign commitments abroad as well.

### DoJ yields to Judiciary Committee subpoena threat

The Department of Justice (DoJ) narrowly averted a confrontation with the House Judiciary Committee on July 31 by agreeing to allow lawmakers to review a legal opinion giving FBI agents authority to kidnap fugitives in foreign nations.

DoJ officials were given until 9 a.m. on July 31 to turn over a 1989 confidential legal opinion which had been subpoenaed by the Judiciary Subcommittee on Economic and Commercial Law which outlines the FBI's authority to arrest criminal suspects abroad—the notorious "Thornburgh Doctrine." The subpoenas were issued after Attorney General Richard Thornburgh boycotted a Judiciary Committee oversight hearing, claiming that Democrats on the committee were planning to turn it into a political circus.

The subcommittee also wanted documents pertaining to the DoJ's handling of a \$10 million contract with Inslaw, Inc., a Washington-based computer software company. The committee is probing allegations by Inslaw that DoJ officials conspired to steal a software program and deliv-

er it to a rival firm headed by a long-time associate of former Attorney General Edwin Meese.

"I am pleased that the attorney general . . . has decided to obey the subpoena by acknowledging our respective interests in the opinion," said Judiciary Committee chairman Rep. Jack Brooks (D-Tex.). "I was fully prepared this morning to move forward with the contempt process against the attorney general to compel production, had he not supplied written assurances of his willingness to accommodate the interests of the committee."

President Bush had been prepared to resist the panel's subpoena by invoking executive privilege. Thornburgh, under fire from Democrats for an alleged DoJ coverup of the Bank for Credit and Commerce International scandal, decided against an open confrontation.

## Congress extends unemployment benefits

In the face of growing lay-offs in industry and the service sector, the Senate on Aug. 1 and the House on Aug. 2 approved \$5.2 billion in extended unemployment benefits.

The measure, sponsored by Sen. Lloyd Bentsen (D-Tex.), the chairman of the Senate Finance Committee, would provide up to 20 additional weeks of benefits to the nearly 3 million unemployed who will have exhausted their benefits by late this year. The bill was also seen as a political move by House and Senate Democrats to underline the Bush administration's insensitivity to the plight of workers.

The bill was sent to the President before the congressional recess, but the White House has indicated that Bush will veto the bill or refuse to take

steps to implement it. Budget Director Richard Darman called the legislation economically "counterproductive," saying that it would merely add to the huge federal deficit.

## Committee to save Iraqi children testifies

The Committee to Save the Children in Iraq submitted testimony to the House Select Committee on Hunger, chaired by Rep. Tony Hall (D-Ohio), on Aug. 1, criticizing the Bush administration for genocide against the children of Iraq by maintaining the sanctions against that country.

Committee representative Nancy Spannaus referred to the statements of U.N. Special Delegate Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan, that the continuation of the sanctions "means the denial of the most basic human rights to the Iraqi people and equals a deliberate policy of genocide in the name of the United Nations."

Spannaus pointed to the massive contamination of water supplies caused by the destruction of water and power infrastructure, and the devastating effect of lack of electricity on communications and medical care. She urged the committee to call for the immediate lifting of all sanctions against Iraq.

## Freedom from Want Act is introduced

The "Freedom from Want Act" (H.R. 2258), a mega-bill covering both domestic and world issues introduced in February by members of the House Select Committee on Hunger, now has over 100 co-sponsors. The bill represents an effort to use the concern

over hunger to implement a "new world order" agenda of food control, corporatism, and genocide.

The bill has been parceled out to other committees including Labor, Education, and Foreign Affairs. Observers expect that aspects of the bill will be passed as part of other legislation. The House Select Committee on Hunger reported the following developments on July 30:

- "Micro-enterprise" credit and training provisions have been adopted as proposed amendments to the Job Training and Partnership Act (H.R. 3033). "Microenterprises are businesses employing five or fewer people, one of whom is the owner." The stated objective is, "helping welfare recipients become self-sufficient."

- The per meal reimbursement for senior food relief programs has been raised from 56.76¢ to 65.66¢, in a proposed amendment to the Older Americans Act (H.R. 2967). Thousands of people have been cut out of these programs altogether for lack of funds.

- The House version of the 1991 Foreign Aid Authorization included several provisions calling for a U.N. Convention on the Right to Food and Humanitarian Assistance, a permanent U.N. Undersecretary for Humanitarian Affairs, and increasing U.S. funding for international hunger and malnutrition-related programs." This is otherwise known as the "Czar of Food" proposal.

Rep. Tony Hall (D-Ohio) said, "Solving the problem of hunger requires comprehensive and innovative strategies. We have to give people more than food—we have to give them hope, and the tools they need to feed themselves. . . . I'm glad that key domestic and international provisions of this bill are on the way to becoming law."