

National News

Drug Control Summit held on Capitol Hill

The third International Drug Control Summit was held Feb. 8-9 on Capitol Hill with international parliamentarians, government officials, UN representatives, law enforcement officials, and others in attendance. It was co-hosted by House Speaker Dennis Hastert (R-Ill.), and Pino Arlacchi, of the UN Office of Drug Control Policy.

The biggest controversy at the summit concerned Colombia, where President Andrés Pastrana's government has effectively given about half of the national territory to the narco-terrorist FARC, under the banner of "the peace process." Despite (or because of) these concessions, violence has escalated and the drug traffic has flourished.

U.S. drug policy adviser Gen. Barry McCaffrey (ret.), speaking on Feb. 8, emphasized the importance of American anti-drug aid to Colombia. The entire U.S. Cabinet he said, believes that Colombia is under siege, and that the aid package, which includes a significant military component, has to pass through Congress soon. These remarks were in response to a question by House Foreign Relations Committee Chairman Rep. Ben Gilman (R-N.Y.), who asked how strenuously the administration is supporting the aid package. McCaffrey argued for the United States to supply Black Hawk helicopters, because government forces need a lot of mobility to reintroduce sovereign control in the south. He emphasized that there is no reason to fear, as some do, that U.S. aid will lead to a "new Vietnam."

McCaffrey underlined that Colombia has experienced extensive violence and three nationwide guerrilla offensives over the last three years. He pointed to the cases of Bolivia and Peru as the answers to those who say you can never decrease drug supply. Those nations reduced drug production substantially within a small period of time. He reiterated that he and Health and Human Services Secretary Donna Shalala strongly oppose the legalization of marijuana.

U.S. Congressional speakers included Rep. William Delahunt (D-Mass.), who

wants to make sure that funds from the U.S. aid package do not go to the Colombian military. He claimed that the only way to stop the flow of drugs from Colombia was to stabilize the country through the "peace process" first.

Representative Gilman, who also wants to keep funds away from the Colombian military, threw his support behind Colombian President Pastrana's "Plan Colombia," talking tough about the need to prevent Colombia from becoming a "narco-state," while saying that more funds in the aid package should go for "alternative development."

Colombian General Trujillo from the National Police gave a report on efforts in Colombia to eradicate coca and poppy production. He estimated that they have 106,000 hectares involved in cocaine production. The immediate goal is to fumigate 50,000 hectares of coca, and 10,000 hectares of poppies. They want to seize 40 tons of coca, 30 tons of marijuana, and 600 kilos of opium derivatives, as well as destroy 500 labs in Putumayo, as well as landing strips.

Homeless and broke in Silicon Valley

In California's Silicon Valley, a leading center of computer and electronics development, former high-tech job holders—and even some still employed—are now living in homeless shelters or out of their cars, Mark Leibovic wrote in the *Washington Post* on Feb. 12. A few examples:

Gordon Seybold worked as a corporate sales manager for Oakland-based C2Net Software, Inc., where last year he was on track to earn \$125,000. He was fired and, in August of last year, was evicted from his \$1,600-a-month apartment. He now lives in a homeless lodging, and recently got a job as a clerk at a drug-store, which pays \$8.50 per hour.

Tim McCormack works as a systems engineer, which pays \$52,000 per year, at CompuNet Systems Solutions in San Jose. He has child-support payments to make, and past due credit card debt. When his rent dou-

bled at his San Jose apartment, he was forced to live in his car.

It is reported that 20,000 people in Santa Clara County, which encompasses most of Silicon Valley, will experience a "homeless episode" this year. An official of the Emergency Housing Consortium, which crams people into very small quarters, reports, "We turn out people every day who are making \$60,000 a year." He said that about half of the consortium's 1,100 clients are employed. Thus, there are people earning as much as \$35,000 to \$60,000 per year, who live at the consortium.

Randall Condon, who works at the San Jose-based Inn-Vision, which provides shelter to some of the homeless, said, "There's a very thin line in Silicon Valley between being a director and being a derelict."

General asks, 'Why do we need NATO?'

The CBS news program "60 Minutes" on Feb. 8 interviewed Gen. Eugene Habiger (ret.), the four-star general who was, until his retirement a year and a half ago, the head of U.S. nuclear forces. He was sharply critical of the "New NATO" policy toward Russia, and reported the background of the failure of the lengthy and laborious U.S.-Russia negotiations concerning nuclear missiles.

"On Dec. 16, 1998," the program reported, "the United States bombed Iraq. The attacks came three days before the Russian parliament was to vote on the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty II. Once again, the treaty was expected to pass. But because of the bombing, the treaty was shelved. And in the months that followed, U.S.-Russian relations went from bad to worse as NATO, with Washington leading the way, expanded by adding three former eastern European countries to its ranks. Habiger says that these moves confused his new friends [the Russians]. 'The Russians continue to shake their heads,' he says. 'They would ask me, "Now, let me get this right, NATO is a Cold War organization? The Cold War's over. Why in the world do you still have

THE ARKANSAS disbarment committee has drafted a complaint which could result in disbarment of President Clinton, according to the *New York Post's* Brian Blomquist. Sources told him that the committee sent a copy of its proposed complaint to the Southeastern Legal Foundation—one of “Get Clinton” operative Richard Mellon Scaife’s front groups. The committee’s next step would be to send the complaint to President Clinton and his lawyer, David Kendall, who would have 30 days to respond.

LAROCHE spokesman Harley Schlanger addressed a luncheon of the California Democratic Council on Feb. 12. “Lyndon LaRouche,” he said, “is the one Democrat who is addressing the reality of the economic crisis,” and is organizing to bring together the FDR core constituencies of the Democratic Party, so that the U.S. can take leadership in creating a New Bretton Woods system.

BILL BRADLEY condemned George W. Bush and John McCain for refusing to take a stand against the flying of the Confederate flag over the South Carolina capitol. In Columbia, S.C. on Feb. 8, Bradley said, “That flag shows the true colors of the Republicans who want to be President. That flag is not a symbol of Southern heritage—that flag is a symbol of the fight to preserve segregation.”

REV. AL SHARPTON, the Harlem African-American leader, criticized Al Gore for taking black voters for granted. “You don’t expect a marriage before courtin’,” said Sharpton, “and so far we’ve only been dated by Senator Bradley.” Sharpton said that if Gore did not respond within a week to his offer to debate urban issues in a black neighborhood, “then clearly some of us may mobilize against his efforts.”

GEORGE W. BUSH'S donors and fundraisers are asking how he could spend \$50 million and win only 31 convention delegates so far, the *Washington Post* reported.

NATO?” I didn’t have a good answer for them. We’re doing a heck of harm to the Russians—or with the Russians—by continuing to poke this NATO stick in their eye,” says Habiger.

“The Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty II came up for another vote in the Russian parliament on March 16, 1999. Once again, it didn’t pass. The night before the vote, NATO began bombing Kosovo. Had that not happened, the treaty would probably have passed, Habiger says. Shortly after the war in Kosovo began, General Yakovlev deployed 10 new Topol missiles and mounted the largest nuclear exercise since the end of the Cold War. At the same time, the Russian missile-controllers were ordered to break all contact with their American friends. Habiger says that he is worried. ‘It doesn’t take a brain surgeon to figure out that when you shut off that kind of a relationship, you’re going down a path that’s not pleasant.’ ”

Spare parts shortages threaten military

A problem has been developing since the U.S. military drawdown began at the end of the Cold War: Aviation forces in the Coast Guard and all the military services have taken to “cannibalization” as a way of life, to keep aircraft operable for missions, the *Washington Post* reported on Feb. 3.

Cannibalization involves taking a part from one airplane to install on another. This is done when the needed part is not available from supply warehouses, and doubles, and in some cases triples, the maintenance time required. It also results in “hangar queens,” aircraft that have had parts removed from them to keep others flying, and are, consequently, not available for missions.

The problem is so serious in the Coast Guard that they often have only one C-130 long-range search aircraft operational for each coast, a situation that can result—and has—in lost lives. During the bombing of Yugoslavia last year, the Air Force succeeded in keeping the 400 war planes flying, by stripping parts from units that were not

involved in the war.

Military officials say that the spare parts situation resulted from the drawdown of the 1990s, when the military lived off large supply inventories from the 1980s defense buildup. Additionally, to cut costs further, the military reduced its ability to overhaul parts itself, and relies, instead on “just-in-time” supply-and-delivery methods. When the military cut purchasing parts during much of the 1990s, many suppliers went into other businesses, and now they are no longer capable of producing many of the highly specialized parts that the military services need. The drawdown has also resulted in a huge loss of experienced maintenance personnel within the services, resulting in too few people to keep the military’s airplanes flying.

British dirty-tricks man comes to help Gore

Shaun Woodward, a millionaire British Member of Parliament who left the Conservative Party to join Prime Minister Tony Blair’s Labour Party about eight weeks ago, was in Washington at the end of January, to offer tips for Al Gore’s and Hillary Clinton’s campaigns. He was a guest of Sidney Blumenthal, described by the London *Sunday Times* as one of Blair’s friends on President Clinton’s staff.

Woodward, as the Tories’ communications director, had helped to formulate their dirty-tricks campaign which defeated Labour’s Neil Kinnock in 1992.

Besides briefing Democrats on possible Republican dirty tricks, “he also held high-level policy discussions on how to ensure that community values and the support of middle America, are at the heart of Gore’s Presidential campaign and Hillary Clinton’s bid to be a New York Senator,” the *Times* reported.

An anonymous White House source told the *Times* that Woodward had “offered considerable advice and helped to ensure that the Vice-President came from behind to win the New Hampshire primary against Bill Bradley.”