

The report also takes issue with Weinberger's contention that growing Soviet influence in the Gulf and Mid-east generally is an immediate danger. "There is little likelihood of Soviet political encroachment among Gulf Arab states," says the report, because of their mistrust and basic differences with Moscow.

What baloney! Moderate Arab states have long feared that the United States would gradually reduce its presence in the region, creating a political and military vacuum which the Soviets would fill. That is precisely what has happened over the last decade; the reflagging operation represents a much-needed corrective to that suicidal course.

## **'AIDS could kill 25 million Americans'**

Rep. Dan Burton (R-Ind.) warned from the floor of the House on Oct. 15 that if the United States fails to adopt a comprehensive AIDS testing program, 25 million Americans could be dead of the disease by the year 2005—just 17 years from now.

Burton based his prediction on a new computer study conducted by Dr. Allan Salzberg, chief of the medical service at the Veterans Administration in Miles City, Montana.

The study compares how many Americans will contract AIDS, how many will die, and how much the epidemic will cost over the next 20 years, if testing and related measures are implemented, and if they are not.

Assuming that testing is not adopted, Salzberg estimates that by 2005, some 25 million Americans will die of the disease, and 43 million will be carriers. Costs will total \$8.2 trillion.

If, on the other hand, an effective testing program is put into action by 1990, Salzberg believes the AIDS pandemic could be contained, with 2 million casualties and another 2.4 to 3.3 million carriers.

Burton, co-sponsor of a mandatory AIDS testing bill now pending in Congress, warned that voluntary testing alone would be entirely inadequate. "AIDS is a pandemic, not just an epidemic," he said. "I use the analogy of the bubonic plague which wiped out half of Europe during the 14th and 15th centuries. That disease . . . became so bad that they would nail windows on houses shut and burn people alive the minute somebody said 'plague.'

"We do not want that kind of thing to happen in the United States. We want to have an orderly way to deal with this epidemic, but if it gets out of control, because we have not done the proper things today, then we are going to have a real problem on our hands, not only economically, but as far as dealing with it as a civilization."

If the United States doesn't get down to the "hard decisions" needed now, Burton warned, "we may be facing a problem that humankind has never seen in the history of this Earth."

Burton announced that he had sent copies of the Salzberg report to every office on the Hill.

## **House calls for Panama aid cut-off**

Following in the footsteps of the U.S. Senate, the House adopted a non-binding resolution Oct. 19 urging the administration to terminate all U.S. aid to Panama, and to give the "Marcos treatment" to Gen. Manuel Antonio Noriega, chief of the Panamanian

Defense Forces.

The resolution is part and parcel of the State Department's attempt to overthrow Noriega, who has become a thorn in State's side, because of his nationalism and strong opposition to both IMF policies and the international drug traffic.

Like the Senate resolution, which passed 97-0, the House measure calls on the United States to cease "all economic and military assistance" and "suspend all shipments of military and spare parts" to the Panamanian government unless it meets a number of conditions, among them: ensuring "civilian control of the armed forces and the Panama Defense Forces"; removing the armed forces' leaders from "non-military activities and institutions"; and instituting a "non-military transitional government."

The resolution's chief sponsor is Mel Levine, a liberal California Democrat who usually vents his spleen on the Strategic Defense Initiative.

## **House backs law on special prosecutor**

A measure to make permanent the law authorizing special prosecutors to investigate wrongdoing by government officials was approved by the House on Oct. 21.

The move is a blow to the administration, which had argued that the law was unconstitutional because it violates the separation of powers.

The 327-87 vote is far more than the two-thirds necessary to override a presidential veto. The Senate was expected to take up a similar measure in late October, which differs from the House bill in that it would extend the current law for five years.