

Editorial

Bush 'defense' policy

The speed with which George Bush is dismembering the U.S. defense capability is only rivaled by the speed at which his policies are destroying the U.S. economy. Clearly, topmost in his mind is his obsession with saving Mikhail Gorbachov's position with the Soviet power structure. In order to accomplish this goal Bush will sacrifice anything.

Bush's State of the Union message was a case in point. While the wires were buzzing with rumors of Gorbachov's imminent resignation as Secretary General of the Communist Party, the U.S. President felt impelled to make a surprise offer of massive troop cuts on the European front.

He proposed that the United States and the Soviets each reduce troop levels in Central Europe to 195,000, a cut of about 65,000 in the American presence in that area now. This would mean a 370,000 cut for the Soviets, but of course, they could pull troops back but maintain them on the continent in an alert status, something much more difficult for the United States. The United States would maintain 30,000 troops in Britain, Italy, and Turkey for a total European presence of 225,000—about 80,000 below current levels.

This proposal came on top of cuts in U.S. troop strength at home, which had been previously announced as part of budget retrenchment. Not only are bases throughout the continental U.S. scheduled for shutdown, but two active duty Army combat divisions which are normally stationed in the United States are also scheduled for the chopping block. These, the Ninth Infantry (motorized division) and the Second Armored Division, account for a total of 36,000 troops, and are dedicated as reinforcements for U.S. forces stationed in the NATO theater.

As part and parcel of this treacherous new policy of destroying U.S. defense capabilities and NATO's at the same time, the Pentagon has leaked the existence of a new policy report, which has declared Iran to be outside the U.S. perimeter of defense, and moots withdrawal of U.S. troops from the Philippines and South Korea as well.

The rationale behind these cuts is that the Soviet

Union is no longer the enemy. This insanity overlooks the vicious faction fight now ongoing in the U.S.S.R., which at any time may bring the most rabid nationalist forces to the fore there. The rapid rate of economic and social collapse in the Soviet Union is also a factor of instability which can propel it into military adventures, particularly in the face of Bush's fervid appeasement policy.

Another ugly aspect of the present U.S. defense policy, is the redefinition of the enemy image to include, on the one hand, perceived economic rivals, such as the Federal Republic of Germany and Japan, and certain countries of the developing sector on the other.

"New threats are emerging beyond the traditional antagonism of the last 45 years. These contingencies must loom large in our defense planning," George Bush told San Francisco business and civic leaders on Feb. 7. Bush stressed that the Soviet Union likely will not be the target of the military capabilities of the United States, but of other countries that have nuclear bombs or are involved in drugs, code these days for the Third World.

Special Operations Forces are set to grow by 5% to 40,000 men, under the 1991 defense budget, while conventional forces are to be cut by the two Army divisions, two Navy battleships, and 14 long-range B-52 bombers.

The reality of the Bush policy shift is now being played out in places like Lebanon where fighting has once again increased, reportedly with U.S. prompting of the Syrian-backed forces who oppose Prime Minister Michel Aoun.

Under these circumstances, the U.S. defense industry is feeling the pinch in an already declining economy. Now, irony of ironies, General Motors has found a new customer in the face of the proposed cut from the budget of the tilt-rotor V-22 Osprey, which is a hybrid helicopter and fixed-wing aircraft. They will be devoting their production capability to supplying the Soviets with up to 600 turbine engines for a new Soviet commercial helicopter.