

Congressional Closeup by William Jones

CIA targets Gonzalez on classified files

In an attempt to prevent further exposure of Bush administration pre-Gulf war policy toward Iraq, the CIA is opening a formal review of potential damage caused by disclosures of allegedly classified information involving U.S. policy toward Iraq made by House Banking Committee Chairman Henry B. Gonzalez (D-Tex.) on the floor of the House in the course of the last few months.

Two months ago, the Bush administration, in an effort to restrict the politically damaging revelations, decided to cut off Gonzalez's access to classified information. In a letter dated July 24, CIA head Robert Gates claimed that Gonzalez had revealed information from "a top-secret, compartmented and particularly sensitive document."

In a statement on July 30, Gonzalez said that the revelations "have in no way harmed the national security or revealed sensitive sources and methods," and called Gates's charges "inflammatory and without merit." Gonzalez said that the classification issue was being used "as a convenient device to avoid substantive discussion of the issues at hand."

The investigation initiated by Gonzalez involves illicit loans to Iraq from the Atlanta branch of Italy's Banca Nazionale del Lavoro (BNL), which received Commodity Credit Corp. loan guarantees to buy U.S. agricultural products.

House Foreign Affairs subcommittee chairman Sam Gejdenson (D-Conn.), who is conducting a similar investigation, said that the Bush administration was "hiding behind outdated national security classifications" in order to prevent embarrassing information from being made public. At a Banking Committee hearing in May, Deputy Secretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger admitted that he was un-

able to show that there was any risk from the disclosures.

Aides subpoenaed in House Post Office probe

A federal grand jury has subpoenaed about a half-dozen aides who work for three House Democrats who are under investigation in connection with the House Post Office scandal.

The subpoenas were issued as the three legislators, House Ways and Means Chairman Dan Rostenkowski (D-Ill.), Rep. Joseph Kolter (D-Pa.), and Rep. Austin Murphy (D-Pa.) refused to appear before the grand jury on July 28 after being subpoenaed. They asserted their rights against self-incrimination. The three Democrats described the "criminal" inquiry as being "politically motivated."

House officials would not say exactly how many aides have received subpoenas, nor who were the recipients. U.S. Attorney for the District of Columbia Jay Stephens had earlier obtained the financial records of top aides to Rostenkowski and Kolter.

Baucus warns that NAFTA is in trouble

Sen. Max Baucus (D-Mont.), one of the leading supporters of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), indicated in floor statements on July 27 that President Bush should not assume that Congress will rubber-stamp any treaty now under negotiation. Remarking that "the current rush [for a treaty] is dictated more by American electoral politics than by the substance of the negotiations," Baucus warned that "the deal that is taking shape does not seem to be a good deal for the United States."

Baucus reiterated, as did House Majority Leader Richard Gephardt (D-Mo.) several weeks ago, that, for the Democrats, any agreement must include certain environmental provisions and a program of "worker adjustment" to assist those laid off because of NAFTA. Baucus added that Mexico must also agree "to a quick phase-out of existing barriers and provisions to ensure that Mexico does not become an export platform for Japanese autos."

Baucus revealed the political motivation of this new-found "hesitation" by the Democrats to the deal which they had so warmly embraced in voting Bush the fast-track authority, when he added, "if Governor Clinton is elected President . . . I would advise him to renegotiate NAFTA to ensure that concerns about the environment and worker adjustment were adequately addressed."

"There is no compelling reason," said Baucus, "to finish the NAFTA in the next few days."

Lantos salivates for new Gulf war, hits official

Rep. Tom Lantos (D-Calif.), the Hungarian-American congressman who piled insult upon insult to Hungarian parliamentarians recently visiting the United States on a human rights mission to investigate the case of political prisoner Lyndon LaRouche, railed at U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Edward Perkins for having accepted a compromise agreement between the U.N. and Iraq which staved off further military action in the area.

In accordance with the agreement worked out by U.N. Special Ambassador Rolf Ekeus, no Americans were allowed on a newly constituted U.N. inspection team. The Iraqis objected to their presence since the United

States had been the chief belligerent against Iraq during the war.

(Lantos is one of the biggest supporters of Israel on Capitol Hill, and, according to Hill sources, makes a point of staying at the most provocative Israeli settlements on the West Bank whenever he goes there.)

In hearings before the House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Europe and the Middle East on July 29, Lantos ranted about Perkins "white-washing an abominable decision," and demanded to know who was responsible from the U.S. side in agreeing to the decision. "This is a humiliating spectacle to have the United States, which led that international operation against Saddam Hussein, now agree to having its citizens excluded from the inspection team."

Lantos grilled Perkins and Deputy Secretary of State George Ward for 10-15 minutes for their "acquiescence" in that decision. Lantos also reiterated his desire to hold a war crimes tribunal to try Iraqi President Saddam Hussein for crimes against humanity.

Congress hikes tariffs on Japanese minivans

In what is just the beginning of trade legislation aimed against Japan, the House on July 31 passed by a 273-112 vote legislation reclassifying certain imported minivans (multi-purpose or sport-utility vehicles) as trucks. This raises the rate of duty on these vehicles from 2.5% to 25%.

The legislation reverses a 1989 Treasury Department ruling that said that imported multi-purpose vehicles (MPVs) with four doors would be classified as trucks for purposes of safety standards, emissions tests, fuel economy, and taxes, but as cars for

tariff purposes.

The White House has threatened to veto the bill, which it considers a violation of U.S. obligations under the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT).

Shelby forces death penalty onto D.C. ballot

Sen. Richard Shelby (D-Ala.) has forced a measure into the District of Columbia Appropriations bill which will put a referendum on the death penalty onto the ballot in the next city election. Presently, there is no death penalty in the District.

Shelby offered a proposal to make murder committed in the District a federal crime and mandate either a mandatory life sentence or the death penalty. An attempt last year to tack on a D.C. death penalty in the crime bill was dropped by the conference committee.

Sen. Brock Adams (D-Wash.) objected that the Shelby proposal would violate the right of D.C. citizens to determine themselves whether or not they wanted to introduce the death penalty. Adams proposed that the Shelby amendment be made the subject of a referendum to be included in the next D.C. elections, which the Senate adopted.

Shelby has warned that if the District does not vote the death penalty and if the killing doesn't stop, he will pursue his legislation. There are presently 15 states, including the District, which do not have a death penalty.

Senate passes moratorium on nuclear testing

For the first time ever, the Senate voted overwhelmingly on Aug. 3 for a

far-reaching moratorium on nuclear testing.

The legislation would suspend nuclear weapons testing for nine months and would set a limit of not more than five explosions per year for the next three years. During this period, the government is called upon to negotiate a comprehensive test ban with Russia. No U.S. nuclear tests could be conducted after Sept. 30, 1996 unless Russia restarts testing.

The White House has threatened to veto the legislation. Defense Secretary Richard Cheney said at the end of July that nuclear testing was crucial to assure both the safety and the reliability of nuclear weapons in case they are ever needed for war.

The Senate passed the legislation 68-26, enough votes to override a presidential veto. Earlier this year, the House had approved a one-year moratorium on testing but without a veto-proof majority.

Wolf condemns House inaction against Serbia

Rep. Frank Wolf (R-Va.), a member of the congressional Helsinki group on human rights, called congressional inaction on the Serbian aggression against its neighbors "a disgrace" and an abomination.

"Where is the Congress?" cried Wolf, in floor comments on July 29. "Every day women and men and children are being killed, and what is called an ethnic cleansing is destroying entire ethnic populations. . . . Why will the Committee on Foreign Affairs not hold hearings? Why will the Committee on Ways and Means not report out my bill that takes away Most Favored Nation status from Serbia? Why has this House refused to act? It is a disgrace," said Wolf.