

Congressional Closeup by William Jones

House votes further cuts in missile defense

The House voted to cut \$500 million on May 18 in President Clinton's \$3.2 billion request for anti-missile defense. The House also rejected an amendment by Martin Meehan (D-Mass.) by a vote of 271-155, which would have cut an additional \$200 million out of funding for ballistic missile defense, as the House began action on a \$263 billion Defense Authorization Bill for fiscal year 1995.

The House Armed Services Committee had cut \$500 million from Clinton's request before sending the bill to the full House. Clinton's request is primarily for development of anti-missile missiles, similar to the Patriot missile, which was used during the Gulf war to protect U.S. troops and allies from missile attack.

Patricia Schroeder (D-Colo.) said the \$200 million could safely be cut and the money used instead to cut the U.S. federal deficit. But Deputy Secretary of Defense John Deutch told the House in a letter that the \$200 million would cripple research on more exotic future defenses against missile attack.

Europe told to pay more for U.S. troop presence

The House voted on May 19 to withdraw up to 75,000 U.S. troops from Europe if U.S. allies there do not pay 75% of the forces' costs by 1998, excluding salaries. The House voted the proposal into the FY 95 Defense Authorization Bill by a vote of 268-144.

The House rejected by a vote of 260-163 a more extreme proposal to withdraw all U.S. troops by the year 2000 from countries that do not pay all costs except salaries for the U.S. troops stationed on their territory. The

proposal was made by John Bryant (D-Tex.), who argued that Europe and Japan have the wealth to pay for the U.S. troops defending them. Opponents argued that U.S. troops are in Europe and Japan to maintain stability in the United States' own security interests.

U.S. troops in Europe are already being cut to 100,000, and the proposal passed by the House would cut them to as few as 25,000. The provision would require withdrawal of 1,000 U.S. troops from Europe for each percentage point less than 75% the European allies failed to pay for the troops' cost. The effort to force Europe to pay a larger share of the cost would have to be approved by the Senate and signed by President Clinton in order to become law.

Assistant House Majority Leader David Bonior (D-Mich.) argued that Japan agreed to pay a larger share of the cost of U.S. troops stationed in that country when the House passed a similar proposal, and that the House should now put the same pressure on Europe. "We're saying it is time for European allies to pay their fair share, too," he said.

Proponents of the measure couple what they consider "unfair" trade practices to the troop-cost issue, using threatened troop withdrawal as blackmail to force concessions on the trade front. Bonior justified the demand by saying that Germany, for example, earns a \$10 billion surplus in trade with the United States, "but we pay \$4 billion for their defense."

The White House is opposed to the measure and senior aides to President Clinton appealed to the House not to approve the proposal, saying it would undermine U.S. leadership in NATO. Defense Secretary William Perry told the House in a letter: "The administration has made good progress in adapt-

ing NATO to the new post-Cold War security environment. More still needs to be done. . . . Forcing the withdrawal of U.S. forces from Europe would undercut U.S. leadership in NATO during this critical time of transition." Opponents of the U.S. troop cut in Europe said Secretary of State Warren Christopher also appealed to House members not to approve the proposal.

Senate reaffirms tough stand against crime

The Senate on May 19 reaffirmed its "get tough on crime" stance just prior to conference with the House on a crime bill. The Senate passed its version of the bill last November, while the House passed its version in April. A joint committee of House and Senate members is expected to meet soon to work out the differences and send a compromise version back to both chambers for final action.

In a series of votes, the Senate said it wanted the final bill to include longer mandatory prison terms for criminals who use guns and commit violent crimes, and for violent criminals to serve at least 85% of their sentences. The votes came on non-binding motions to instruct the Senate members of the conference and to indicate the intent of the Senate. Much of this is meant to score points during the mid-term election campaign.

Most vociferous in his posturing was Phil Gramm (R-Tex.), who ranted about how "we are not going to let this session of Congress end before we have a tough crime bill." He accused Democrats of weakening previous crime bills in conference. "We want 10 years in prison without parole for possessing a firearm during commis-

sion of a violent crime; 20 years for discharging it. We want life imprisonment for murder, and the death penalty in aggravated cases," Gramm said. Both bills already include slightly different versions of the "three strikes and you're out" provision, which provides for mandatory life sentences after a third felony conviction.

However, Senate Judiciary Committee Chairman Joseph Biden (D-Del.) said that the motions would not bind him or the other members in conference. Although calling the bill the most significant anti-crime legislation ever considered by Congress, Biden added, "The crime bill will not end crime."

The crime bills would authorize funds to hire more police and build more prisons. One of the key issues of the conference will be whether to add a provision that is supported by President Clinton to ban 19 types of semi-automatic assault weapons. The Senate included the weapons ban in its bill while the House approved the measure as a separate bill in April by a two-vote margin.

House Judiciary Committee Chairman Jack Brooks (D-Tex.), an opponent of the gun ban, has said he will try to eliminate it from the final bill. Another contested provision in the House bill would allow persons sentenced to death to use statistics in their appeal to show that their sentences were influenced by racial bias. The Senate has voted to oppose that language.

Brown draws the line on Space Station cuts

Rep. George Brown (D-Calif.), chairman of the Science, Space, and Technology Committee, in mid-May released a draft NASA authorization bill for fiscal year 1995 that his committee

will submit to the House. The bill would reduce the Clinton administration's request of \$14.3 billion by \$149.6 million in anticipation of cuts that will be made by the House Appropriations Committee. Brown indicated that this is as low as he will allow the NASA budget to go before recommending the elimination of funding for the Space Station.

Over half of the cuts are in the Space Shuttle program, with the proposed elimination of one flight in FY 97 and the permanent reduction from eight to seven flights per year after that. The committee projects that that would "save" \$15 million in FY 95 in hardware that would not be built for the cancelled future mission. In addition, the committee is recommending that one Spacelab microgravity flight be substituted for a less costly mission, "saving" an additional \$38.4 million.

While some Republican members of the committee are prepared to fight the administration on its proposal to hinge the U.S. program on a Russian-centered space station, Brown has supported the White House initiative. The White House has made the Space Station an important part of its foreign policy initiative for cooperation with Russia. In the proposed budget authorization, while funds to start the robotic Mars Surveyor program were zeroed out, for example, \$50 million was added for cooperation with Russia in space science, which the committee expects to be used for joint missions to Mars.

Brown accompanied President Clinton on a plane trip to California on May 20 in an effort to impress upon him how important it is for the White House to pressure Congress not to cut the requested NASA budget. Brown has threatened that if the Appropriations Committee cuts the budget sub-

stantially, which it has done each of the past 10 years, he will recommend to his colleagues eliminating funding for the Space Station in order to preserve the integrity of the other NASA programs.

One staffer noted that Vice President Al Gore had "made a very articulate case" for space cooperation with Russia with members of Congress, but that this was put in a "compelling emotional context" which, when put "in logical terms, is hard to defend." As in each of the past three years, amendments will be introduced on the House floor to cancel the Space Station. One such amendment was introduced in the House on May 18 by Tim Roemer (D-Ind.), an ardent opponent of the Space Station.

Decide on Whitewater hearings, say GOPers

Senate Republicans have given Democrats a deadline of Memorial Day, May 30, to reach an agreement on a date for hearings on President Clinton's alleged wrongdoings in the so-called Whitewater affair. The growing pressure for hearings comes as special prosecutor Robert Fiske indicated that he is near completion of the phase of his probe dealing with the Vincent Foster death and White House contacts with the Resolution Trust Corp. and Treasury officials concerning Whitewater.

The Senate Republican Policy Committee decided to pressure Senate Majority Leader George Mitchell (D-Me.) for a date and hearing calendar, the May 19 *Washington Post* reported. If he doesn't do that, GOPers will begin introducing amendments to pending bills with their preferred dates and guidelines.