

Congressional Closeup by Kathleen Klenetsky

Armed Services Committee gets lesson on SDI

Gen. James Abrahamson, director of the Strategic Defense Initiative Office, teamed with Undersecretary of Defense Fred Ikle Feb. 21 to tell a key Senate panel that the SDI must proceed without delay and to warn that any cuts imposed by Congress in the program's budget for FY 1986 would imperil U.S. efforts to match Soviet ABM capabilities.

Testifying before the Senate Armed Services Committee, some of whose members, including Sam Nunn (D-Ga.) and Ted Kennedy (D-Mass.), are among the leaders of the hard-core Capitol Hill opponents of the program, Ikle emphasized that the SDI is "not an optional program, on the margin of our defense efforts. It is central." Terming the SDI "a program of extraordinary long-term importance" and the "key for overcoming the relentless and repugnant competition in offensive arms," the Pentagon spokesman added, "The one and one-fifth percent of the budget that it requires for the coming fiscal year will build the very core of our long-term policy for reducing the risk of nuclear war. . . . It would be derelict in the extreme were the United States not to pursue the SDI," especially in the context of an impending Soviet break-out from the ABM Treaty.

In response to questions from Sen. Carl Levin (D-Mich.) on whether the administration would be willing to negotiate with the Soviets on space defense once the SDI is proven feasible, Ikle replied: "We would never give the Soviets a veto over the program. We are prepared to discuss [SDI] with the Soviets, but not from the standpoint

of not deploying it."

General Abrahamson provided the committee with a detailed summary of the structure and goals of the program. He stressed that President Reagan's goal of rendering nuclear weapons obsolete is eminently feasible. "I am a technical optimist who believes that our people" can achieve this objective, he said, noting, "The Soviets believe we can do it. That's why they returned to Geneva." Abrahamson termed the SDI "the most human program we have," one which will "help improve the chances for survival of humanity."

In his prepared statement, Abrahamson stressed to the panel that the Soviet Union has had "a large SDI-equivalent program of its own for some years," noting ironically, "They obviously appreciate the vast potential of the technologies and the bold objectives."

Both Ikle and Abrahamson were faced with a string of hostile questions from Nunn and his cronies—although the net effect on an observer was more sound and fury than actual content. Perhaps the most amusing exchange took place between Nunn and Abrahamson, when the senator, a self-proclaimed military expert, launched into a perfervid paean to High Frontier, the unworkable, obsolete defense system pushed by former DIA head Gen. Danny Graham. Reading from a High Frontier pamphlet describing the space-based kinetic energy system proposed by Graham, Nunn demanded to know why the Reagan administration was insisting on spending \$26 billion on the SDI to explore "far-off technologies" when the technology proposed by Graham already exists.

Abrahamson's reply was especial-

ly instructive to those many persons misled by Graham and others into thinking of High Frontier and the SDI as the same thing. While acknowledging that the SDI research team is investigating systems similar to those of High Frontier, Abrahamson emphasized that such systems could never be used alone and would be potentially useful only as part of a far broader strategic defense system incorporating more advanced technologies.

Abrahamson told the senators that his main concern is to ensure that whatever the defensive system finally developed and deployed by this country, it will be invulnerable to Soviet countermeasures. High Frontier alone is incapable of meeting this criterion. "We can't rely on a single system," he emphasized. "That would send absolutely the wrong signal to the Soviets. If the Soviets were able to overcome it, that would be highly destabilizing. If I were to advocate [deploying a single system like Graham], I would be responsible for leading the U.S. down the wrong road."

Cranston to lead fight against 'Star Wars' funding

Sen. Alan Cranston (D-Calif.), one of Adolf Hitler's earliest American admirers, and fellow California Democrat Rep. George Brown, announced in the *Congressional Record* Feb. 5 that they intend to lead the fight against full funding for the SDI and for a ban on anti-satellite (ASAT) weapons testing.

Cranston announced that he opposes the "testing and deployment of Star Wars," and agrees with "Paul Warnke that 'the testing and deploy-

ment of such systems would be fatal to prospects of controlling and reducing strategic nuclear warheads.'" Cranston also said that he believes that the United States should extend the moratorium on ASAT testing imposed by Congress last year. It expires March 1.

The senator added that his position is identical to that of Representative Brown, who supports "limited, prudent research, but who will work for cuts in the massive spending proposed by the Reagan administration." Brown became the focus of an international scandal last May when Democratic presidential candidate Lyndon H. LaRouche went on national television to document the fact that Brown was a key member of a group of congressmen whose anti-SDI legislation had been drafted with the aid of the Soviet embassy in Washington.

In his *Congressional Record* statement, Brown called on the President to extend the ASAT moratorium. His office has disclosed that he will shortly send a formal letter to Reagan reiterating this demand; he expects to have over a 100 congressional co-signers.

Soviet delegation visits during defense debate

Led by House Speaker Tip O'Neill (D-Mass.), a group of congressmen are calling in some heavy reinforcements in their assault on the Reagan administration's program to restore American military capabilities.

At O'Neill's personal invitation, a top-level delegation of 25 Soviets, headed by Politburo member Vladimir Scherbitsky, leader of the Ukrainian Communist Party, will descend on

Capitol Hill during the second week in March for a series of private meetings and consultations with various members of Congress and key congressional panels, including the House Foreign Affairs and Senate Foreign Relations committees.

In addition, the Russians will meet with President Reagan and Secretary of State George Shultz, and will make stops in Dallas and Austin, Texas, and California.

The timing of the visit couldn't be more propitious—from the Kremlin's standpoint. Not only does it intersect the opening of U.S.-Soviet arms talks in Geneva; it also comes smack in the middle of the pitched battle raging between Congress and the Reagan administration over the Pentagon's budget for FY 1986. Moreover, the visit occurs on the eve of a crucial Congressional vote which will determine the fate of the MX missile.

Moscow is well aware that the U.S. Congress represents one of the more promising "cards" it can play against the administration on the issue of defense spending in general, and on the Strategic Defense Initiative and the MX missile in particular.

The Soviet visit is part of an exchange program which Moscow has had going with Congress since the late 1970s. Last year, under the aegis of this program, a group of American congressmen went to the Soviet Union for "consultations."

Upon returning to the United States, they began issuing denunciations of the Reagan administration, echoing Moscow's charges that the breakdown in U.S.-Soviet discussions was the fault of the United States and singling out the SDI as the number-one obstacle to improved U.S.-

Soviet relations. Shortly thereafter, a delegation of Soviet scientists came to Capitol Hill to lobby against the SDI. The results of these combined efforts were well worth the Soviets' efforts: a multi-million-dollar cut in the beam-defense budget, plus deep reductions and immobilizing restrictions on the MX program.

The Kremlin intends to wrack up similar successes this year through its careful cultivation of dupes and traitors on the Hill. A spokesman for Rep. Tom Foley (D-Wash.), head of the bipartisan group which is sponsoring the trip, reported, "We expect the Soviets to raise the U.S. defense budget and the SDI in meetings with Congress. We think this will be a fruitful set of discussions."

Other sources report that the Soviet delegation will try to spur on the anti-Pentagon lobby on the Hill by telling their Congressional pals that if they can defeat the administration's defense budget and cripple the SDI, a new arms-control treaty will be assured.

The congressmen involved in this operation include liberal Democrats like Rep. Martin Frost (D-Tex.), who is coordinating the delegation's March 8-9 tour of several Texas cities, and Representative Burton (D-Calif.), who will be doing the same in her home state, as well as "conservatives" like Jack Kemp (R-N.Y.), who styles himself the "New Right" standard-bearer on the Hill. Also part of the group are Rep. Dick Cheney (R-Wyo.), a pal of Henry Kissinger; Rep. Charles Diggs (D-Mich.); and Tom Downey (D-N.Y.), a world federalist who has carved out a congressional career as an arch-enemy of all measures to shore up U.S. military capabilities.