

Congressional Closeup by Kathleen Klenetsky

Congress to vote on fate of MX

With just a few weeks to go before Congress votes on whether to release funds for the MX missile, President Reagan and other key administration representatives have been busily applying the screws to ensure a pro-missile outcome, and several developments indicate that the administration's campaign is working.

On March 5, according to press reports, five influential members of Congress agreed to postpone any full-scale review of the MX until the summer. The five included House Armed Services Committee chairman Les Aspin (D-Wisc.), Rep. Norm Dicks (D-Wash.), William Cohen (R-Maine), and Sam Nunn (D-Ga.).

Not one could be considered a friend of the administration's overall military posture; in fact, it was Aspin who fashioned the "compromise" that has held up the \$1.5 billion in MX funding voted by Congress for FY 1985. Thus, their decision could turn the tide in the administration's favor. Reliable sources report, however, that they may be demanding a very heavy price—namely, administration agreement to reduce funding for the MX and SDI in the FY 1986 budget.

Soviet delegation on 'special mission' against SDI, MX

A Soviet delegation headed by Vladimir Shcherbitsky—the first Politburo member to visit since 1973—concluded a three-day visit to Washington March 7 with a gala love-fest hosted by House Majority Whip Tom Foley (D-Wash.), chairman of a bipartisan congressional group which arranges

exchange visits with Soviet officials.

The delegation, which included Moscow's chief "Americanologist," Georgii Arbatov, and general-staff member Col. Gen. Nikolai F. Chervov, descended on Capitol Hill on the eve of the Geneva talks and just days before Congress votes on the MX missile. Although the delegation met with Secretary of State George Shultz, defense department officials, and the President himself, its main target was Capitol Hill, where members engaged in intensive discussions with the House and Senate foreign affairs committees, the leadership of both houses, and other interested parties.

Speaking at an American Legion convention on March 5, Edward Rowny, Reagan administration special adviser on arms control, charged that the Shcherbitsky visit was aimed at undermining the Strategic Defense Initiative and the MX.

"Shcherbitsky is here on a special mission," said Rowny, in response to a question posed by *EIR*. "His aim is to convince people we don't need the SDI or the MX. The timing of his visit is no accident. They [the Soviet delegation] are here working on elements of our democratic society and are putting their arguments to people who are either uninformed or who are so desperate for an [arms] agreement that they are willing to overlook the true situation. . . ."

Rowny's characterization of the trip was right on target. While details of the various têtes-à-têtes have been carefully guarded, *EIR* has learned that the Kremlin's emissaries hammered away at the administration's alleged "lack of sincerity" on arms control, and warned that the United States better abandon the SDI—or else.

Interviewed on Washington television, delegation member Arbatov

said he and his comrades had told Congress that Moscow is "very pessimistic" about the Geneva talks. Arbatov claimed that the administration is either "not very honest" or "maybe something has changed" since the January meeting between Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko and George Shultz, adding that the Reagan request for "billions of dollars in new military appropriations" and his commitment to the SDI proves that he isn't interested in arms reduction.

The Soviet threats were made more explicit by Colonel General Chervov, to the *Washington Post*. Chervov told the *Post* that Moscow "will develop and perfect [its] strategic offensive arms" rather than negotiate reductions if the United States continues the SDI program.

"We are not going to sit on our hands and wait until you decide whether or not it would be worthy to deploy such a system," he warned. "You are working on your system, and that means we'll start perfecting our strategic offensive arms. This is not something for the future. It is something which is going to happen in practice." Chervov charged that the three-fold increase in SDI funding which the Administration has requested for FY 1986 is an effort to make "Star Wars" irreversible.

'We can't negotiate from a position of strength'

Shcherbitsky's "secret mission" has already borne fruit. One of the congressional participants in the têtes-à-têtes with the Russians, Rep. Tom Downey (D-N.Y.), confided to this news service that the major thing he learned from them is that the United States "must not negotiate from a po-

sition of strength, because this implies weakness on the other side.”

Downey, who was recently called a “draft-dodging wimp” by Rep. Dornan (R-Calif.) on the floor of the House, added that he’s now certain the MX will be defeated. “I believe we will defeat it in the House, although it’ll be close.”

The congressman made his comments at a reception thrown for the Soviet delegation by the Kennan Institute. Feasting on shrimp canapes and Bloody Marys (White Russians were strictly *verboten*) were such distinguished Soviet fans as Sen. Claiborne Pell (D-R.I.), who was seen huddled with cable-TV czar Ted Turner and KGB Mata-Hari Carol Rosin of the Institute for Security and Cooperation in Outer Space; former ambassadors to Moscow Tom Watson and Malcolm Toon; several congressmen, including Jim Wright (D-Tex.), Tom Foley (D-Wash.), and ADL operative Henry Waxman (D-Calif.); the *New York Times*’ Bernard Gwertzman; the *Washington Post*’s Ben Bradlee and Robert Kaiser; State Department official Mark Palmer; and Sovietologist George Kennan.

Bill introduced to expand Pentagon’s drug-fighting role

A bipartisan group of U.S. senators introduced a bill into Congress on Feb. 27 to expand the Pentagon’s role in the war on drugs. Entitled “The Readiness Enhancement of Air Force Reserve Special Operations Act of 1985,” the measure represents, according to chief sponsor Dennis DeConcini (D-Ariz.), “a bold new step toward bringing the Department of Defense more deeply into our war against the narcotics traffickers.”

The bill’s other major sponsors include Sens. Abdnor (R-S.D.), D’Amato (R-N.Y.), Chiles (D-Fla.), Cochran (R-Miss.), and Paula Hawkins (R-Fla.), chairwoman of both the Senate Subcommittee on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse and the Senate Drug Enforcement Caucus. Hawkins has been particularly outspoken on the need for a major offensive against the global drug-and-terrorism networks.

In a statement published in the *Congressional Record*, DeConcini said the bill’s aim is to “pave the way for the Department of Defense to assume a peacetime, drug surveillance mission as part of an overall national security strategy to protect our vulnerable southern borders from drug smugglers, terrorist insurgents, and unidentified, low-flying aircraft. . . . No longer can we afford to sit idly by and be outgunned day in and day out by a well-financed, well-organized army of drug smugglers that is penetrating our borders with record loads of cocaine, marijuana, and heroin.”

The measure mandates the creation of an Air Force Reserve special operations squadron that, “for the first time in history, will have a peacetime drug interdiction mission.” The unit will include 16 P-3 aircraft equipped with extremely sophisticated surveillance capabilities.

The bill would also make the Defense Department’s Task Force on Drug Law Enforcement a permanent office of the Pentagon.

Budget panel actions signal rocky going for Reagan

The Senate Budget Committee began deliberations on the Reagan administration’s budget package for 1986 dur-

ing the second week in March, and promptly rejected some of the major issues of the administration’s proposals.

On March 5, the Republican-controlled panel voted to cut the administration’s proposed Pentagon budget for fiscal years 1986 through 1989 by a whopping \$79 billion. That figure exceeded even the \$66 billion in defense reductions advocated by committee chairman Pete Domenici (R-N.M.). The only senators voting against the cuts were Orrin Hatch (Utah), Steve Symms (Id.), Robert Kasten (Wisc.) and Dan Quayle (Ind.)—all Republicans.

White House spokesman Robert Sims told reporters, “We’re very disappointed by this vote. We want the president’s [defense] proposal the way he proposed it, and he’ll continue to seek that on the Hill.”

The defense vote was just one of the actions taken by the committee signaling that Congress and the administration are headed for a major confrontation on the budget. Aside from slashing military spending, the committee rejected many of the administration’s reductions in various domestic programs, opting instead for freezing spending at current levels.

The panel voted 13-9 against the administration’s proposal for paring \$6 billion from federal agriculture-support programs—although it did vote to slice them by \$200 million on the grounds that, as Sen. James Exon (D-Neb.) put it, “Agriculture must play a part in the deficit reductions, but not such a Draconian part.”

Not once during the entire proceedings did any committee member suggest that the deficit be reduced by cutting some of the \$197 billion in debt service which is set to be gouged from U.S. taxpayers’ pockets.