

## Congressional Closeup by Kathleen Klenetsky

### SDI narrowly escapes huge cut by Senate

Funding for the Strategic Defense Initiative, already slashed by committees in both houses of Congress, barely escaped another big cut Aug. 5, as the Senate opened deliberations on the fiscal 1987 defense authorization bill.

The measure includes \$3.9 billion for the SDI, reflecting the \$1.4 billion cut taken out of the original administration request by the Senate Armed Services Committee.

By identical 50-49 votes, the Senate defeated two amendments which would have taken huge new cuts out of the SDI budget. One of the amendments, sponsored by Sen. Bennett Johnston (D-La.), would have capped SDI spending increases at 3% per annum, which translates into a maximum \$3.2 billion budget for FY 1987.

Earlier this year, Johnston circulated a letter arguing that the amount of money the administration wanted for the SDI was excessive, and put the program on a "premature" schedule. Forty-eight senators signed it, including both Democrats and Republicans—and almost all of them voted for Johnston's amendment. One exception was Sen. John Heinz (R-Pa.), who changed his vote at the last minute.

Another amendment, also defeated by one vote, would have slashed the SDI to \$3.5 billion.

Lieutenant-General James Abrahamson, director of the SDI program, watched anxiously from the gallery as the Senate debated the merits of strategic defense.

Some of the most virulent attacks on the program came from Sen. John Kerry (D-Mass.), a first-term senator whose mother belongs to the blue-blood Forbes family. "The choice is

arms control or 'Star Wars,'" Kerry said during a long-winded tirade against the program. The SDI is "a cancer on our nation's defense."

The usual cast of pro-Moscow Republicans also weighed in against the SDI. Sen. Charles Mathias (R-Md.) complained that there is a lack of clarity in the program. "Why is there so much urgency in getting there, when we don't even know where we're going?" he wailed. Ditto from Sen. John Chafee (R-R.I.), who insisted that SDI "has too many question marks, far too many serious implications for arms control. . . . No one seems clear about the goals for the program."

Earlier in the day, President Reagan and Secretary of Defense Weinberger had met with Senate leaders to urge that at least some of the funds for the program, which had been cut by the Armed Services Committee, be restored, but the Senate was having none of that.

The SDI faces much tougher sledding in the House, which took up the defense authorization bill at the same time the Senate did.

### House launches its own war on drugs

House leaders have responded to President Reagan's new drive to end drug abuse in the United States with their own, belated war on drugs.

On Aug. 5, the day after Reagan made a nationally televised address outlining a tough, six-point program that he called "a national crusade against drugs," House Speaker Tip O'Neill (D-Mass.) and minority leader Bob Michel (R-Ill.) released the text of a letter to the major television net-

works which urges them to launch an educational campaign over the airwaves on the dangers of drug use.

Signed by 300 House members, the letter contends that "many fewer younger Americans would turn to drugs if they fully understood the facts."

O'Neill said the proposed media campaign would complement new moves in Congress to pass legislation to stem the supply of drugs through enhanced enforcement and interdiction efforts.

Senate Democrats also unveiled a new a three-point anti-drug program. Sens. Lawton Chiles (D-Fla.) and Joseph Biden (D-Del.), who introduced the package on behalf of the Senate Democratic Task Force on Drugs, said the legislation would:

- Increase the penalties for the first offense of possessing five grams or more of an illegal drug, to 20 years in prison and a \$250,000 fine;
- Make it a felony with double penalties to use minors for distribution of drugs;
- Make it an offense, punishable by a 20-year prison term or a \$250,000 fine, to operate a "Crack" house;
- Increase penalties for distributing drugs within 1,000 feet of a school.

### Money-laundering bill passes committee

On July 31, the Senate Judiciary Committee took one small step toward curbing drug and other dirty-money laundering, approving a bill that would provide fines of \$250,000 and prison terms up to 20 years for the offense. Similar legislation is pending in the House.

"Creation of a money-laundering offense is imperative," said chairman Strom Thurmond (R-S.C.), "if our law enforcement agencies are to be effective against the organized criminal groups which reap profits from unlawful activity by camouflaging the proceeds through elaborate laundering schemes. This committee has taken a crucial step in the war against illegal drugs."

The bill would protect banks which expose money launderers and allow them, in certain cases, not to tell depositors if their accounts are being checked for possible violations by federal agents.

## **What's behind new probe of Jesse Helms?**

The FBI, at the request of the Senate Intelligence Committee, is investigating a "potential violation" of national security secrets by either Senator Helms (R-N.C.) himself or one of his top aides, Christopher Manion. Manion is the son of Clarence Manion, one of the leading lights of the John Birch Society.

Helms's office is being accused of having leaked the specifics of a U.S. covert intelligence operation in Chile, including the names of on-the-ground agents, to Chilean authorities.

Sources report that Manion, who has frequently visited Chile, attended a confidential briefing by U.S. intelligence authorities, at which sensitive information was disclosed that later made its way to the Chilean government.

Washington insiders tell *EIR* that the probe is part of an attempt to undercut Helms's operations in Ibero-America, which run the gamut from

attempts to destabilize the Mexican government, through trying to overthrow the government in Panama in favor of an avowed Hitler supporter.

One of the more significant features of any comprehensive probe into Helms and his coterie, is that it would immediately lead to the Ariel Sharon faction of the Israeli Mossad. This faction, which has cultivated Helms in recent years, also recruited accused spy Jonathan Pollard, and has worked with various Soviet KGB deployments in Ibero-America.

A key bridge between this faction and Helms is Jon Speller, an agent of "The Trust," the coordinating point for the Eastern and Western oligarchies. Several of Helms's top aides, including Jim Lucier, Deborah DeMoss, and Cliff Kiracofe, have worked closely with Speller. All three accompanied Helms on his trip to Chile in July.

In a hastily called press conference Aug. 4, Helms called the charges part of a "smear campaign" by the State Department and the CIA.

Helms also accused Elliott Abrams, assistant secretary of state for inter-American affairs, of having instigated the investigation.

"It was Elliott Abrams," Helms declared. "He crept up here in the dead of night and made these charges. . . . Elliott Abrams committed a deliberate falsehood."

## **Congressmen wrangle over S. Africa sanctions**

The package of economic sanctions against South Africa, proposed by Sen. Richard Lugar (R-Ind.) and passed by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on Aug. 1, has run into a tem-

porary legislative logjam. Angered by Senate Majority Leader Bob Dole's (R-Kan.) insistence on delaying a vote on sanctions until Democrats agree to allow a vote on aid to the Nicaraguan contras, Sens. Ted Kennedy (D-Mass.) and Robert Byrd (D-W.Va., the Senate Minority leader) offered an even tougher version of the Lugar plan on Aug. 5.

That move brought sharp words from Dole, who accused Byrd of a "violation of the spirit" of earlier plans for dealing with the sanctions issue. Dole retaliated by tacking both the sanctions and contra proposals onto the defense authorization bill.

At press time, it looks possible that the Senate may not get around to dealing with sanctions until after the August recess.

Meanwhile, the House Foreign Affairs Committee voted up a non-binding resolution Aug. 6 urging the South African government to free black nationalist leader Nelson Mandela, and to legalize the outlawed African National Congress (ANC).

Introduced by Rep. George Crockett (D-Mich.), the measure calls on Pretoria to unconditionally release Mandela, the ANC's principal leader, who was jailed in the early 1960s, and to recognize the ANC as the "legitimate representative of the black majority."

Even liberals like Senator Kennedy have been forced to admit that the ANC is heavily influenced by the Soviet Union. At least 8 members of its leadership, and likely as many as 15, are also members of the Communist Party. Moreover, its 5,000-strong terrorist wing, infamous for the brutal practice of "necklacing" moderate blacks, is run by a Lithuanian-born Soviet operative.