

Eye on Washington by Nicholas F. Benton

Weinberger opposes 'posse comitatus' repeal

Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger labeled "absurd" the amendment passed by the House in its omnibus anti-drug bill the second week of September, to seal the U.S.-Mexican border with U.S. troops within 45 days of the enactment of the bill.

The amendment was authored by conservative Rep. Duncan Hunter (R-Calif.) and attached to another amendment, equally opposed by the Pentagon, by Rep. Charles Bennett (D-Fla.), repealing the U.S. "posse comitatus" laws which prohibit the military from performing direct law-enforcement activity.

White House spokesman Larry Speakes and Attorney General Edwin Meese have both backed up Weinberger in his opposition to the House amendments.

In a letter to the Congress, Assistant Defense Secretary William Taft IV pointed out that the military plays, and will continue to play, a significant role in providing time and equipment to assist civilian law-enforcement agencies in the War on Drugs, and even in helping foreign governments (such as Operation Blast Furnace in Bolivia). However, he pointed out, to divert the military to direct involvement in law-enforcement captures and arrests would require expensive retraining, cutting into U.S. strategic military readiness.

Taft also pointed out, it would provide too easy an out for government to underfund domestic law enforcement.

With so many members of the Democratic-controlled House eager to shred the defense budget and pull U.S. troops out of Europe, many people are

suspicious of the motivations behind the tough-talking advocates of using the U.S. military on the Mexican border to fight drugs.

The President's War on Drugs legislative package asks for \$400 million to equip the new Southwestern Border Patrol with sophisticated technology to detect low-flying aircraft and other modes of drug smuggling across the border, without direct involvement of U.S. troops.

Use of troops would be justified, one observer pointed out, only if Congress were to make a formal declaration of war against drug traffickers. Then, the matter would be simple. Any aircraft, vehicle, or boat entering the United States that failed to identify itself and receive proper clearance would be considered an enemy and shot down, blown up, or sunk.

Short of calling for this, however, the House should not be allowed to use anti-drug rhetoric as an excuse to take U.S. troops out of Europe while slashing funding for the Drug Enforcement Agency, Customs, and Immigration services.

Meese raised another problem with repeal of "posse comitatus": namely, that it violates the constitutional separation of powers by letting Congress decide how the President shall use the armed forces.

Meese 'in full accord' with French anti-terror

In response to queries from this reporter, Meese on Sept. 18 became the highest-level U.S. official to go on record in support of French Premier Jacques Chirac's virtual declaration of war against terrorists. Meese said "we are in all sympathy" and "in full accord with what they are trying to do" to deal with the terrorists.

Meese announced a new U.S.-

British treaty to cooperate in drug-money-laundering investigations on the British islands east of Florida known as the Turks and Caicos. Turks and Caicos was "put on the map" last year when the prime minister of the tiny islands was arrested at the Miami airport for trying to smuggle heroin into the United States. The islands have been a major base for drug traffickers, being one of many "bank secrecy havens" in the world where local laws "draw a dark curtain" over records of private bank accounts, according to Meese. He said he expects the new treaty will produce results similar to that signed in 1984 with the Cayman Islands; 65 indictments for drug money laundering have resulted from "lifting the curtain" there.

He added that a similar treaty with the Italian government led to the breakup of the "Pizza Connection" heroin trafficking ring, some of whose operatives are now on trial in New York.

Meese announced that he has been invited to Mexico City by the Mexican attorney general to meet with his Mexican, Colombian, and Peruvian counterparts to widen the War on Drugs throughout the hemisphere.

Assistant Attorney General Steve Trott put his stamp of approval on a declassified executive summary of a classified Army-sponsored project study of low-intensity warfare, which recommends lifting restrictions that limit aid to allies in debt to the U.S. Asked by *EIR* if he supported telling the International Monetary Fund to "back off" in the name of national security and the War on Drugs, Trott told the Sept. 18 press conference that it is "a valid concept." He noted that the success of Operation Blast Furnace in Bolivia against cocaine production has created economic chaos where "dollars would be well spent" for development purposes.