

Congressional Closeup by William Jones

Wright spills secrets to burn Contra aid

The White House was furious at House Speaker Jim Wright (D-Tex.) for revealing information they said might have been based on secret briefings to congressional intelligence committees. On Sept. 20, Wright accused the CIA of having whipped up public unrest in Nicaragua, and of having improperly provoked the Sandinista regime into cracking down on opposition groups through a covert program aimed at sparking anti-government riots. "We have received clear testimony from CIA people that they have deliberately done things to provoke an overreaction on the part of the government in Nicaragua," said Wright.

The disclosure by Wright may violate House rules that prohibit public discussion of secret testimony, according to several congressional officials. The CIA and the NSC regard the leak as "very serious" and plan to pursue the disclosure with the House Intelligence Committee and the House Ethics Committee, which is responsible for enforcing House rules.

One House intelligence source described Wright's comments as a "highly irresponsible leak" of intelligence information that appeared timed to undermine efforts to gain congressional approval of renewed U.S. aid to the resistance. Wright, already under scrutiny by the House Ethics Committee, for his "assistance" to some Texas thrifts, has a reputation for conducting his own foreign policy initiatives, independent of the Executive branch.

In this case, he has perhaps undermined the security of the United States. House Minority Leader Rep. Robert Michel (R-Ill.) and GOP Conference chairman Rep. Richard Cheney (R-

Wyo.) sent letters to the two House committees seeking investigations of the Speaker's statements. "I sure as hell want to know who that testimony is from and under what circumstances he got it," said Rep. Henry Hyde (R-Ill.), senior Republican member of the Intelligence Committee.

Dannemeyer fights for strong AIDS legislation

Rep. William Dannemeyer (R-Calif.), who recently has been attacked for his proposal in California to institute measures against AIDS similar to the original LaRouche proposal, Proposition 64, brought up the AIDS issue on the floor of the House, on the eve of the discussion of the AIDS Policy Act in the U.S. House of Representatives.

Dannemeyer made a major attack on U.S. public health officials and the policy of the CDC. "That we have seen public health officials, that I mentioned previously, treat this as a civil rights issue rather than a public health issue, is a tragedy for all of us to observe. What is even more tragic is that we have distinguished members of the media, of the public health profession, the insurance industry, in this country who are today attempting to argue and defend the rationality of exempting persons who are HIV-positive from any accountability to the public health care system at all.

"I have no idea how much longer this country can continue such a course if it has an intention to survive as a citadel in this world," continued Dannemeyer. "The citizens of the world are witnessing the virtual annihilation of certain countries in Africa today, because the incidence of the virus is

creeping up to 20 or 30 or 40% of the populations of some of these countries. If we do not take steps in this country to control the transferability of this virus to other persons, we Americans risk a similar fate in our society."

The AIDS Policy Act, the first major piece of national legislation on the deadly epidemic, is grossly inadequate to meet the tremendous threat posed by this killer disease, and is a dangerous compromise with the "civil rights" arguments of the gay lobby. Dannemeyer indicated this in his comments on the bill. "It will establish for the first time that I have been able to figure out or find out in the history of medicine . . . that before the doctor can test the patient's blood for the virus for AIDS, the doctor must get written consent from the patient to test for the virus, or rather to test the blood for the presence of the virus."

Dannemeyer had offered an amendment in the committee to eliminate that requirement for written consent, but the committee decided not to bring the amendment to the floor.

The bill provides a mere \$200 million a year for state AIDS testing and counseling programs. States receiving funds under the bill must test all persons convicted of prostitution, drug abuse, or a crime related to sexual assault; offer routine testing for those who receive treatment for drug abuse, venereal disease, tuberculosis, or attend family planning clinics; and make it a crime for a person to knowingly spread the AIDS virus.

Several amendments will, however, be offered, and, if passed, could help to forge the bill into an initial baby step in trying to cope with this species-threatening disease. Representative Dannemeyer and Rep. Ralph Hall (D-Texas) will introduce an

amendment to require states to report to public health officials all positive AIDS test results, along with information that is "sufficient to locate" the individual who tests positive.

An amendment by Rep. Bill McCollum (R-Fla.) will require states with a seroprevalence rate of 0.1% or greater to institute mandatory testing of applicants for marriage licenses. Two other amendments will also be considered: one which will require states to routinely test hospital employees, and another which would require states to test all prisoners when they enter prison and within 30 days of their release. In addition, Danne-meyer will offer an amendment requiring states receiving funds under the bill to test all prisoners as they enter and leave prison.

U.S.-Canada trade bill approved by Senate

On Sept. 19, the Senate voted 83 to 9 to approve the free-trade agreement with Canada. The bill would phase out by 1999 all tariffs and other trade barriers on the \$131 billion worth of goods that cross the northern U.S. border each year. The House approved identical legislation on Aug. 9 by a vote of 366 to 40. The pact was signed by President Reagan and Prime Minister Brian Mulroney on Jan. 2 of this year.

The only other country with which the United States has such an agreement is Israel, although the volume of trade is much smaller than that between Canada and the United States. The two countries will continue to have separate sets of tariffs and quotas on imports from third countries.

The agreement met heavy opposition from some senators, who main-

tained that despite the concessions of the Reagan administration, their state's industries were not adequately protected against subsidized Canadian competition. The Canadian Senate, controlled by the opposition Liberal Party, has refused to approve the agreement and has demanded that Mulroney call a general election. If the Liberals win the election, the Liberal Party leader, John Turner, has said that he will tear up the trade agreement.

Defense bill to cripple initial SDI deployment?

Certain formulations in the Senate Defense Appropriations bill could seriously impede the initial phase of an anti-ballistic missile system by transferring funding jurisdiction over the anti-tactical ballistic missile (ATBM) program from the SDI office to the Army. The bill calls for the Army to study and report back to Congress that the ATBM and similar programs are on track.

Supporters of ATBM contend that such a study could take between one and two years and that no funds for the program could be expended in the meantime.

A conference committee will attempt to reconcile the Senate measure with one passed by the House that does not call for the Army study. As one SDI supporter expressed it, "Having failed to kill the program, its enemies are out to cripple it by moving the most worthwhile things in it out of SDIO."

It is believed that such a move would be vigorously opposed by Israel, since it would tend to threaten Israel's own ATBM program, the Ar-

row, which is being developed with 80% U.S. funding under the SDI program. "The move is geared to hurt Israel, hurt the SDI program, and create tension between the Army and the SDIO. It's very mischievous," said one opponent of the Senate version.

Report claims Iraq used poison gas against Kurds

A staff report issued on Sept. 21 by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee says there is "overwhelming evidence" that Iraq used chemical weapons against Kurdish guerrillas and civilians in Iraq. The report claims are based on several hundred interviews with Kurdish refugees and other witnesses to events in Iraq.

"At least 15 of the refugees we interviewed exhibited symptoms characteristic of mustard gas poisoning," said the report, prepared by two members of the Committee staff, Peter W. Galbraith and Christopher Van Hollen, Jr.

Both the Turkish government, which is receiving a great number of Kurdish refugees, and the International Red Cross have said that they have found no evidence indicating that poison might have been used against the Kurds.

The Senate report is likely to influence Congress as it continues to debate sanctions against Iraq on account of the poison gas issue. On Sept. 8, the Senate approved economic sanctions. The bill, now pending in the House of Representatives, would prohibit the United States from providing Iraq with military equipment, loans, or loan guarantees. In addition, Iraqi oil products could not be imported into the United States.