

Congressional Closeup by William Jones

Nunn: Accelerate arms agreements with Moscow

Elaborating on a proposal that he had presented recently to the International Institute of Strategic Studies (IISS) in London, Georgia Democratic Sen. Sam Nunn wrote in a commentary in the *Washington Post* Sept. 19, that a two-tier system of negotiations should be developed to accelerate the pace of arms control.

The first tier would deal with ongoing negotiations on nuclear and conventional weapons; in the second tier, issues of greater complexity could be worked on by a U.S.-Soviet "experts group," which would be asked to develop options that otherwise would be reserved for a distant future phase of arms control negotiations.

This second tier, according to Nunn, would explore "revolutionary leapfrog advances" in arms control. If the "experts group" would reach a consensus on a basic conceptual approach on a specific arms control issue, then the consensus would be reviewed at the highest levels of government, leading to the initiation of actual negotiations.

The second tier could begin to explore limitations on nuclear sea-launched cruise missiles or on short-range nuclear missiles, or restrictions on anti-satellite systems.

The "pro-defense" Sen. Nunn has floated an idea which would significantly accelerate the rush to arms control exhibited by the starry-eyed Gorbachov lovers among the political establishment. If it is perceived that ostensible progress is being made in the pre-negotiating phase in one field not yet on the table, the tendency would be to come to an agreement more rapidly—and prematurely—as a result of the expectations created by the exploratory talks.

At a time when negotiation fever is raging in an attempt by the administration to cut a deal with Gorbachov, Sam Nunn probably thought he might try to get them to step on the gas a bit.

Thornburgh said to block the Iran-Contra probe

At a news conference following a closed-door meeting with the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence on Sept. 19, Independent Counsel Lawrence Walsh voiced complaints about Attorney General Richard Thornburgh's attempts to put roadblocks in the way of his investigations.

This involved Thornburgh's use of "national security concerns" to prevent the use of certain material in the trial of former White House aide Lt. Col. Oliver North. "The disagreements," said Walsh, "are over matters that the court knows, the public knows, and that we know the public knows. Yet there is an effort to keep it classified."

In a 38-page report to the House committee, Walsh also indicated that the most important charges against North had to be dismissed last January, primarily because of the refusal of intelligence agencies to permit "disclosure" of publicly known facts. As a result of compromises made by the Justice Department and the intelligence agencies after the North trial began, that information was introduced into evidence anyway. At that point, however, the main charges of conspiracy and theft of government property had been dropped.

Under the Classified Information Procedures Act, Thornburgh is empowered to file an affidavit blocking disclosure of any government secrets

in the courtroom, even if they are common knowledge. "I don't think the Attorney General should get into the act unless he feels that strongly about it," said Walsh. "He's not there to tinker with it. He should not come in unless he wants to kill the case."

Administration wards off strict ozone curbs

The Bush administration succeeded on Sept. 19 in warding off a stringent ozone bill by a 12-10 vote in the House Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Health and the Environment. The bill, put forward by subcommittee chairman Henry Waxman (D-Calif.), would have mandated tighter deadlines for cleaning up ozone, more stringent measures for cities failing to meet the 3% annual reduction in ozone, and would have required anti-pollution devices for industries emitting as little as 10 million tons of ozone-generating substances in the most polluted cities.

Committee chairman John Dingell (D-Mich.) called the Waxman measure "extremely harsh and punitive" toward the affected cities, adding that it would have an "adverse impact on innocent small business."

As a counter to the Waxman amendment, Dingell sponsored a bill supported by the administration which classifies urban areas according to the severity of their pollution and also prescribes increasingly stringent measures for reaching the ozone standard, decreasing ozone levels by 3% per year. The bill mandates no penalties for failure, and the cities would have to come into compliance with the levels within 5 to 20 years, depending on their level of pollution.

In order to waylay criticism from the environmentalists that the bill is too lax, the administration introduced at the last moment provisions that would increase the number of industries for which specific anti-ozone controls would be required and strengthen requirements for inspecting motor vehicles.

Barney Frank could be forced to resign

Rep. Barney Frank (D-Mass.), still trying to recover from the scandal caused by his aide, male prostitute Steve Gobie, whom Frank hired after having bought his sexual services, is under increasing pressure to resign.

In an editorial on Sept. 17, the *Boston Globe*, a long-time backer of Frank, demanded his resignation. The *Globe* said that Frank's "presence in Congress serves as a distraction and a hindrance" to the ideas he has promoted, adding that the issue was not Frank's homosexuality, but the issue of prostitution.

Others demanding Frank's resignation include the local *Catholic Times*, and liberal syndicated columnist Mark Shield, on Sept. 18.

Frank's friends in the House have advised him to stop talking so much about his personal life, advice which he has apparently taken to heart, refusing to give interviews. Although the official word from his Democratic colleagues is to still "hang tough," until the case is investigated by the House Committee on Ethics and Standards of Conduct, privately House Democratic leaders indicate that it might be best for all concerned if Frank did resign.

House Republicans, who were rather low-key on the Frank scandal initially, have now been taking up the

cudgels against the congressman, with House Minority Leader Robert Michel calling the scandal "a stain on the House of Representatives." "If it were anybody other than Barney Frank, if I were to have a woman prostitute in my employ, for my self-gratification, I'd be run out of town," said Michel.

Senate votes to fund population control

In a narrow 52-48 vote, the Senate on Sept. 20 agreed to resume funding of a United Nations fund that promotes population control in the developing sector. The U.S. contributions to the fund were discontinued during the Reagan administration, after charges were raised that the People's Republic of China was enforcing its one-child-per-family policy through compulsory abortions and sterilizations.

The Senate measure, appended as an amendment to the \$14.4 billion foreign aid bill, authorized a \$15 million contribution to the fund. The policy reversal is generally seen as part of an attempt by the abortion lobby to reverse some of the measures instituted during the Reagan administration under the influence of the right-to-life movement.

In another amendment to the bill, the Senate agreed to increase aid to Poland to \$45 million—far above the \$10 million proposed by President Bush during his visit to that country in July.

Free marketeers change their tune on airlines

In light of the increasing number of airline accidents during recent years,

there is a move in Congress to reregulate the airline industry. Ironically enough, the demands are coming from both mainstream and conservative Republicans, who earlier had led the charge for deregulation, ostensibly for the sake of increasing competition and thereby bringing down airline prices.

Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.) claims that he has shifted positions because the market forces that were to increase competition have, in fact, had the opposite effect, allowing the major airlines to block competition from newcomers, resulting in defacto reregulation—without regulators. This, McCain thinks, is "the worst of all possible worlds."

Democrats try to out-bid Bush on drug funds

Senate Democrats agreed on a national drug plan on Sept. 20 that would boost President Bush's \$7.9 billion package by \$1 billion—still woefully inadequate for a competent war on drugs. They had originally been calling for a \$2.2 billion increase, but agreed to compromise on the \$1 billion figure.

Sen. Robert Dole (R-Kan.) called the compromise a "hollow gesture."

The President had agreed to increase his plan by \$800 million, calling that figure his "final offer." Of the \$800 million increase, about \$200 million will go to local law enforcement programs and \$600 million for drug-abuse prevention, education, and treatment programs.

The Democratic program puts an even greater emphasis on drug treatment and prevention. It would be financed by across-the-board cuts in all discretionary domestic and military programs.