

Defense implications of the Clean Air Act

by Anthony K. Wikrent and Carol White

The amended Clean Air Act will have serious impact on U.S. defense capabilities. Because it will levy a tax on the economy of over \$50 billion per year for non-existing benefits to the economy, it may well precipitate a chain reaction of bankruptcies and plant shutdowns, and not only in immediately affected areas such as coal production. It will also dampen investment in high-technology areas such as lasers and plasma processes, because funds otherwise available will be siphoned off into non-productive, anti-pollution investments.

Despite Soviet advances in many areas of military deployment, emphatically including the application of new physical principles to develop whole new areas of weaponry—as is the case with radio frequency weapons—the U.S. has so far maintained a military advantage because of the far greater productivity of its civilian economy. This is now in danger of rapidly eroding.

When economist Lyndon LaRouche proposed a crash program to develop the Strategic Defense Initiative, he proved that it would not be a cost to the economy because of the spinoff benefits of newly developed technologies in the civilian economy. The Clean Air Act will have precisely the reverse effect. It will be impossible for the economy to make the necessary investments to absorb and take advantage of technologies developed for the military; it will reduce the U.S. economy to the level of the stagnant Soviet economy by stripping away the cultural advantage which it formerly enjoyed with the capability for rapid assimilation of new technology.

Abuses under existing environmentalist laws

The act will have unforeseen consequences caused by dislocations, as capabilities are unpredictably lost. Examples of this already exist.

The eco-facists are targeting industrial capabilities ever more precisely. Avtex Fiber Co., of Front Royal, Virginia, for example, announced in October 1988 that it was being forced to shut down its manufacturing plant after having spent millions of dollars attempting to comply with environmental regulations applied to the 50-year-old plant. While problems were being discussed with the Environmental Protection Agency, Virginia Attorney General Mary Sue Terry slapped Avtex with a \$19.5 million lawsuit for violations, ensuring the plant was shut down forever.

After the plant was in the process of shutting down, the Department of Defense and National Aeronautics and Space Administration discovered that Avtex was the *only* facility in the United States able to produce a resin-impregnated rayon material used in the nozzles of solid rocket motors for the Space Shuttle and the MX missile. The Air Force and NASA had to come up with \$38 million to keep the plant open, producing the specialized material they needed.

The act is an administrative nightmare. The EPA will be enabled to enforce police-state type regulations over every area of production, and failure to comply even with the red tape involved may involve confiscatory fines as well as criminal penalties.

Ban on petroleum derived chemicals

The Clean Air Act is *designed* to replicate these examples dozens and hundreds of times over. Presently, under existing law, there are only eight “air pollutants” which are regulated: mercury, asbestos, beryllium, vinyl chloride, benzene, radionuclides, inorganic arsenic, and coke-oven emissions. The amended Clean Air Act establishes a new list of 191 substances to be identified as “hazardous air pollutants.” “Major sources” of these substances will be strictly regulated. A “major” source is defined as a facility that emits only 10 tons per year of any listed substance, or 25 tons per year of any combination of listed substances.

One of the substances that will be totally banned by the year 2000 is methylchloroform (MCF). On April 11, syndicated columnist Warren Brookes reported in the *Washington Times* that he had received confirmation from a panic-stricken White House aide that the ban of MCF will absolutely eliminate the U.S. electronics industry, because MCF is a critical factor in the production of computer chips and circuit boards. “A total MCF ban,” Brookes noted, “would leave this industry and its defense products naked.” Ironically, MCFs were developed because they are supposedly one-tenth as destructive of ozone as chlorofluorocarbons.

Especially targeted are virtually all chemicals and substances derived from petroleum. The EPA has concluded that all nine plants which produce butadiene will have to shut down. Some 22 plants which produce styrene butadiene and six plants which produce polybutadiene will also be closed. According to the U.S. Department of Commerce, butadiene is an essential ingredient in the manufacture of synthetic rubber for which there is no immediately available replacement. Thus, under the act, the U.S. will be prohibited from producing almost all synthetic rubber products, and will probably end up importing all of its tires, hoses, belts, and other rubber items.

The implications for U.S. military-industrial capabilities in time of war are serious. Rather than pass a law guaranteed to be of advantage only to the Soviets, the Congress would be better advised to investigate how such a law came to be promulgated in the first place.