

Congressional Closeup by William Jones and Carl Osgood

North Korea cited for withdrawal from NPT

Sen. Chuck Robb (D-Va.) introduced Senate Resolution 92 on April 2, calling for the condemnation of North Korea for its planned withdrawal from the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). The resolution says "that the United States and its international partners should take measured steps to compel North Korea to remain a party to the treaty and to allow unconditional special inspections of apparent nuclear waste sites and other areas suspected of harboring a nuclear weapons-building program."

In remarks motivating the resolution, Robb called for a "full court diplomatic press . . . to promote dialogue and communication with the North Korean leadership."

He also called for consideration of this matter by the U.N. Security Council, in spite of Chinese opposition to such a move. "To add further pressure," he said, "a list of punitive sanctions should be crafted between now and mid-June," when North Korea's withdrawal from the NPT takes effect. "The sanctions list should include oil, agricultural products, military supplies, and heavy machinery. Japanese investment in North Korea and food shipments from the United States should also be targeted."

Democrats push for line-item veto

With the shift in administrations, Democratic House leaders, responding to President Clinton's call for a line-item veto, have begun testing the waters to see if that particular creature would sink or swim. The line-item veto would shift significant power to the Executive branch from the Congress.

President Bush had several times called on Congress to give him a line-item veto, by which he would be able to selectively cut certain items out of the budget passed by the Congress without being forced to either sign or veto the budget resolution as a whole.

Clinton's appeal is receiving a better response, but the move for a line-item veto is anything but sewn up. House Democrats, who feel that a line-item veto would have a much greater chance of passing there than in the Senate, proposed to allow the President to veto, for two years, specific items in appropriations bills unless a simple majority in the House or Senate objected.

To their surprise, the Democratic leaders realized they didn't have the votes. The 175 House Republicans are prepared to vote in unison against the rule to protest not getting a chance to debate a stronger version of the line-item veto. And the Congressional Black Caucus, with 38 members, also rejected the measure, expressing an unwillingness to cede these legislative powers to the Executive branch.

McConnell urges plan to help Russian soldiers

Sen. Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.), in remarks on the Senate floor on April 1, called on President Clinton to adopt a plan, which he said he hoped could be discussed with Russian President Boris Yeltsin at the Vancouver summit, to deal with the problem of demobilizing the Russian Army. The plan McConnell suggested would put newly demobilized soldiers to work in a "new civilian capital projects corps. With relatively little funding, we can serve urgent public sector needs as we avert an emergency crisis within the military."

The corps, with assistance channeled through private companies, would build roads and housing, improve railways, clean up the water supply, and upgrade public utilities.

"Initially," McConnell said, "soldiers could be encouraged to participate with a 'you build it, you own it' plan. . . . Homeownership would reinforce free market principles. This kind of approach would go a long way to fulfill President Clinton's call today to convince the Russian people that they are beneficiaries of democratic reform, not victims."

EPA programs ridiculed, targeted for cuts

Sen. Kit Bond (R-Mo.) has introduced an amendment to the emergency supplemental appropriations bill (H.R. 1335) to eliminate \$23.5 million in funding for the Green Lights, Energy Productivity, and Methane Gas Recapture programs of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

The first two programs, Bond said, give corporations taxpayer funds so that they can save money on their own taxes, and should therefore be eliminated.

However, Bond saved the Methane Gas Recapture program for his most pungent comments. "The laudable purpose of this program," he said, "is to help companies and farmers recapture methane gas from coal mines and natural gas pipelines, landfills and livestock—yes, livestock—so that emissions are not wasted but rather used for energy purposes." He read from an EPA document which states that the program will aim at "partitioning carbon to useful products, meat and milk, by nutritional supplements and/or range improvements." He pointed out that the EPA

has given a grant of \$210,000 to Washington State University to study "cattle belching," and that there was previously a \$19 million appropriation to study "other cow gases." As an alternative, Bond suggested that the Clinton administration ought to study natural wetlands, "which are estimated to produce 20% of the methane discharged into the atmosphere."

In the House, Rep. John Duncan (R-Tenn.) attacked the EPA as out of control in remarks on the House floor. He cited a *New York Times* article which reported that many scientists, economists, and government officials have concluded that billions of dollars are wasted each year to fight problems that are no longer considered serious.

"Most environmental activists are wealthy or at least upper income and thus are insulated from the economic harm their policies cause. But now, as the *New York Times* points out, environmental overkill has cost this nation hundreds of billions. It has cost us millions of jobs. It has made everything much more expensive. Environmental extremists have really hurt the poor and the working people of this country."

Talbot nomination approved by Senate

The nomination of former *Time* magazine correspondent Strobe Talbot to become ambassador at large and special adviser to the secretary of state on newly independent states was approved by the Senate by a vote of 89-9 on April 2.

In remarks on the Senate floor prior to the vote, John McCain (R-Ariz.) opposed the nomination. He criticized Talbot on the basis of his opposition to President Reagan's 1983 policy for the Strategic Defense Initiative, and

his support for arms limitation agreements as the basis of policymaking between the superpowers.

West must act to stop Balkans war, members warn

Rep. Frank McCloskey (D-Ind.) called for an immediate end of the Balkans war "for the sake of our own national security," and targeted Serbia as responsible for genocide, in extensive remarks on the House floor on March 31. His speech echoed the analysis of Gen. Paul Albert Scherer (ret.), the former head of West German military intelligence who visited Washington in March, and outlined the strategic need to quickly end the war.

"There is no doubt in my mind that the Balkan crisis is the defining issue of the post-Cold War world. We are already paying the price for our failure to confront this crisis over the past two years. . . . The growing aggressiveness of hard-line, reactionary, irredentist forces in Russia—what observers call a red-brown coalition that is so threatening to Boris Yeltsin and to Russia's future relations with its neighbors and the West—also owes much to western equivocation in the face of Serbia's version of this coalition," McCloskey stated.

McCloskey warned that "if the United States and Europe do not recognize and establish diplomatic relations with Macedonia in the very near future, we will bear a heavy historical responsibility for encouraging Serb aggression against that democratic, newly independent state."

McCloskey demanded that President Clinton define the Balkan crisis to the American public as aggression and genocide in Central Europe; that a deadline for Serb forces to sign and comply with the Vance-Owen peace

plan on Bosnia be established; that the U.N. arms embargo from all former Yugoslav republics except Serbia and Montenegro, be lifted, and western air power be used; and that the United States lead the way on western recognition of Makedonija.

"If President Clinton does not take such steps, genocidal Serb aggression will continue in Bosnia and Croatia, spread to Macedonia and Kosova, spill over to a wider Balkan war, and continue to embolden the Russian hard-liners who are threatening Yeltsin's reform effort."

Rep. John Olver (D-Mass.) seconded McCloskey: "If unchecked, this attempt to exterminate Bosnian Muslims encourages attacks on national minorities in Slovakia, Bulgaria, Moldova, Romania and a dozen other places, and in Lithuania and Latvia, and encourages attacks by any powerful neighbor on any small neighbor where a national minority resides. . . . Who can believe that Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, for instance, would be secure and could stand up to a virulent nationalist Russia if the world community is unwilling to stop genocide in Bosnia?"

Olver also called for the use of air strikes against Serbian artillery and tanks which are shelling civilians in Sarajevo and other cities, and for the lifting of the arms embargo against Bosnia.

In the Senate, freshman Sen. Russell Feingold (D-Wisc.) also called for lifting the arms embargo. Feingold invoked the right of self-defense as guaranteed by Article 51 of the U.N. Charter. "The United States and United Nations," he said, "have recognized the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina as a country, but when it comes to the fundamental right of self-defense we have done just the opposite—rather, we have imposed an arms embargo."