

Congressional Closeup by William Jones

Caution raised on space cooperation with Russia

Following the Clinton administration's decision to initiate closer collaboration with the Russians in space exploration, four leading congressmen sent a letter to Vice President Al Gore at the end of September, warning that the joint U.S.-Russian work in space could compromise the U.S. Space Station program. The signers included the chairman and ranking minority members of the committees that authorize and appropriate the NASA budget.

The administration has promoted the idea of using the Russian Mir 2 station as the core of the international station, thereby making the entire facility dependent upon what the Russians can deliver. There has been a war of words regarding Russian participation in the re-designed space station effort, now designated as station Alpha.

The White House has promoted close coordination with the Russians as a way of stabilizing the Yeltsin regime. Budget balancers have promoted it as a way to cut the price of what Space Station Freedom would have cost, and the station funding which the Senate passed on Sept. 22 was influenced by these considerations. Russian Space Agency head Yuri Koptev has described the collaboration as the way to save the rapidly deteriorating Russian program, which is receiving about half of the money it is requesting from the Russian government.

James Oberg, an expert in the Russian space program, recently raised concerns in an article in the *Wall Street Journal* over the instability of the Russian political situation and the growing enmity between Russia and Kazakhstan, where the launch facility is located. Oberg described the decrepit state of the physical facili-

ties. This led the White House to have a study done on the state of the Baikonur cosmodrome, which appears to be a white-wash of the problems.

Collaboration on the Space Station was one of the carrots held out to Moscow by the Clinton administration in order to pressure the Russians to scrap their planned sale of cryogenic rocket engines to India. The House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology will be holding hearings on the issue in October.

Hill told: no oversight of Russian missile destruction

At hearings before the House Foreign Affairs Committee on Sept. 21, Ashton Carter, Assistant Secretary of Defense for National Security and Counterproliferation, admitted to Congress that the United States really has no idea how many missiles the Russians have destroyed. The admission came at a time when the Clinton administration is clamping down on high-technology capabilities available to Third World countries by toughening up the non-proliferation regime.

In response to a question from Jan Meyers (R-Kan.) about how many missiles the Russians have destroyed, Carter said, "We don't know, again, exactly. We presume somewhere in the neighborhood of 2,000 per year or slightly in excess of that number." When queried further by committee chairman Lee Hamilton (D-Ind.), Carter replied, "We have been assured by the Russian government that dismantling is taking place. . . . That [2,000] is . . . the number that we have been told that we put most stock in."

Carter admitted that the Russians give no verification for their figures.

Hamilton was particularly perturbed, because the United States, under the Nunn-Lugar amendment, is giving Russia the equipment needed to destroy rocket delivery systems. The amendment was designed to assist the Russians financially in dismantling their nuclear capabilities.

Reactor okayed despite 'proliferation' concerns

In a victory of economics over ideology, the Senate rejected by a vote of 53-44 on Sept. 30 an amendment by John Kerry (D-Mass.) which would have eliminated the \$22 million in funding for the Advanced Liquid Metal Reactor, contained in the Energy and Water Appropriations Bill for fiscal year 1994.

Anti-nuclear groups have been opposed to the reactor, which produces plutonium as a by-product. It is not clear what effect the Senate decision will have on the development of the reactor, because the House voted in June to cancel funding.

The debate in the Senate was heated because of the tightening of the non-proliferation restrictions enunciated, at least in outline, by President Clinton in his speech to the United Nations on Sept. 27, where he reiterated the U.S. pledge to work for a ban on plutonium production. Kerry argued that it was therefore necessary to stop development of the ALMR, now under way at the Argonne National Laboratory, since it could be configured to breed plutonium.

Ironically, the purpose of the reactor is not to produce plutonium, but rather, to burn it as an energy source, offering a possible solution to the problem of disposing of surplus plutonium from dismantled nuclear weapons.

FBI files on senator raise oversight questions

An article in *Roll Call* magazine, which circulates on Capitol Hill, published on Sept. 25 information regarding an FBI file which J. Edgar Hoover had on the late Sen. Quentin Burdick (D-N.D.). The FBI kept an investigative file on Burdick from 1959 to 1965 because of his alleged "communist sympathies."

Sen. Kent Conrad (D-N.D.), who took over Burdick's seat after his death, expressed outrage over the fact that *Roll Call* would publish such discredited allegations about Burdick. *Roll Call* responded, however, that the article was not aimed against Burdick, but rather against the FBI, referring to earlier exposés they had run showing how the FBI had conducted probes of the late Rep. Larry McDonald (D-Ga.) and the late Rep. Mickey Leland (D-Tex.), and a smear campaign against the late Rep. Hale Boggs (D-La.)

In an editorial on Sept. 27, *Roll Call* warned: "Senators and representatives should take these articles to heart as examples of what government agencies and officials can do when Congress is too awed or too cowed to oversee them adequately."

Ban kept on federally funded abortions

In a set-back for pro-abortion advocates, the House and the Senate both maintained a 17-year-old ban on Medicaid-financed abortions despite a major effort by abortion advocates, encouraged by the election of four new pro-abortion women to the U.S. Senate, to overturn the ban. The ban was introduced in 1977 on an amendment sponsored by Rep. Henry Hyde (R-

Ill.), a spokesman for pro-life views.

The Senate voted 59-40 on Sept. 27 to maintain that ban. The only exceptions made were in cases of pregnancies resulting from rape or incest. In June, the House had voted 255-178 to maintain the ban.

The vote also places in question the upcoming Clinton health care package. The White House has indicated that it wants to include funding for abortions, but pro-life advocates warn that they will reject the package if it makes it easier for women to obtain abortions.

Clinton asked to report on Somalia goals

The House on Sept. 28 voted 406-26 for a compromise resolution which requests, but does not require, President Clinton to report to Congress by Oct. 15 on his goals for Somalia, and to seek a vote by Nov. 15 on authorizing a continued troop presence.

House Republicans pushed a measure which would have cut off all funds for the mission unless the President certified that the deployment was in the national interest. Democrats prevented this amendment from getting to the floor. "While we weren't looking," said Benjamin Gilman (R-N.Y.), ranking member of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, "the U.N. and the administration changed the mission in Somalia."

The House Appropriations Committee also attempted to place limits on peacekeeping operations in the Defense Appropriations Bill. But under the threat of a presidential veto, they removed the limitations.

Pressure for a pullout increased on Oct. 4 when 12 more Americans were killed in gun battles in Somalia. Sen.

Robert Byrd (D-W.V.), one of the toughest critics of the administration's Somalia policy, renewed his call to "disengage" entirely from Somalia, pointing to clear constitutional grounds for his argument. "This U.N. experiment on new world order nation-building, the new mission that neither the Congress nor the American people at large ever endorsed, ought to be shut down as far as U.S. involvement is concerned," said Byrd, in floor statements on Oct. 4.

Senate Minority Leader Bob Dole (R-Kan.) called for action on the part of the administration to put forward a strategy for exiting from Somalia.

Temporary waiver granted for funding the PLO

The Senate Foreign Relations Committee voted on Sept. 28 to lift restrictions on U.S. aid to the Palestine Liberation Organization, opening the way for U.S. financing of West Bank and Gaza Strip development projects. The measure gives President Clinton until Jan. 1 to waive laws that ban aid for, and relations with, the PLO, and passed on the same day that Senate and House conferees incorporated a similar waiver into the final version of the Fiscal Year 1994 Foreign Aid Appropriations Bill.

Committee Chairman Claiborne Pell (D-R.I.) said that the waiver was granted on a temporary basis because he and Jesse Helms (R-N.C.), the ranking Republican, had reservations about the PLO. The bill also lets the PLO reopen its office in Washington, but would require the President to determine that lifting foreign aid restrictions is in the U.S. interest and that the PLO is abiding by its commitments to Israel.