

## Congressional Closeup by William Jones and Carl Osgood

### Congressmen cool to British defense minister

British Defense Minister Malcolm Rifkind met a cool reception from congressmen at a meeting of the West European Union, held on Capitol Hill on June 21. Rifkind railed against the growing U.S. opposition to Unprofor (U.N. protection forces) operations in Bosnia.

Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.), in his opening remarks, insisted that Bosnia was "not a failure of NATO," but rather "a failure of the U.N. because it cannot either enforce or make peace." McCain said that there was tremendous opposition in Congress to the new Rapid Reaction Force (RRF), with many members skeptical about funding it. Although the idea of the RRF was to "beef up" U.N. operations to enable the forces to fulfill the U.N. mandate, "we haven't seen what the RRF would do except more of the same," he said.

In response, Rifkind snidely remarked that "those who are not involved in the operation shouldn't criticize those who are on the ground in Bosnia. . . . The British, the French, and the Dutch have to prove to themselves and their publics whether it's worth sending young men to go face to face with the Serbs. . . . This is a much more difficult question than merely sending money."

The RRF was an idea put forward by French President Jacques Chirac following the kidnapping of U.N. peacekeepers by the Bosnian Serbs in retaliation for NATO air strikes. Even the Clinton administration, which is supporting the RRF in "solidarity" with its NATO partners, has expressed growing concern that the RRF will indeed be "business as usual" for Unprofor.

In response to a question on June 23, State Department spokesman Nick Burns said, "We have not

reached a conclusion in the Security Council about the mandate of the Rapid Reaction Force. . . . Discussions continue with the Dutch, with the French, and with the British and, frankly, we are not hearing consistent views from all three countries about the specifics of the mandate."

Both the Senate and the House have passed resolutions calling for lifting the arms embargo, which would enable the Bosnians to counteract the tremendous advantage the Serbs have in heavy artillery. Rifkind received a further snub when Senate Majority Leader Bob Dole (R-Kan.) could not find time for a meeting with him.

### Christopher cautions Congress on Jerusalem

In a letter dated June 20 and sent to House Speaker Newt Gingrich (R-Ga.) and Senate Majority Leader Bob Dole (R-Kan.), Secretary of State Warren Christopher labeled the Senate measure (S. 770), which calls for moving the U.S. Embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, "ill-advised" and "potentially very damaging" to the success of the Mideast peace process.

The secretary of state warned that the step "would disrupt the negotiating process and the promotion of Middle East peace," an issue, Christopher underlined, that has been one of President Clinton's "key priorities in foreign policy."

Christopher wrote, "Our support for Israel will remain strong and steadfast, and we will work actively to help Israel achieve peace with her neighbors. . . . Given the extraordinary progress of the last two years, that objective appears, for perhaps the first time in history, to be within our reach." Therefore, he concluded, "we

must not take steps that make it more difficult to achieve that historic end." Such a measure at the present time would be the death-knell for the Mideast peace accords because Jerusalem is a holy city for Muslims and Christians as well as for Jews. The Palestinians also consider Jerusalem the capital of Palestine. In order to move the peace process forward, Israel and the Palestinians took the issue off the table, postponing any decision on Jerusalem until 1996.

### Foster nomination falls victim to electioneering

The nomination of Henry Foster to become Surgeon General is stalled. On June 22, a final vote in the Senate to break a filibuster launched by Phil Gramm (R-Tex.) to block his confirmation, failed, garnering only 57 of the 60 votes needed. Gramm, a presidential candidate, was desperately trying to play up to the Christian Coalition on one of their pet issues—abortion.

Meanwhile, some Republicans are using the ruckus over the nomination as a pretext to "zero out" the Office of the Surgeon General entirely, possibly by merging it with the post of assistant secretary of health. Senate Majority Whip Trent Lott (R-Miss.) has called for abolition of the position. And in the House, Robert Dornan (R-Calif.) and 33 other members have called for House conferees on the budget resolution to accept the Senate's call for abolition of the post, which they described as "unnecessary" and "largely symbolic."

President Clinton said the Gramm obstructionism on the Foster nomination "sent a chilling message to the rest of the country."

## **N**unn questions value of NATO expansion

Sen. Sam Nunn (D-Ga.), in a speech to a NATO seminar in Norfolk, Virginia on June 23, questioned the wisdom of NATO expansion. He said that while the advantages of expansion can't be ignored, "the serious disadvantages must be thought through carefully." He warned that "if NATO enlargement stays on its current course, reaction in Russia is likely to be a sense of isolation by those committed to democracy and economic reform, with varying degrees of paranoia, nationalism, and demagoguery emerging from across the political spectrum." Russia could still threaten European stability by putting pressure on Ukraine and the Baltic countries, and could threaten the rest of Europe by putting its remaining nuclear forces on a higher alert status, he warned.

At the conference of the Western European Union, on Capitol Hill on June 21, Clinton administration officials affirmed NATO's Partnership for Peace program as an essential part of U.S. foreign policy. Amb. Richard Holbrooke, assistant secretary of state for European affairs, said, "All of the countries of eastern Europe are looking to western Europe and the United States to extend an institutional embrace," and that, even though this is a long and complicated process, "we're committed to that process."

Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs Joseph Nye, Jr. called the Partnership for Peace program "an institution that will exist long after some countries in eastern Europe have joined NATO." It provides a way for nations to have a relationship with NATO.

There is little opposition to Partnership for Peace, but regarding the expansion of NATO, however, the ranks are indeed divided. Even Nye insisted that NATO expansion has to

be done in a "gradual and transparent way," so that Russia will understand what is happening. Russia should have a voice in this process, he said, but not a veto.

## **T**ax cut gets go-ahead from conferees

Republican leaders in the House and Senate struck a deal on June 22 to cut a variety of income and investment taxes by \$245 billion over the next seven years. The accord was announced by Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich (R-Ga.) and Senate Majority Leader Bob Dole (R-Kan.), who both cast it as the final agreement on the budget negotiations that have taken three weeks.

The proposed tax cuts would include a \$500-per-child tax credit for most families, a reduction in the capital gains tax, a new Individual Retirement Account, elimination of the marriage tax penalty, and business tax breaks.

This tax cut, originally slated to be \$354 billion by the House, had been the main bone of contention between the House and the strict budget deficit reductionists in the Senate, with many Republicans fearing that a such a "tax cut for the wealthy" would not sit well with the voters in a budget that otherwise gouges major areas of necessary social spending. Aimed at eliminating the deficit by 2002, the plan would curb the growth of Medicare by \$270 billion, slash Medicaid growth by \$180 billion, reduce interest subsidies on student loans by \$11 billion, and cut farm subsidies by \$13 billion. The \$250 billion a year in discretionary spending that includes education, housing, transportation, the environment, and other domestic

areas which are largely hard and soft infrastructure, would lose \$190 billion in funding over seven years.

In commenting on the Republican budget on June 20, President Clinton warned that it would cause "unnecessary pain." The legislation would also entirely eliminate the Commerce Department, a key institution in President Clinton's overall foreign policy initiatives, including the Mideast peace process.

## **C**onservative Revolution targets vaccinations

Rep. Scott Klug (R-Wisc.) has introduced legislation that would eliminate Vaccines For Children, a program which was set up by President Clinton in 1993 in order to close the gap in immunization and to reach children in impoverished areas who previously were not helped by vaccination programs.

The program is expected to spend millions of dollars this year providing children on Medicaid or whose health insurance provider will not cover vaccines, with free vaccine against the leading childhood killer diseases, including measles, mumps, polio, and whooping cough.

At Klug's request, the General Accounting Office had conducted a study of the program, and its report had been highly critical.

Speaking on ABC's "This Week with David Brinkley" on June 25, Vice President Al Gore said that it was "troubling to see the United States way down on the list of countries around the world in terms of vaccinating children against diseases." Gore said the administration might be willing to make some changes to improve the program, but would not agree to scrap it.