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Peacekeeping - H.R. 872

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February 14, 1995

Dear Mr. Speaker:

I am writing to express my deep concern about H.R. 872, the "National Security Revitalization Act". This bill represents an assault on the authority of the President as Commander in Chief and, by destroying the capacity for U.N. peacekeeping, would force us into a choice between acting alone or doing nothing when international crises arise.

The bill contains numerous flawed provisions that are simply unacceptable.

First, by effectively eliminating U.S. payments for our share of U.N. costs and by encouraging other nations to do the same, H.R. 872 would end U.N. peacekeeping overnight. The elimination of U.N. peacekeeping would damage U.S. interests. While the U.S. must remain prepared to act alone when our vital interests are threatened, we must also preserve the ability to share risks and burdens with other nations where that is the most appropriate response to international dangers. Of the more than 60,000 U.N. peacekeepers currently deployed in trouble spots around the world, less than one thousand are Americans.

The option of collective action through the United Nations has been available to every U.S. President since Harry Truman. As successive Administrations of both parties have found, U.N. peacekeeping can be one of the best forms of burdensharing. U.N. missions in such places as the Golan Heights, Kuwait, Cyprus, El Salvador and soon in Haiti serve important U.S. interests by protecting our allies, checking aggressors, deterring regional conflicts, and promoting democracy. H.R. 872 would deny the President the flexibility to employ this cost-effective tool to protect and advance U.S. interests.

Second, this bill would infringe upon my constitutional authority as Commander in Chief to determine the appropriate command and control arrangements for U.S. forces serving around the world. While I will never relinquish command authority over U.S. forces, as Commander in Chief I must retain the flexibility to place U.S.
troops temporarily under the operational control of allied officers of another nation when it suits our interests, as the U.S. has done from the Revolutionary War to Operation Desert Storm. By restricting that authority, H.R. 872 would undercut our ability to mobilize the international community to respond to threats.

Third, by requiring specific Congressional authorization before the President can dispatch even a single U.S. soldier to a U.N. mission, H.R. 872 hinders our ability to react swiftly and proportionately to regional security threats. The likely result is to impel the U.S. to act alone more often.

Fourth, this bill alters the steady course we and our Allies have set toward the expansion of NATO. As I have said many times, NATO's expansion is inevitable and will strengthen stability in Europe for all countries -- NATO members and non-members alike. At our initiative, the Alliance is now developing the principles to be applied in considering potential new members and will present its initial conclusions this fall to members of the Partnership for Peace. H.R. 872 would unilaterally and prematurely declare certain countries as qualified for NATO membership, writing into law distinctions that could discourage reformers in countries not named and encourage complacency in countries that are. The legislation could actually slow and complicate the expansion process by generating disagreements with our Allies and by sowing instability in the region whose security we seek to bolster.

Fifth, H.R. 872 seeks to commit the United States to an accelerated deployment of a National Missile Defense (NMD) system that would cost many tens of billions of dollars and could only be fielded if we abrogate or amend the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty. Such a costly undertaking would divert defense resources from higher priority mission areas, including readiness and theater missile defenses. By threatening the ABM Treaty, this plan would also put at risk continued Russian adherence to the START I Treaty and its ratification of the pending START II Treaty -- treaties which together will remove from deployed status two-thirds of the strategic nuclear warheads which threatened us when the Cold War ended. Finally, there is simply no need to embark on an accelerated NMD deployment plan at this time. The NMD technology readiness program proposed in my FY 1996 budget request ensures that we can respond in a timely fashion should a long-range missile threat to the U.S. homeland materialize sooner than our intelligence community now forecasts.

In addition, H.R. 872 would slow the pace of U.N. reform by mandating withholdings of U.S. payments to the U.N. until the recently-established U.N. inspector general meets several new and
unworkable requirements. Finally, at a time when my Administration is successfully cutting the size and cost of government, this bill would create a new National Security Commission that would duplicate work already being done properly by the Department of Defense and Congress.

H.R. 872 is simply bad national security policy. It would limit the United States' flexibility to respond to international crises and to protect U.S. interests. It would undermine the President's constitutional responsibility to conduct U.S. foreign policy and act as Commander in Chief. It could set us on a collision course with some of our closest allies. It would undercut U.S. leadership abroad. It would place U.S. forces at greater risk by forcing us to act unilaterally or not at all.

I urge Congress to defeat H.R. 872.

Sincerely,

The Honorable Newt Gingrich
Speaker of the
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515
GOP Bid to Downgrade U.N. Peacekeeping Role Is Likely to Gain Steam in House Vote Today

By CARLA ANNE ROBBINS
Staff Reporter of THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

WASHINGTON—The Republicans have found a target to replace the "evil empire": the United Nations. And if they get their way, the U.N. could be out of the business of peacekeeping.

The assault on the U.N. is part of a broader challenge to President Clinton's foreign policy contained in the National Security Revitalization Act, which the House is expected to approve today after the Democrats surprisingly won some revisions last night. The bill, part of the GOP's "Contract With America," reflects a deep-seated Republican fear that the U.S. is losing its military dominance in the world and a deep-seated conviction that the U.S. is not to blame.

At the start of yesterday's tumultuous debate, California freshman Rep. Andrea Seaquist summed up a Republican anger, saying the bill would "ensure the U.S. is not a servant to the U.N." and that American troops "would not serve in a U.N. blue beret when they serve the red, white and blue."

Decline in Standing

The U.N.'s standing has declined sharply with the U.S. public since 1990, when Congress insisted President Bush first seek Security Council authorization before it would support the Gulf War. And although the world body has had some genuine successes in recent years—including Cambodia and Mozambique—spectacular failures in Somalia and Bosnia have persuaded many Americans that the U.N. is not just wasteful, but actually "dangerous." As written, the House bill would cut for a "U.N. budget that is basically in deficit," says Iowa Rep. Jim Nussle, chairman of the House International Relations Committee, says the bill isn't intended to kill off peacekeeping but only to ensure that the U.S. pays "its equitable share."

Reducing Dues

As for what's equitable, Mr. Gilman cites a presidential-waiver provision Republicans recently added to the bill that he estimates would have reduced U.S. peacekeeping dues by only $227 million last year—rather than the zeroing out predicted by the Democrats. When asked if such a modest savings was what his party and the U.S. public had in mind, Mr. Gilman suggested future cuts could also "go a lot higher" to $300 million, $400 million or more.

While $227 million isn't a large savings for the U.S. budget, it would be a "devastating" cut for a "U.N. budget that is basically in deficit," says Iowa Rep. Jim Leach, one of the organization's few GOP defenders. If the U.N. gets out of the business of peacekeeping, he argues, "we'll have to look for much more expensive 'alternatives'" to solve the world's messiest problems.

For now at least, the Clinton administration is pinning most of its hopes on the traditionally more cautious Senate. It's also hoping that the latest test for the U.N.-U.S. partnership in Haiti, comes off without a hitch. At the end of March, the U.N. will formally take over the U.S. mission in Haiti. To maintain control, the most important problem.

The administration has focused almost all of its fire on the bill's funding restrictions, which it says would "bankrupt" U.N. peacekeeping accounts.

Demand for Credit

Charging that the U.S. is being unfairly "double-billed," the Republicans are demanding the U.N. credit the U.S. for spending on American missions— even when, as in the Haiti intervention or enforcing sanctions against Iraq, that blessing is more than a diplomatic fig leaf for U.S. action. Under those accounting rules, the U.S. last year would have paid nothing into the U.N. peacekeeping accounts, as it spent $1.7 billion on such "voluntary" missions, while its peacekeeping dues amounted to $1.1 billion.

And once the U.S. stopped paying, argues U.N. Ambassador Madeleine Albright, so would everyone else. The end result, she says, is that the U.N. would stop doing peacekeeping, forcing the U.S. "to act alone or not at all."

With victory in sight, the Republicans this week began to play down the effects of their own legislation. Rep. Benjamin Gilman of New York, a moderate Republican who is chairman of the House International Relations Committee, says the bill
WASHINGTON — Republican governors, unhappy with the GOP congressional leadership’s decision to keep food stamps a federal program, have won concessions from House leaders to give states more flexibility in running the program.

The 31-year-old food-stamp program supplies vouchers to poor people to buy groceries. In their “Contract With America,” Republicans proposed taking money the federal government spends on food stamps and giving it to states in a “block grant” to spend on assistance programs of their own design.

But last week, under pressure from farm-state Republicans, the House leadership said they had decided to keep food stamps a federal program as they push legislation through Congress to reform the welfare system.

After meeting with the leadership Tuesday night, Gov. John Engler of Michigan said House leaders had agreed to alter their legislation to allow states to run their own food-stamp programs if the state goes to a statewide “Electronic Benefits Transfer” system. Under EBT, food-stamp beneficiaries are given a computerized card, similar to an automatic teller debit card, to buy food. Currently, only Maryland is on a statewide EBT system, according to a House Agriculture Committee official.

Mr. Engler, who was accompanied by Massachusetts Gov. William Weld, at the meeting said that House leaders had also agreed to write provisions into their welfare legislation that would give states the authority to sanction food-stamp recipients if they do not meet work requirements under the government’s main cash welfare program, Aid to Families with Dependent Children. He said a state could go so far as to cut off an entire family from food stamps if the adult refuses to go to work.

Moreover, under the agreement, states could “cash out” food stamps for some welfare recipients who go to work in private-sector jobs, giving certain recipients money that could be spent on items other than food. The measure is “part of our effort to make work pay,” said Mr. Engler. According to a House aide, people would be eligible only if they were on both AFDC and food stamps, had worked in a private-sector job for at least three months and were earning at least $350 a month.

Meanwhile, the Clinton administration announced plans to attack food-stamp fraud. Government officials estimate they lose about $1 billion annually in illegal trafficking of food stamps for cash, alcohol, drugs, guns and other items. At a news conference yesterday, Agriculture Department officials said they are proposing legislation that will toughen penalties for food-stamp traffickers and better screen retailers who want to participate in the program.

“This administration has made clear our opposition to block grants for our nutrition programs,” President Clinton said in a statement. “With this tough, workable antifraud initiative, we are ensuring that the food-stamp program will earn the public trust, and continue to help people who need it.”

Key Senator Indicates
More Moderate Line
On Trimming HUD

By a WALL STREET JOURNAL Staff Reporter
WASHINGTON—The Senate is preparing to take a more moderate approach than the House toward paring the Department of Housing and Urban Development, according to Sen. Christopher S. Bond, chairman of a Senate Appropriations subcommittee.

Amid signs some House Republicans are having second thoughts about a $7.2 billion cut made by a House Appropriations subcommittee last week, the Missouri Republican said any reform should “provide protection for the tenants who depend on HUD for the roof over their heads.”

“We’re going to have to cut, but our cuts will look different from the House and they may not be the same level as in the House,” he said, referring to the debate on trimming HUD’s $28 billion 1995 budget and other agency budgets to pay for tax cuts, California disaster relief and other bills facing Congress.

This week, HUD Secretary Henry Cisneros tried to pressure Congress to restore some cuts. News releases to 12 major cities showed how the House cuts would be “devastating” to the poor and cost cities hundreds of millions in federal aid.

In a letter to Rep. Jerry Lewis, chairman of the House panel that made the cuts, Secretary Cisneros said the move would force HUD tenants “into the street,” and stymie programs to restore some slum properties and tear down buildings that can’t be fixed. “I ask that you seriously consider the human toll of the rescissions you have recommended,” he wrote.

Mr. Cisneros’s campaign didn’t appear to mollify his Republican critics. “I think it would be far more productive if Secretary Cisneros would tell us how the details of his budget will work,” said Sen. Bond.
President Assails GOP Defense Bill

By Dana Priest and Daniel Williams
Washington Post Staff Writers

The Clinton administration yesterday set up a major confrontation with Congress over national security policy, as President Clinton charged that the GOP's defense bill would limit the country's ability to respond to international crises and hamper the president's "constitutional responsibility to conduct U.S. foreign policy."

Secretary of State Warren Christopher and Secretary of Defense William J. Perry said they had recommended Clinton veto the bill if Congress approves it.

The bill, to be debated on the House floor today, embodies the defense priorities outlined in the GOP's "Contract With America." It would place some restrictions on U.S. participation in United Nations peacekeeping operations. It also advocates strengthening antimissile defenses and calls generally for a more robust military.

Clinton said in a letter to House Speaker Newt Gingrich (R-Ga.) that the bill would "undercut U.S. leadership in international peacekeeping operations."

In putting new restrictions on U.S. financing of and participation in U.N. and other international peacekeeping missions, the bill would prohibit U.S. troops from operating under foreign command. But it gives the president several ways around those provisions, including the ability to waive the financial restrictions if "the activity is of such importance to the national security of the United States that the United States would undertake the activity unilaterally" if the United Nations had not acted.

The bill also advocates expanding NATO membership to include Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic and Slovakia, but a timetable was eliminated from the bill in committee.

The issue of antimissile defense provides the clearest example of use of the bill by both sides to gain rhetorical advantage. The bill calls on the Pentagon to deploy "at the earliest practical date" an antimissile defense system, and Perry has repeatedly slammed the bill for going in the wrong direction.

In fact, the language of the bill and current administration policy are fairly close on the issue. The Defense Department spends about $400 million a year on developing a limited antimissile defense system, and the Republicans admit they would fulfill their near-term development goal.

At the news conference, Perry admitted the two sides were not far apart. "I think we are on the course that is compatible," he said. "As the language of the bill is written, I don't see a conflict."

Republicans defending the peacekeeping provisions yesterday were somewhat divided on the effort their bill would have. Some said it is their intention to end U.S. participation in peacekeeping. When a reporter suggested that under Republican guidelines the United Nations might someday owe the United States money, Rep. Duncan Hunter (R-Calif.) responded, "Now you're talking!"

But Rep. Benjamin Gilman (R-N.Y.), chairman of the House International Relations Committee, said the bill was strictly a "truth-in-funding" measure that would keep Congress involved. He insisted that under a provision to deduct funds the United States spends over regular U.N. contributions, the United Nations would be out $140 million in fiscal 1995, a fraction of the U.S. contribution to the United Nations.

The statements by the administration yesterday were part of a new, coordinated effort to reposition itself on defense matters. It is time to "set a marker," as one high-ranking defense official said, to beat back Dole's bill and preempt future attempts to add stronger anti-peacekeeping amendments onto separate legislation.

While the House debates — with plans to vote by Thursday afternoon — the administration will hold a full-court press to kill the bill. Christopher plans to meet with conservative and moderate Democrats on Capitol Hill today, while Madeleine K. Albright, the U.S. ambassador to the U.N., met with 10 members of Congress yesterday and plans to lobby moderate Republicans today.

Staff writer Ann Devery contributed to this report.

Top Clinton Officials Recommend a Veto Of GOP Defense Bill

WASHINGTON POST

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 15, 1995
Judge Rejects Proposed Microsoft Antitrust Settlement

MICROSOFT, From A1

"We hope the parties go back to the table and modify the settlement," said Jeffrey Jacobovitz, a Washington-based lawyer who represents IDEC Corp., a computer company that opposed the settlement during a hearing Sporkin held in January.

"It's definitely a step forward," said Ed Black, president of the Computer and Communications Industry Association, which also criticized the deal at the hearing. "We are extremely pleased that the judge stayed focused on the public interest. ... When we say we want to be at the forefront of an open and competitive industry, we really do mean it."

The Justice Department would not comment yesterday on the decision, saying that it is still reviewing the judge's written opinion. A Microsoft spokesman said the company was disappointed over the ruling. "We haven't yet had a chance to read his order," said spokesman Greg Shaw. "When we have, we'll determine an appropriate course of action."

Sporkin was ruling on a proposed settlement that the Justice Department and Microsoft reached last July. The department then simultaneously filed a complaint alleging that certain practices that Microsoft used in licensing operating systems to computer makers were anti-competitive and a proposed settlement that centered on an agreement by Microsoft to change those practices. The company did not admit that it had acted improperly.

Under the so-called Tunney Act governing this case, the settlement must be approved by a judge before it becomes final.

Because Sporkin rejected the remedy proposed by the government and Microsoft, the Justice Department's complaints about the software company are still active. Sporkin has scheduled a "status call" on March 16 that will bring the parties together to assess the next step in the case.

What happens next, observers said, is up to the Justice Department and the companies involved. One would be to appeal the ruling, arguing that Sporkin overstepped his role in the case.

"It is an unusual ruling," said William Baxter, a professor at Stanford University Law School and former antitrust division chief. "As I read the Tunney Act, he can only respond to the issues ... the Justice Department negotiated."

The department also could choose to try to work out a new settlement with Microsoft or void the settlement and fight the company in court. If the Justice Department chose to litigate against Microsoft, the case would be likely to stay in Sporkin's court, legal experts said.

"We hope that the judge's opinion will cause the Justice Department to do some introspection," said Gary Reback, an attorney with Wilson Sonsini Goodrich & Rosati in Palo Alto, Calif.

Reback, who represents three unidentified computer companies that were critical of Microsoft, submitted evidence to Sporkin that the ruling suggests made a dramatic difference in how the judge viewed the settlement.

"We believe it would be inappropriate to appeal this funding by a neutral judge," Reback said.

Staff writer Kara Swisher contributed to this report.
Top Clinton Aides Set Stage For Foreign Policy Showdown

BY ERIC SCHMITT
Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Feb. 14 — Digging in their heels against a main tenet of the Contract With America, President Clinton and his top national security advisers have ratcheted up their opposition to a bill that would significantly alter American foreign and military policy.

In a series of letters and public statements in recent days, senior Administration officials say the Republican-sponsored bill, the National Security Revitalization Act, would strain America's alliances, doom United Nations peacekeeping operations and hamper the White House's flexibility in dealing with foreign policy crises.

As the bill goes to the House floor on Wednesday for debate and a likely vote on Thursday, Administration officials say the measure has become an important test case pitting advocates of internationalism against a growing tide of isolationists in Congress. Indeed, President Clinton all but vowed today to veto the bill if Congress approved it in its current form.

"The bill contains numerous flawed provisions that are simply unacceptable," Mr. Clinton said in a letter sent to House Speaker Newt Gingrich, Republican of Georgia.

The legislation would effectively limit United States participation in United Nations missions by requiring that Washington's annual peacekeeping dues be reduced by the costs of overseas operations the United States conducts voluntarily. Deducting the $1.7 billion cost of American overseas operations last year, for example, would more than eat up the $1 billion a year that Washington contributes to the United Nations' $3 billion-a-year peacekeeping budget.

The measure would restrict the placement of United States troops under United Nations command. It would also establish a bipartisan commission to assess national security strategy, speed deployment of a national defense against ballistic missiles and quicken the entry of Poland, Hungary, Slovakia and the Czech Republic into NATO.

Senior Administration officials described their legislative strategy this way: wage a good fight but concede defeat in the House, and use the debate there to raise opposition to the bill in the public and in the more deliberative Senate.

Democrats hoped to pick up support among influential Republican senators like John W. Warner of Virginia, Richard G. Lugar of Indiana, Nancy Landon Kassebaum of Kansas and William S. Cohen of Maine, to kill the bill in the Senate or at least significantly modify it. "We're going to have to fix it up a lot when it gets over here," a senior Senate aide said.

Parallel legislation in the Senate has not advanced out of committee yet. But Senator Bob Dole of Kansas, the majority leader, included similar restrictions on peacekeeping in a bill he proposed last month, the Peace Powers Act of 1995.

The Clinton Administration contends that many of the bill's provisions are unnecessary or unsound. The Administration already has restrictions on placing American troops under foreign command. And the bipartisan commission would perform the same tasks as the Pentagon and Congress.

Senior Administration officials have been raising concerns about the bill since last month, when Madeleine K. Albright, the United States representative to the United Nations, told lawmakers that the measure was "fatally flawed."

Stepping up the campaign, Defense Secretary William J. Perry and Secretary of State Warren Christopher held a news conference today to denounce the bill. Both officials have met with Republican and Democratic lawmakers, and will visit Capitol Hill on Wednesday to press their objections.

Administration officials fear, for example, that changes in the peacekeeping accounting procedures would encourage other nations that make voluntary contributions, like Japan and other NATO allies, to follow suit in asking that those costs be deducted from their annual peacekeeping dues. "As a result, U.N. peacekeeping would simply come to an end," Mr. Christopher said today.

Republicans counter that their bill would install equity to peacekeeping accounting, and would not hurt United Nations operations. "We're basically being double billed," Mr. Gingrich said today. "We're both paying the largest single amount to the U.N. and we're providing uncompensated support on a fairly significant scale. And we just think there ought to be honesty in budgeting."

A struggle billed as isolationism vs. internationalism.

THE NEW YORK TIMES

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 15, 1995
WASHINGTON, Feb. 14 — The most serious Democratic attempt to alter the proposed balanced-budget amendment, one that would have excluded the vast Social Security trust fund from being tapped for future deficit reduction, went down to solid defeat today in the Senate.

Whether that signaled fresh support or trouble for the budget amendment depended mostly on which senator was talking. But the closeness of the contest was undisputed, and it was hammered home by the Republican National Committee, which moved into the state of seven wavering Democrats today with broadcast advertisements implying that they might oppose further deficit-cutting for political reasons.

That burst of grass-roots strategy, and other developments, suggested that the long-running debate on the amendment is turning into the home stretch and that a final vote in the Senate could come late this month. The House passed the measure last month.

Elsewhere in Congress, Republicans talked about abolishing four Cabinet departments and, under fire, stuck by their choice of a conservative economist to run the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office.

Today's major action was the Senate's 57-to-41 rejection of the Social Security change, with 7 Democrats joining the Republican majority. It followed a lengthy effort by each side to cast the other as intent on balking Social Security's billions to finance big Government or to provide a quick fix for the deficit.

The Social Security proposal, sponsored by Senator Harry Reid, a Nevada Democrat, would have placed Social Security income and expenses off limits for deficit-cutters, depriving them of $60 billion in surplus retirement taxes that are to flow into the Treasury between now and 2007, when the amendment envisages a balanced budget.

Democrats allowed that the prohibition would make the budget impossibly more difficult to balance; eliminating the deficit is already estimated to cost more than $1.3 trillion in the next seven years. But without the Reid exemption, they said, the temptation to use Social Security as an easy source of spare change for budget balancing would be almost irresistible.

"If the Reid amendment is rejected," said Senator John D. Rockefeller IV, a West Virginia Democrat, in Monday's debate, "it will be the equivalent of posting a danger sign in front of every household that counts on Social Security." 

For their part, Republicans argued that Social Security would be in far worse trouble if the deficit continued to mount. The Government, which buys Treasury bonds with the surplus Social Security money, will be unable to pay the debt if it owes Social Security when the trust fund stops running a surplus in another 25 years or so, they said.

"The debt of our Government is the threat to Social Security," Senator Larry E. Craig, a Republican from Idaho, said.

The effect of Mr. Reid's defeat was unclear. Mr. Craig called it "a strong vote for us," endorsing Republican reasoning that support for the balanced-budget amendment would have dropped if its cost had risen hundreds of billions higher.

But Senator Bob Graham, a Florida Democrat who supports the amendment, said the loss made it appear that the Senate had signed off on the bankrupting of Social Security. Had Social Security been exempted, he said, "there would have been in excess of 70 votes for the balanced-budget amendment."

"Now it's a much tougher situation," he said.

Most foes-counters believe the amendment has 65 or 66 of the 67 votes, or two-thirds of the Senate, required for its adoption. Today the Senate majority leader, Bob Dole of Kansas, moved to end a weeks-long filibuster, scheduling a vote to shut off debate for Thursday. Republicans expect that vote to fail, but they said they will prevail later.

Democrats were not anxious to help. Some reacted angrily to the Republican National Committee commercials, which targeted the minority leader, Tom Daschle of South Dakota, and six others who previously backed balanced-budget amendments but now are on the fence.

The commercials depicted the amendment as a gift to future generations that must pay for today's Federal borrowing. "Tell Senator Ford you support the balanced-budget amendment," urged one advertisement, aimed at Kentucky's Wendell H. Ford, the minority whip. "Tell him, 'Don't put the Democratic Party first — put our children first.'"

Mr. Ford said through a spokesman that he was pleased that Republicans were "spending their thousands" on him.

In the House, Republican freshmen already known for their hard line, deep-cutting fiscal policies took their reputations a step further today: they proposed abolishing four Cabinet-level agencies.

A group led by Representatives Sam Brownback of Kansas and Todd Tiahrt, both of Kansas, urged Congress to abolish the departments of Housing and Urban Development, Energy, Education and Commerce.

They were joined at a news conference by two other generations Republicans, Jack Kemp and Robert Mosbacher, who ran the Housing and Commerce departments under President Bush.

Mr. Brownback said the agencies are centralized bureaucracies whose mission is to "bury the people" who did not work in the Soviet Union and "won't work here."

A senior aide to the House leadership said that Speaker Newt Gingrich of Georgia did not directly endorse the proposal but that he was encouraging the freshmen to think and act boldly.

At least one Republican had reservations, however: Senator Pete V. Domenici, chairman of the Budget Committee, made it clear that the Energy Department will never vanish as long as he is in charge.

Mr. Domenici represents New Mexico, a major center of Energy Department weapons and research establishments.

Democrats were prickly about another fiscal matter as well: the Republicans' selection of a conservative economist, June O'Neill, to replace Robert D. Reischauer as head of the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office.

"Mr. O'Neill is a favorite of House Republican deficit-cutters. Today a top Democrat on the Senate Budget Committee, Jim Exon of Nebraska, fretted that Mr. O'Neill's Washington is overly controlled by the Republican leadership to the point where she may not be able to do his job."

The points is important because the office's analyses are the basis for most Congressional spending decisions.
Republicans Seek to Curb U.N. Funding

Peacekeeping Efforts Could Be Eliminated

By R. Jeffrey Smith

Senior Republican lawmakers have introduced legislation that would almost certainly terminate direct U.S. funding of more than a dozen United Nations peacekeeping operations in Africa, Asia, the Middle East, and Central America.

The proposal, which constitutes a major challenge to the Clinton administration's conduct of foreign policy, would radically alter the method the United States uses to calculate its contributions to the United Nations. It would reduce U.S. payments to the financially strapped international organization by about $1 billion per year and could cost the United Nations much more if other donor countries, following the U.S. lead, adopt a similar accounting change.

The Clinton administration recently decided to begin a major campaign against the proposal, which is included in national security legislation introduced in the Senate by Majority Leader Robert J. Dole (R-Kan.) and in the House as part of the "Contract With America" promoted by Speaker Newt Gingrich (R-Ga.).

The U.S. Administration's R. Albright opened the lobbying effort by deploring the Republican plan at a closed hearing Friday of the House International Relations Committee. He said it "could eliminate, by our own calculation, all U.S. payments for U.N. peacekeeping," inviting "chaos" and leading to "budgetary anarchy" at the United Nations if other countries followed the U.S. lead.

"It would become literally impossible for the U.N. to manage or sustain peace operations, thereby leaving us more and more with the stark choice" between acting unilaterally or not at all when global emergencies arise, Albright told the committee in remarks cleared by the White House.

The reply from Republicans is essentially yes, yes, yes. It "would end [U.N.] peacekeeping as we now know it," said a key Senate Republican.

Peacekeepers can aid in the legislative effort. About a third of the $3.6 billion annual U.S. budget for 17 peacekeeping operations would immediately be wiped out.

At the root of the squabble is a major dispute between Republican lawmakers and the Clinton administration over the recent U.N. performance in peace operations and its ability to effectively prevent regional conflicts or repair humanitarian disasters.

The Clinton administration has given U.N. peace operations considerable support during the last two years, arguing that the operations serve key U.S. interests by promoting democracy, punishing miscreants or deterring aggression. After extensive lobbying, the administration persuaded Congress but failed to pay all outstanding U.S. bills for peacekeeping for the first time in years.

But many Republican lawmakers have asserted that the Clinton administration's effort squandered funds and military assets on operations that were mishandled or wrongly undertaken, in places where vital U.S. interests were not directly threatened.

Although recent public opinion polls report that the electorate is divided on U.N. peacekeeping issues, the Republicans have concluded that the November elections proved there is little support for U.S. military involvement in U.N. actions.

With still-acute memories of the 1993 dubbing of U.S. special forces by a Somali warlord in the streets of Mogadishu and lingering suspicion that the U.S. military interventions in Haiti may also turn out badly, many Republicans have argued that Washington must shun such military entanglements.

"Sooner or later, we have to say, 'Look, we gave you the office.' And the rest of these countries are going to have to pony up. They've got to pay their share," said House Appropriations Committee Chairman Bob Livingston (R-La.), who led the working group that drafted H.R. 7 -- the "National Security Restoration Act of 1995."

"I think the elections [said ... scale it back ... our international presence, but what most people are looking upon as Uncle Sacker," he said.

Both H.R. 7 and its counterpart bill, S. 7, seek to shift more of the financial burden for U.N. peacekeeping to other nations by forbidding the U.S. government for the first time to deduct from its assigned U.N. peacekeeping bill the total cost of any indirect U.S. military expenditures for U.N.-related operations.

The aim is to give Washington financial credit for the roughly $1.2 billion it spends voluntarily on military operations such as naval exercises, "no-fly" zones or humanitarian relief in places such as Somalia, Haiti, Iraq or Rwanda, frequently as part of coalitions approved by the United Nations.

The proposal is an expression of Republican frustration with the present U.N. formula for assessing peacekeeping contributions by the United States and other donor countries.

Under the current formula, the U.S. share of peacekeeping costs this year will likely reach $1.2 billion without taking into account the larger sum it regularly spends in indirect military expenses. The agreed U.S. share of U.N. peacekeeping expenses is 31.7 percent but will decline to 25 percent after Oct. 1 under legislation enacted by Congress last year.

If the Republicans' proposal is enacted, officials say, direct U.S. payments to the United Nations will almost certainly drop to zero.

"This prospect might seem attractive," Albright told the House committee. But she added that it could prompt NATO allies "to seek a credit for costs incurred in enforcing the Bosnia and Iraq no-fly zones. Japan might seek reimbursement for the funds it established to underwrite logistics costs in Somalia. France might seek a credit for its actions in Rwanda," U.S. and U.N. officials say such actions would wipe out virtually all remaining U.N. peacekeeping funds.

The Republican legislation contains other provisions the administration plans to oppose. It would, for example, bar the future deployment of U.S. troops under foreign command without specific congressional or presidential authorization -- a limitation that senior U.S. officials say would infringe on the president's constitutional powers to join the United Nations in responding on short notice to humanitarian emergencies.

The legislation also would require the administration to provide regular reports to Congress of the costs and funding mechanisms for all U.N. peacekeeping operations. It would further require the withholding of a fifth of the overall U.S. payment to the United Nations until the U.N.'s new inspector general -- installed largely at U.S. insistence -- obtains powers to investigate a wider range of U.N. documents and programs.

Albright called the latter idea "unworkable" and said it would lead other nations to accuse Washington of reneging on the inspector general arrangement it negotiated last year.

Two concerns lie behind these proposals, according to Republican lawmakers and independent experts. Jerome Rosner, a former National Security Council legislative adviser who recently interviewed scores of congressional staff about U.N. matters, said the October 1995 gun battle in Mogadishu that killed 18 U.S. military personnel is "absolutely pivotal" to congressional mistrust of the world body.

Although the U.S. forces in that battle were acting under direct U.S. command, a half-dozenacakewa Republican lawmakers said in interviews that they blamed the United Nations for mismanaging the operation and concluded as a result that U.S. forces must not be placed under U.N. command. "Multilateralism's Obituary Was Written in Mogadishu," states the headline on an article by Sen. Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) that he gives to visitors on Capitol Hill.

McConnell, who chairs the Senate Appropriations subcommittee with jurisdiction over foreign aid, said in the article that "the U.N. commands, committed to questionable military tactics driven by a U.N. bureaucracy with no public accountability should not decide, for example, whether the U.N. and U.S. soldiers in Somalia are看电视['s] soldiers. Not in Somalia, not in Bosnia, not in Haiti." Other Republican lawmakers have argued that the Clinton administration's financial and military contributions to U.N. peacekeeping have wrongly diverted funds from Pentagon spending for readiness to fight conventional threats.

"I don't want them using defense money for other purposes," said Senate Armed Services Committee Chairman Strom Thurmond (S.C.), Thurmond, like other Republicans, said in an interview that U.S. involvement in peacekeeping is acceptable only for the "protective" U.N. interests and is not paid for with defense funds. "Bosnia and Haiti -- these are not vital interests. Our security is not threatened."

More moderate Republicans such as Sen. John W. Warner (Va.) also say they believe a "neo-isolationist" mood is sweeping the electorate. "The basic philosophy in America today is "we can't solve all the problems in the world," Warner said, adding that he supports restricting the deployment of U.S. military forces to regions where U.S. interests are clearly threatened. "I do not include the African continent," said Warner, who chairs the Armed Services air-and-space subcommittee.

A spokesman for Defense Secretary William J. Perry said that while provisions of the Republican bills were still under review, "in the overall view [at the Pentagon], peacekeeping serves our common interest in getting others to take on greater responsibility for maintaining international peace and stability."

Aides to Secretary of State Warren Christopher said he would outline his legislative position at a hearing of the House International Relations Committee on Thursday morning. The committee is slated to mark up the bill that afternoon.
The Harry S. Truman Memorial Veterans Hospital in Columbia, Mo., is one of the largest hospitals in the U.S. and is home to thousands of veterans who are treated there. In March 1993, hospital officials detected a sudden surge in the number of veterans dying in Ward 4 East, a ward dedicated to care for veterans with severe mental illnesses.

Between October 1991 and August 1992, resuscitation teams had to be summoned to the ward 33 times to revive patients whose hearts had stopped. According to a hospital review, during 23 of those deaths, a particular nurse was on duty and during 13 of those deaths he was the only registered nurse in the ward.

Many of the deaths occurred late at night when the same nurse identified as “Nurse H” in hospital reports worked to try to save the patient. There was “an unusually high number of deaths during the 1:00 a.m. to 7:00 a.m. shift” and a striking peak on Ward 4 East between 1:00 a.m. and 3:00 a.m.

For the small, 210-bed hospital, run by the Department of Veterans Affairs and affiliated with the University of Missouri Medical School, it was an alarming medical mystery—or perhaps something much worse. The striking statistical link between the death rate on the ward and Nurse H’s shift, noted by outside investigators in March 1993 to the examination of bodies of 13 patients who had died on Ward 4 East. The bodies were autopsied and samples of tissue were removed for testing by the FBI, which has declined to release results, saying its investigation is continuing.

The nurse, Robert Williams, 28, who was identified by the Columbia Daily Tribune whose story broke the story on the deaths two years ago, was removed from patient care after the allegations surfaced in the fall of 1992. He has not been charged with any crime or violation of VA standards. He has denied any wrongdoing.

Last week, Gordon Christensen, the hospital’s assistant chief of staff for research, who first raised suspicions about the deaths on Ward 4 East, charged that hospital officials had tried to cover up the problem. These allegations, which VA Inspector General Stephen A. Trodden called “serious,” seem likely to revive concerns about how well the VA runs the largest federal hospital system.

More than two years after the allegations about Williams surfaced, and is publicly known about why the Columbia veterans died or how many deaths are considered suspicious. A recently released report by the VA inspector general gave the first hint of the possible dimensions of the case, saying Williams was on duty when 45 veterans died during the period under investigation. After he was removed from the ward, the death rate returned to its previous level, about half the rate of deaths that occurred during the time Williams was on duty.

In 11 months that Williams was under scrutiny there were 82 deaths in the ward compared to 53 the previous year and 41 the year before that.

Most of the veterans who died there were elderly men with multiple ailments, and many were terminally ill. But officials say few believed to be immediate danger of death.

Beyond that, VA and FBI officials will say little about what has been a massive investigation that senior VA officials in Washington acknowledged has left a “cloud” over the seven-story hospital near the Missouri football stadium. The FBI has conducted more than 1,000 interviews of the case and reviewed thousands of medical charts, according to a VA statement.

“This is a criminal investigation,” Trodden said in a statement last week. “The burden of proof is high.”

An internal statistical report, released by the VA's office in response to a Freedom of Information Act request, stated there are “less than 1 in 1 million” odds that the relationship between the nurse and the deaths is due to chance. The issue “requires further exploration,” the report said.

Shortly after Trodden’s office made the report public Jan. 4, Christensen charged that unidentified VA officials at the hospital had attempted to cut short his investigation into the deaths.

He said officials destroyed a copy of his research findings, blocked him from meeting with investigating VA officials and threatened him with prosecution if he made public his charges.

Why? “I don’t know,” Christensen said. “It’s my presumption that they didn’t want it to get out.”

Cases of health care providers killing their patients are rare, but they have occurred from time to time in many kinds of health care settings, including VA hospitals. In 1977, two New Yorkjonians nurses who worked in the VA’s Ann Arbor, Mich., hospital were convicted of poisoning five veterans with a powerful muscle relaxant, part of a wave of 52 sudden breathing failures that caused 12 deaths in 1975.

Often, the first evidence linking a health care worker with patient deaths comes from statistical studies similar to the one conducted at the Columbia hospital. But even finding a strong association between a worker’s presence and excess deaths does not prove the worker was responsible. “It is circumstantial in a legal sense,” researchers who conducted a similar investigation in a Toronto hospital wrote in a report published in 1985 in the New England Journal of Medicine.

The question of possible criminal activity ... clearly rests with legal and judicial authorities.

— Williams has repeatedly told reporters he is innocent of any wrongdoing. In newspaper interviews last year, Williams said angrily that co-workers were accusing him of being an “angel of death.” He said he tried to get transferred off the ward because “I had been getting yelled at, this doctor was threatening me with prison.” He was accused of being an “angel of death.” He said he tried to get transferred off the ward because “I had been getting yelled at, this doctor was threatening me with prison.”

VA officials say Williams has worked at a Missouri nursing home since resigning a year ago. He has an unlisted telephone number and could not be reached for comment.

The VA has never publicly said Williams was nurse H. Hospital officials have said Williams was subject to a pointed exchange in the fall of 1992. Mahamoud Al-Kilani, a young medical resident assigned to the hospital, asked Williams point-blank: “Are you killing my patient?” Hospital officials launched an investigation into the doctor’s statement. The inquiry found no evidence to support the doctor’s allegations, according to Stephen Gaither, the hospital’s spokesman.

Initially hospital officials rejected Christensen’s suggestion there was a link between a nurse and the deaths. “I believe very much that it’s a statistical correlation and not a reflection of the kind of care we give people here,” J.L. Kurzejeski, the hospital’s director at the time, told the Kansas City Star in March 1993.

After Christensen presented his findings on the relationships, hospital officials called in a team of officials from a regional VA office in Ann Arbor, Mich. The Michigan team disputed the doctor’s conclusions.

However, the Michigan team’s findings were in turn rejected in September by the VA’s inspector general. The VA’s Office of Healthcare Inspections reviewed Christensen’s results and concluded the probabilities of causation were high. By the time the statistical strength of the relationship between the nurse and deaths. Three different statisticians, including a Pennsylvania State University professor, reached essentially the same conclusion, according to the VA’s report.

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The first report of examinations has been completed and a second, more intensive examination is underway,” Trodden said. “Both VA and FBI are committed to pursuing every possible avenue to determine the answers to the questions raised.”
Behind Arrest of Bomb Fugitive, Informer's Tip, Then Fast Action

BY RICHARD BERNSTEIN

Another year, Ramzi Ahmed Yousef. No. 1 on the FBI's most wanted list and the main authorities considered the main plotter behind the bombing at the World Trade Center were yesterday, he was turned in to the authorities. In his cell, he had been in custody since last week and provided information that led to Mr. Yousef's capture in a hotel room on Tuesday and his arrest on the United States the next day.

According to the officials, the information he provided about others may have been seeking to collect the $1 million reward that the State Department had offered for information leading to Mr. Yousef's arrest. Officials from the Justice Department said that they had had two hours to grab Mr. Yousef, before he left Pakistan for an unknown reason.

Quickly, a room of Pakistani officials and American law enforcement officials was assembled and sent to the room where Mr. Yousef was believed to be staying. The Pakistanis went down the door and rushed into the room, finding Mr. Yousef lying on his bed, a suitcase of explosives nearby.

"At first, he was cocky," said one official, who asked not to be identified, "but he turned stone white and started shaking when he realized that the long arm of American law had caught up with him."

Federal officials said they believed that this is the second time since the trade center attack in Manhattan, Mr. Yousef had plotted other bombings, including failed attacks on the Philippines and Thailand in the Thai immigration documents. In a不孕不育 report on Thursday, officials said that terrorist members of the group recruited in Pakistan by Mr. Yousef had tried to blow up a plane in a Soviet airliner in Asia.

A seaboard of F.B.I. investigators was dispatched to Manila and one person with knowledge of the investigation said yesterday that Mr. Yousef's fingerprints were found in the apartment searched by the Philippine police. But Mr. Yousef was not found.

But on Feb. 3, when an informant who worked for the American Embassy in Islamabad, the trail became warmer. The informant told officials last week that when Mr. Yousef arrived in Pakistan in recent weeks, he was about to blow up an American airliner in Asia.

"We have been looking at information that Mr. Yousef's fingerprints were found in the apartment searched by the Philippine police. But Mr. Yousef was not found."

In an interview after his conviction, Mr. Ajaj said he knew Mr. Yousef by the name Rashid. Mr. Yousef was a member of the group recruited in Pakistan by Mr. Yousef, who was arrested in Manila and one person with knowledge of the investigation said yesterday that Mr. Yousef's fingerprints were found in the apartment searched by the Philippine police. But Mr. Yousef was not found.

But on Feb. 3, when an informant who worked for the American Embassy in Islamabad, the trail became warmer. The informant told officials that Mr. Yousef was in Bangkok and would be coming to Pakistan soon.

After being flown by special plane to the United States on Wednesday, Mr. Yousef was arraigned yesterday morning in Federal District Court in Manhattan, where, unless he pleads guilty, he will stand trial in the months ahead.

Mr. Yousef, head of the last of the major figures believed to be responsible for the trade center explosion to be brought into custody. Four others have already been convicted in the bombing, and each received sentences of 240 years in prison. But Mr. Yousef, traveling under a false name with a ticket he had bought two weeks earlier, slipped out of the United States on a flight to Pakistan. For most of the time since then, officials agree, Mr. Yousef did a good job of concealing himself. It was unclear even which country he was in. Some believed Pakistan, others Iraq, and still others felt he had slipped into Afghanistan, where he could be protected by one of the Arab factions left there from the long and bitter struggle with the Soviet Union.

Thanks to the trade center trial, which ended last March, Mr. Yousef's movements in this country in the months leading up to the bombing are well known. He arrived in New York on a flight from Pakistan, the Pakistani town near the Afghan border that was the center for many of the guerrilla groups fighting in Afghanistan, on Sept. 1, 1992. Though his passport seemed valid, he had no visa to the United States. He asked for political asylum and was allowed to live in the country on that basis, as are many thousands of other people who arrive without proper documents. On the same plane as Mr. Yousef was a Palestinian named Ahmad M. Alai, who was caught traveling on a crudely doctor...
Congress and Baseball

CONGRESS DOESN'T seem inclined to legislate an end to the baseball strike, and that's just as well. There are more important things to be done on the Hill, and in any event it would be a real stretch to use the supposed threat to the Florida economy (all those tourists who won't go south without the lure of spring training—like they'd rather stay here and freeze?) as an excuse for imposing binding arbitration on the major league players and owners. This is a labor dispute in a non-essential business, and it's up to the contending parties, not the federal government, to work it out.

Granted, that may be awhile. As collective bargainers, baseball management and labor have approximately the mutual regard of pit vipers and, as the strike goes on, just about as much standing with the public. There is nearly a century of bad blood between them. The players see any attempt to limit their soaring salaries as a step back toward the iniquitous days when teams practically owned them for life. The owners see those same salaries as a major threat to the future of the game and the fulfillment of their own desires, which are simple enough: the esteem of their communities, a stable and at least moderately profitable financial situation and the chance to be regarded as distinguished sportsmen. So intractable is this situation that W. J. Usery, the Hank Aaron of labor-management mediation, has now pretty much acknowledged defeat, after having labored four months on the case at a major league wage of $120,000 a month.

There is one thing Washington could do, though—ought to have done a long time ago—and that is revoke baseball's exemption from antitrust law. Such an action might not end the strike right away, but it would allow—or force—the game to deal with its long-term problems. The primary effects would be two: to make it easier for owners to move franchises from cities that aren't supporting them and to weaken the majors' ties to the minor leagues.

Right now owners are reluctant to let teams move to other cities because of the predictable outcry from fans and their political leaders (some of whom would undoubtedly be the same congressmen who say baseball labor disputes are none of their business). But it's becoming clear that things like fancy new ballparks and steady fan support are essential for success in the big leagues these days and that there are some cities that simply aren't going to provide either. Baseball is in need of a shakeup and a bit of rearrangement. The best way to bring it about would be to break up the concentration of power among its owners and most highly paid players.

Saving Virginia From Its Governor

LONGTIME ASSEMBLY watchers in Richmond are saying it was the roughest rejection in memory of a governor's budget proposals—but the rough stuff started with Gov. Allen in the first place. Virginians from both parties will tell you he is not the man to ask for it. Politically and mathematically, the governor's calculations proved too crude for lawmakers and their constituents, who weren't ready to wreck Virginia's respected higher education system in return for a phantom tax cut. They did their own math and figured out that the governor's tax cut would simply dump the taxing on down to local governments. The Democrats in the legislature refused to roll over in the face of elections this fall, and voters can thank them for tossing back the Allen I'm-out-of-here-in-three-years grenade.

The complicated budget process in Richmond isn't over, and Gov. Allen is a sure bet to come back someday at some point with another attempt to undo the legislature's work. But the lawmakers should hold fast. It's not that every item Gov. Allen sought to cut is sacred and must stay in the budget; there are cuts that can be made and, between the house and the state senate, will be. But as several legislators noted during the committees' actions, the governor's approach to the budget was contradictory.

House Appropriations Committee Chairman Robert B. Ball Sr. of Henrico County cited the governor's planned reductions in higher education as an example, saying they "would undermine the future of this state and would be counter to our efforts to attract new industry and jobs."

That's not not political exaggeration; it happens to be the same conclusion reached by a coalition of business leaders from across the state who know more than a little about competition to attract businesses—especially about the emphasis neighboring North Carolina places on its education system. It was also the subject of a letter to legislative leaders warning that "the economic progress we need will not happen if Virginia's universities remain mired near the bottom in public support when compared to other states."

The signatures Mills Godwin Jr., governor from 1966 to 1970 and 1974 to 1978; Linwood Holton, governor from 1970 to 1974; and Gerald L. Baliles, governor from 1986 to 1990. That's significant support for responsible lawmakers as they head into the final rounds in Richmond.

THE WASHINGTON POST
FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 10, 1995
U.N. Voices Concern Over a Bill to Limit U.S. Peacekeeping Role

By BARBARA CROSSETTE

UNITED NATIONS, Feb. 9 — A national security bill that could undermine international peacekeeping operations and fundamentally change Washington's relations with the United Nations is arousing concern among officials here, in the capital and abroad.

The legislation, sponsored by Republicans, could be approved by the House of Representatives as early as next week. House aides and Administration officials say:

"Warning that the bill will pick up support among Democratic critics of the United Nations in both houses, Clinton Administration officials and some foreign policy experts are campaigning to organize opposition to the legislation in the Senate and among the public.

The bill, the National Security Realignment Act, would cut United States contributions to peacekeeping operations, but Americans from serving under foreign commanders except under specific conditions relating to the United Nations new peacekeeping missions. It would also require that additional costs incurred by the Pentagon in support of United Nations actions be charged to the United Nations. Such costs, even if they did not involve peacekeeping costs, would be deflected against the United States' regular peacekeeping assessments, the Administration said.

United Nations peacekeeping costs, which are estimated at more than $3 billion last year, are parallel to the legislation in the Senate, where a similar act has been considered.


Madeleine K. Albright, the United States ambassador to the United Nations, has asked President Clinton to veto the bill if passed. She said on Wednesday that it was not "anti-U.N. or anti-peacekeeping."

She warned that the bill would raise questions of how and where money is spent. "The bill is designed to ensure that there will be prior consultation and cost analysis with the Congress by an Administration before it embarks upon a peacekeeping operation, and that Congress will not simply be handed the facts," she said.

Mrs. Albright, who was also at the news conference here today, has taken the lead within the Clinton Administration in rebutting critics of American participation in the United Nations in general. She plans a series of speeches in the American South and Midwest beginning next week at Fort Bragg, North Carolina.

Ms. Albright is also shuttling to Japan and Germany, for example, to contribute heavily and voluntarily to peacekeeping operations in which they do not take an active part, including the American-led Persian Gulf war.

The House International Relations Committee has made some changes in the original bill to meet Administration objections, but Ms. Albright says those do not remove what she sees as fundamental flaws.

The committee has, for example, proposed waiving the right to claim deductions for Pentagon expenses. Support of United Nations activities when those missions would have been carried out in any case for reasons of national security or national self-interest.

The Administration argues that it is not possible to separate national security and the United Nations' role in peacekeeping, which is a "true" human rights issue. The Administration supports the United Nations' role in peacekeeping, which is important to the global community.

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Expand NATO? Yes, Say Most Experts, but What Does the Public Think?

By CRAIG R. WHITNEY
Special to The New York Times

PARIS, Feb. 9 — This is the season of international security conferences. As European and American politicians, defense officials, academic experts and business leaders flocked from Davos to Munich to Brussels, no issue got more discussion than how soon the NATO alliance should extend its nuclear umbrella to Central Europe.

It wasn’t a question of if, but when the emerging democracies in the region will escape the strategic void they have uneasily inhabited since the collapse of the Soviet Union. But while the policy elites discussed expansion of the alliance virtually as a done deal, a skeptical public has been largely left out of any debate over whether the far-reaching change is the right way to go in the first place. And it is American and European voters who would have to bear the burden, in blood and money, of defending historically unstable Central Europe if conflict broke out.

“Stability is not a concept that is easy to sell,” said Senator William S. Cohen, Republican of Maine, at the most recent talkfest in Munich last weekend. “What we need is a thorough public debate, but in the United States it hasn’t even begun.”

A senior U.S. State Department official said, “Our problem with the new Congress is that they think we aren’t going fast enough with expansion,” noting that the new House speaker, Newt Gingrich, has written NATO expansion into the Republican Contract With America. But Senator Cohen had his doubts. “The answer today would be no. The public hasn’t even started to think about what expansion would mean.”

Led by the United States, the NATO allies have agreed in principle to clarify by the middle of this year the entrance requirements for new members. By early fall the word of what more is required will go out to the candidates.

The Czech Republic, Poland, and Hungary have all been clamoring to join NATO as insurance against a revival of expansionist aims by Russia. At the same time, Russia has strenuously opposed a longer reach by NATO to its own borders, regarding the move as a threat.

On Thursday in Brussels Prime Minister Gyula Horn of Hungary, a former Communist, made his country’s case to the Secretary General of NATO, Willy Claes. Mr. Horn said he believed there was a good chance that Hungary could become a member of the alliance even before it joined the European Union, which is expected to take until at least the turn of the century.

German and American policymakers tend to think that Central European countries might qualify for NATO closer to five years from now. French, Spanish, and Italian experts prefer a slower approach, and the British are somewhere in between.

But all seem to agree that NATO and a continuing American role are essential to maintaining stability in Europe, and that extending NATO to Central Europe is a good idea. They also agree that however long NATO expansion takes, Russia must not be left out in the cold or feeling threatened, as it now says it does.

Public opinion in the United States, much more than in Europe, has turned inward since the end of the cold war, and many Americans apparently believe European security is a problem they no longer need to worry about, despite the fact that 100,000 American troops remain there.

The mess that the West and the United Nations made of the war in Bosnia, with NATO standing mostly on the sidelines, has also led many Americans to question the alliance’s future usefulness in other crises.

At the same time, France and other European allies are trying to strengthen the European Union’s military arm, the Western European Union. But so far the Central Europeans are more interested in NATO. In Munich last weekend, Secretary of Defense William J. Perry tried to reassure the Russians and pointed out the obstacles to quick NATO expansion.

“New members must be prepared to defend the alliance and have the capable, professional military force to do it,” he said. They would have to agree to decision-making compatible with NATO’s, work under civilian control, sharing views of strategy and tactics, and having interchangeable equipment, especially in communications, which they now lack entirely.

“At the same time, NATO must be prepared to come to the defense of any new member,” Mr. Perry said. “That is not an abstract concept. It is a commitment of lives and treasure.”

Indeed, for the public in the United States and other NATO countries, that commitment is the crucial question. Modifying the North Atlantic Treaty to take in new members requires a two-thirds majority in the United States Senate and parliament approval in the other allied countries.

Expansion also means money, said the NATO Secretary General, Mr. Claes. “We must face the fact that the enlargement of our alliance will entail financial sacrifices, both for the current as well as for the future allies,” he said.

Would-be allies are expected to uphold democracy and human rights.

President Clinton has asked Congress for $100 million to help prospective members prepare to enter the alliance. But Mr. Claes noted, “NATO is a two-way street. We must make it clear to the prospective new members that NATO is as much about obligations as it is about benefits.”

But European and American security experts agree that NATO should also bring Russia into the new European security framework, despite what Mr. Perry called its appalling military tactics in the war against the breakaway region of Chechnya.

“NATO is a defensive alliance committed to ensuring more security and stability for Europe as a whole, including Russia,” he said. “NATO is not an alliance against Russia.”

Can Americans be persuaded to fight for Poles, Czechs and Hungarians?

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