

## DEFENCE NOTES



### The Future of NATO

■ In recent months the rapid political developments leading towards German reunification have raised core questions about the future of NATO and European security. Official comments have revealed sharply different views on the place of a unified Germany in NATO.

At the end of January, Mikhail Gorbachev announced that the Soviet Union accepted in principle the unification of Germany. The initial position of the Soviet Union was that gradual German unification should be accompanied by disengagement from the two alliances and the establishment by treaty of a neutral state. This view has been strongly rejected not only by NATO, but also within the Warsaw Treaty Organization. In particular, Poland continues to express deep concern about a unified Germany, and is clearly skeptical that neutrality would be a practicable solution. Faced with somewhat ambiguous comments by Chancellor Kohl on future guarantees for the western frontier of Poland at the Ottawa meeting of the two alliances in mid-February, the Polish foreign minister called for a unified Germany to remain within NATO lest it become a "superpower on the European stage."

President Bush stated the official position of the United States and West Germany at a press conference on 25 February, where he commented: "We share a common belief that a unified Germany should remain a full member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, including participation in its military structure." To this, Chancellor Kohl added: "One thing is clear: a united Germany cannot belong to two different pact systems." Although not all members of NATO appear to be enthu-

siastic about German reunification, all take the position that a reunified Germany should be in NATO. The Soviet Union thus appears to be diplomatically isolated.

In early April, the Soviets offered a different solution. A unified Germany could remain in both alliances for a transitional period of five to seven years, so that, according to Gorbachev, reunification could be synchronised with "new structures of security for all of Europe from the Atlantic to the Urals." These comments, echoing the earlier Soviet concept of a "European house," were received negatively in Washington, but served to underline continuing Soviet unwillingness to accept the NATO solution.

### Arsenals in the Middle East

■ In late March and early April, two incidents refocused attention on the emerging potential for widespread deployment of weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East. In late March arrests were made in England following an alleged attempt to smuggle key components of nuclear weapon triggers to Iraq. One week later British customs officials prevented the export to Iraq of lengths of metal tubing which, according to some experts, could be used to assemble a massive artillery piece capable of firing chemical or nuclear warheads over a distance of hundreds of kilometres. Iraq has denied seeking a nuclear capability (which is in any case conservatively estimated to require four or five more years of development), but has acknowledged possession of sophisticated chemical weapons.

During April also, a fire at a controversial chemical plant in Libya, the cause of which is unknown, may have seriously damaged production capabilities. While Libya denies that the plant at Rabta, outside Tripoli, is intended for chemical weapons production, in March, US officials provided information from intelligence analyses which concluded that Libya

had resumed the production of chemical weapons in late 1989.

Libya and Iraq are two of a number of states which have been seeking to acquire a ballistic missile delivery capability. Libya is believed to be developing a missile with a range in excess of 500 kilometres, while Iraq may have successfully extended the range of its Soviet-built Scud-B missile with the aid of an extra fuel tank designed by North Korea. US intelligence sources have also identified facilities close to the Rabta plant that could serve for the storage of poison gas canisters, but it is not yet clear that Libya has been able to design a chemical warhead for its ballistic missiles.

### Elusive Peace Dividend

■ In what promises to be a continuing debate, Washington is divided on defence policy. In early March, CIA chief William Webster and Defense Secretary Cheney openly disagreed on the nature of the Soviet threat. Testifying before a Senate committee, Webster claimed that the US intelligence community saw little likelihood that the Soviets would pose a conventional military threat in the foreseeable future, even if Gorbachev were deposed by Communist Party conservatives. Cheney, on the other hand, argued that recent Soviet changes were reversible, and described Webster's testimony as "not helpful" in securing Congressional support for the President's budget submission.

The following week the Chairman of the Senate Budget Committee proposed to cut defence by four percent per year as opposed to the two percent cut called for by President Bush. With any such cut in the defence budget, possibly including the two percent proposed by the president, attention focusses anew on which of the major new weapons systems, including the B-2 Stealth bomber, the Trident nuclear missile submarine, the mobile MX missile and the Midgetman ICBM, will come under the axe. Meanwhile, Congress has begun to discuss how to

reallocate the \$140 billion over five years, which would be saved if the two-percent cut is accepted.

On 19 and 20 April, the influential chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, Sam Nunn entered the debate with two speeches in the US Senate amounting to what the *New York Times* called "a benchmark" statement on how US military policy and spending plans should change. Nunn said the US should reduce troop strength in Europe to between 75,000 and 100,000 – the Bush administration has proposed 225,000. He also said that the US Navy should reduce the number of aircraft carrier battlegroups to 10 or 12, not the Navy's proposed 14. On the budget side, Nunn suggested cutting the proposed 1991 defence budget by \$18 billion, to \$289 billion.

On 26 April the Defense Secretary re-entered the fray with a proposal to reduce the development and production of new military aircraft. Instead of buying 132 B-2 Stealth bombers, the Air Force would purchase 75; the planned purchase of 210 C-17A transports would be reduced to 120; and the Navy's planned purchase of a new tactical attack plane would be cut by about one-quarter. Two other military aircraft development programmes, for the Navy and the Air Force, are being deferred. Cheney cited changes in Eastern Europe and the USSR as reasons for the reductions and is reported also to have indicated that the Navy would be asked to reduce the number of aircraft carriers it employs, to twelve.

In Canada, the peace dividend is scarcely visible. Under the budget tabled by Michael Wilson on 20 February, defence spending will be limited to five percent growth in 1990–1992, or about the level of inflation. A Department of National Defence task force is expected to produce a revised defence posture in the summer or early fall. □

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