



The Great American Doom Machine

The crisis managers and war gamers have returned to the Pentagon. Forced into the background during the early Nixon years, when an Era of Negotiation was supposed to be replacing the Era of Confrontation, they are back in the saddle. The result is perfectly clear: a mounting effort is underway to rekindle the public's fears of the Russian menace, and revive the specter of nuclear war.

For the past few years, there has been little public debate on nuclear issues: partly because those who struggled against nuclear tests, against ABM, and against MIRV were exhausted; partly because attention shifted to the Vietnam War we were fighting rather than the nuclear war we could hardly even think about; and partly because both sides seemed to be accepting the nuclear stalemate. Now, however, the Nixon Administration is trying its best to stir up the old fears.

Last June, James Schlesinger was

appointed secretary of defense, in the wake of Elliot Richardson's temporary shift to the Justice Department. Schlesinger had taught economics, written a book on national security and systems analysis, and spent most of the Sixties at the Rand Corporation studying defense strategy for the Air Force. He joined the government in 1969, serving first as the Budget Bureau's expert on military matters, then as the hard-nosed chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission. He had a brief stint running the CIA. Having made the rounds of the national security apparatus, Schlesinger still described himself cryptically to *Time* magazine as a "revivalist." What he seems to be reviving, though, are the dead doctrines of the past, preparing us for a nuclear Day of Judgment.

Early in January, Schlesinger announced that a change in nuclear strategy had taken place. The Defense Department now had "targeting options"

which were "more selective" and which would not "necessarily" involve mass destruction on both sides. The Pentagon had started to retarget some of its missiles towards military installations, in addition to the cities that were already targeted, in order to give the President "greater flexibility and selectivity." Schlesinger was also moving ahead with plans to put more warheads on U.S. missiles, increase their explosive yield, improve their guidance systems, enable them to maneuver toward a pinpoint target, and introduce an entirely new intercontinental missile. All this was going on because the Russians might someday acquire the capability to carry out "selective attacks against targets other than cities," and the Defense Department had an "obligation" to see that the United States had a "comparable capability." In short, the Pentagon was getting ready to fight "limited" nuclear war.

by Leonard Rodberg

Illustration by Patrick Oliphant

[“ASSURED DESTRUCTION”]

The rhetoric had a familiar ring. It recapitulated themes from the Sixties: from the Kennedy years, when the emphasis was on nuclear “options,” and from the Johnson era, when the stress was on responding to presumed Russian “capabilities.” Robert McNamara, the very model of the modern manager, descended upon the Defense Department in 1961 and proceeded, for a short while, to turn it into an analysis factory. Reams of studies flowed out, developing an ideology and a strategy for conducting nuclear war. The definitive statement from that period was delivered by McNamara in June 1962 at Ann Arbor, Michigan:

The U.S. has come to the conclusion that, to the extent feasible, basic military strategy in a possible general nuclear war should be approached in much the same way that more conventional military operations have been regarded in the past. That is to say, principal military objectives . . . should be the destruction of the enemy's military forces, not of his civilian population.

This doctrine, usually called “counterforce strategy,” was the favorite of the military—and especially of the Air Force. It allowed them to play with all their old textbook ideas and to treat nuclear war no differently than ordinary, “conventional” World War II-type wars, except that they might be fought more quickly and with a little more blood. Above all, it sanctioned and precipitated an almost unlimited buildup of weapons, since each side would have to keep increasing its arms to assure that the other could not wipe them out in a surprise attack.

McNamara tried to introduce the counterforce (or, as it was quickly termed, the “city-avoidance” strategy) to take advantage of the excess of weapons he discovered when he took office—he had found that the highly-touted “missile gap” was actually in our favor. It also permitted him to belittle De Gaulle's attempt to declare independence from America—his nuclear *force de frappe* was too lightly armed to fight such a war.

However, within several years, McNamara became convinced that it

was technologically impossible to avoid millions of casualties in even the most limited nuclear war. There would be too much nuclear fallout, too much confusion, too little control, for the theories of city-avoidance to work. And so he moved, slowly and reluctantly, to what he called “assured destruction,” and what others called “deterrence”—that is, to a strategy of ensuring a guaranteed high level of destruction for any nation that attacked us. Yet much of America's bloated arsenal remained targeted on Soviet military bases. There were, after all, only nine Russian cities with populations greater than one million—only 150 locales in the Soviet Union that even qualified as “cities”—and America had over 2000 nuclear warheads to aim at them.

Lyndon Johnson's attentions were elsewhere—though, with MIRV and ABM, he did his part to move the arms race up another notch. However Nixon tentatively reopened the question of nuclear strategy soon after taking office. In his first “State of the World” message—imperialism is more up-front these days—he asked the rhetorical question:

Should a President, in the event of a nuclear attack, be left with the single option of ordering the mass destruction of enemy civilians, in the face of the certainty that it would be followed by the mass slaughter of Americans?

Similar questions were raised in each succeeding message. Until Schlesinger arrived, though, little seems to have been done to respond to the question. Politically, *détente* was in the air and, technologically, the necessary weaponry wasn't yet available. In 1974, with Nixon in trouble, with the Solzhenitsyn episode having made the Nixon-Brezhnev alliance something of an embarrassment, and with new weapons waiting in the wings, the time seemed ripe to answer the question.

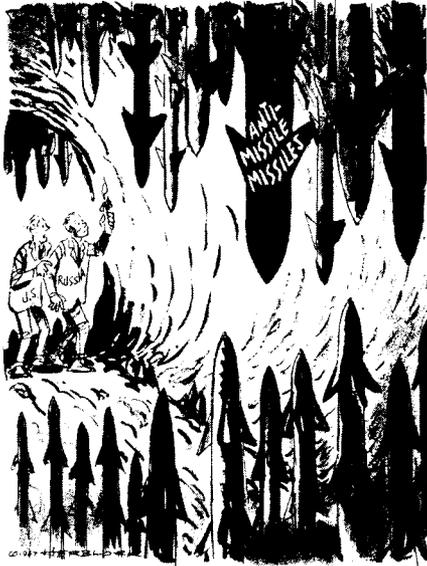
[INSTITUTIONALIZED PARANOIA]

The Defense Department appears to be in considerable disarray, however, on what that answer should be. What seems to have happened is that Schlesinger soon discovered that the “options” which McNamara tried to build into Ameri-

ca's nuclear strategy, in order to give the President some measure of “control” over the missiles and nuclear-armed bombers, had disappeared during Melvin Laird's reign in that office. Laird had turned most of the planning functions back to the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and they had simply reverted to their preferred strategy, the full unleashing of the entire nuclear arsenal in time of war—what was fondly called, in the Fifties, the “wargasm strategy.” And so Schlesinger began, with his fledgling staff, to find some way of reconstituting the “controlled options” beloved of analysts and managers. The Joint Chiefs promptly unleashed a flurry of requests for new weapons to implement the new options—more accurate guidance systems, more powerful nuclear warheads, at least 600 more missiles. Pleading budgetary pressures, Schlesinger has held them at bay, but is allowing research, development, and planning to go forward on all of these, and more.

What might be viewed as a reasonable step to gain tighter control over nuclear weaponry has led again, through the inexorable processes of bureaucratic politicking, to larger and less reasonable steps. New strategic goals produce “military requirements” for new technologies; new “options” require new weapons.

But several other familiar dynamics are at work as well. As in the days of McNamara, the Defense Department finds itself with more missiles than it knows what to do with (its warhead count is now approaching 8000), and so it looks around for additional targets, and for new ways of justifying its arsenal. Formerly a single weapon might have been talked of in the Pentagon as a “city-buster,” but now they want a “hard-target killer,” a warhead which will destroy a single, “hardened” (i.e., concrete-encased) underground missile silo. And they want warheads that can be aimed, from 5000 miles away, at a single factory. As John S. Foster, Jr., the hawkish former R&D chief of the Pentagon, told the Congress several years ago, “A hard target to some people means a [missile] silo. A hard target to other people might be an industrial target . . . steel mills, for example.” Thus individual missile sites and single fac-



"SAY, WE COULD GET LOST IN THIS THING."

1/31/67

is going back to the "flexible retories become targets for the Pentagon's abundance of weapons.

In addition, Schlesinger—like his predecessors—wants to match abilities that the Russians do not yet have. He wants the equipment to destroy military targets, even as he tells the public that the Russians do not now have that ability, and will not until "some point around 1980 or beyond." This dynamic was described well, again by John S. Foster, in Congressional testimony:

We are moving ahead to make sure that, whatever they do, or the possible things we imagine they might do, we will be prepared . . . we see possible threats on the horizon, usually not something the enemy has done, but something we have thought of ourselves that he might do, and that we must therefore be prepared for.

This, in a nutshell, is the institutionalized paranoia that has propelled America's military juggernaut for the past quarter century.*

Schlesinger's decision thus repre-

* And things seem to be no different in the Soviet Union. Khrushchev describes in his memoirs how Eisenhower asked him, during their 1959 meeting at Camp David, how he decided on his military budget. First, Ike explained how it worked in America: "My military leaders say, 'Mr. President, we need

sents a confluence of political, technical, and bureaucratic imperatives. The primary one, though, seems to be Schlesinger's own view of the need for a wide range of nuclear "options." He sponse" doctrines of the early Sixties, trying to give the military the capacity to fight wars all along what the analysts call the "spectrum of conflict."

[IN SEARCH OF TARGETS]

The Pentagon's difficulties in learning what new technologies the Russians are developing serves as an excuse for moving into the next stage of the arms race years before the Russians do. In this case, the new technical innovation is the maneuvering reentry vehicle, or MaRV, in Pentagonese; it makes the new strategy feasible. In implementing the new war-fighting strategy, the Pentagon is planning not just to purchase the forces needed to aim at missile sites; it has been able to do this for years. What it really wants is the ability to destroy underground missile silos with a single ICBM warhead. Today, three or four Minuteman missiles would have to be launched to destroy a single Russian missile base. However the capacity to do this with a single shot can be available within the next decade, and military sources are now talking about doubling both the explosive yield and the accuracy of warheads to achieve this goal.

Once it has such high-precision warheads, the U.S. will be able to destroy a land-based missile force, such as the Russians rely on, before it can be launched. It will have, in other words, the capacity for nuclear surprise attack.

The Nixon Administration has repeatedly assured a worried Congress that it was not developing such a capacity. Nixon once told the Senate that "we have not developed, and are not developing, a weapon system hav-

such and such a sum for such and such a program.' I say, 'Sorry, we don't have the funds.' They say, 'We have reliable information that the Soviet Union has already allocated funds for their own such program.' So I give in. That's how they wring money out of me. Now tell me, how is it with you?"

The Soviet Premier replied, "It's just the same. Some people say, 'Comrade Khrushchev, look at this: The Americans are developing such and such a system.' I tell them there's no money. So we discuss it some more, and I end up by giving them the money they ask for."

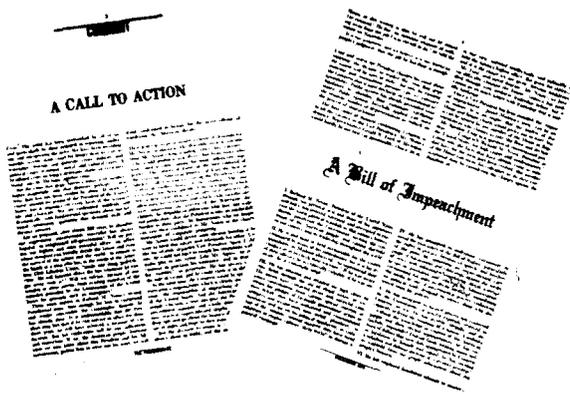
ing, or which could reasonably be construed as having, a first strike potential." The Congress refused several times to appropriate money for the "hard-target killer."

Nevertheless, research on MaRV has been underway continuously for more than five years. Immediately after the conclusion of the SALT agreements in 1972—as a sop to the military for its support—the Nixon Administration specifically allocated new funds for research on more accurate and powerful missile warheads. (This decision was not formally announced; it leaked out through William Beecher, then a *New York Times* writer with close contacts in the Pentagon—and now the Pentagon's information chief.) While the Air Force is close-mouthed about its efforts, the Navy has announced a \$222 million program to put MaRVs on its Poseidon and Trident missiles.

MaRV is the successor to the MIRV multi-headed missile, which went into production in 1968. Whereas MIRV (the Pentagon's acronym for Multiple Independently-targeted Reentry Vehicle) is dropped off a maneuvering "space bus" while still far out in space, to coast down to its target, the new MaRV would maneuver during reentry into the atmosphere and guide itself to its target using some type of homing device.

Like many Pentagon programs, this one has been a weapon in search of a purpose, with floating justifications that shift with the political winds. Originally it was justified as a way of foiling a missile defense, by maneuvering out of the path of pursuing anti-missile missiles. Now, with large scale deployment of ABMs banned by the 1972 SALT treaty, MaRV is being justified by the new-found need, rationalized in the Schlesinger strategy, for missile-site-seeking nuclear warheads.

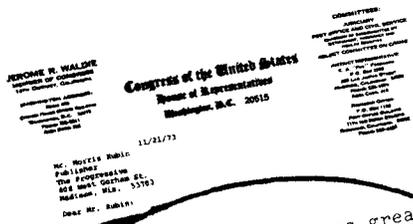
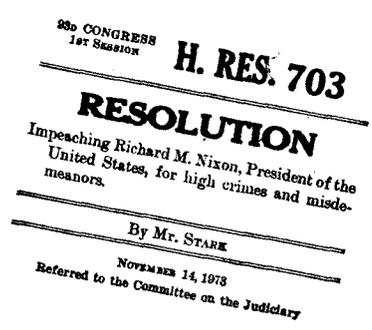
With MaRV nearing the time for full production and deployment, its importance has been symbolized by a significant bureaucratic realignment. The direction of the Advanced Ballistic Reentry Systems (ABRES) program, which has developed MaRV, is being taken out of the hands of the Air Force and placed directly in the Office of the Secretary of Defense, where Schlesinger can oversee this next stage in the nuclear spiral.



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"DE-ESCALATE? WITHDRAW? NOT HERE ON THE SPENDING FRONT."

3/11/69

[PLANNING THE UNTHINKABLE]

Deterrence and war-fighting are not the most compatible concepts. By declaring that he is targeting nuclear weapons away from civilian targets and toward selected military sites, Schlesinger is undercutting the deterrent effect he claims, at the same time, to be supporting. Engaging in nuclear warfare appears a more feasible choice if civilian casualties can really be avoided. Increasing talk of war-fighting intensifies the ever-present pressures from the military services for fuzzing the line between nuclear and conventional weapons and for the use of nuclear weapons in situations where, until now, civilian leaders would have resisted their use. During the Vietnam War there were repeated suggestions from high military officers, and from some of their civilian technical advisors, that nuclear weapons be used to end the war sooner, eliminate North Vietnam's war-making capacity, clear away jungle foliage, or achieve some other technological quick-fix. Fortunately, these proposals were dismissed. Next time they might not be, if the new campaign to "conventionalize" nuclear weapons is a success.*

* This campaign extends to the so-called "tactical" weapon area. Smaller nuclear warheads are being developed for the short-range missiles now based in Western Europe. General Andrew Goodpaster, the NATO chief, told a Senate committee that these would "increase military effectiveness while reducing possible collateral damage [military jargon for civilian casualties], thereby increasing their utility as well as their ac-



"YOU SEE, THE MORE ARMS WE HAVE, THE MORE WE'LL BE ABLE TO DISARM."

8/22/69

The "scenarios" of nuclear war which underlie such ideas seem to contain no recognition of the realities of Presidential decision making—the inadequate and often conflicting information he receives, the political motives that drive his advisors, the psychological pressures acting within him, the need for rapid action in a totally unprecedented situation. Much less traumatic events than impending nuclear war have produced demonstrably faulty Presidential judgments, based on misleading information, bad advice, and poor judgment—witness Nixon unleashing the Plumbers against Daniel Ellsberg. Here, though, there would obviously be no room for any second-guessing.

As the Schlesinger strategy is pursued, the use of nuclear weapons will become, to strategic planners and military advisors (if not to a President who maintains *some* perspective on what nuclear war is all about) a sane and reasonable choice. The notion of what Walt Whitman Rostow used to call "surgical strikes" will come back into favor, with a vengeance, for now they will be nuclearized. We saw how sloppy this surgery was in Vietnam, where every hamlet and village in some provinces was completely obliterated. Even ground troops, supposedly under the tightest, most direct control of all, wreaked havoc on the civilian population. "Command and

ceptability in NATO planning and for employment in the NATO countries." Here, too, the military services hope to have nuclear weapons treated exactly like artillery shells and bullets.

control" bears little resemblance in combat to pre-war game theories. And yet the terrifying lessons of Vietnam have obviously not been learned where they are most needed—in the Defense Department.

The Pentagon seems even to have forgotten what a single nuclear explosion would be like. Schlesinger talks about a war in which each side attacks the opponent's missile sites without touching the population. And yet to destroy an underground missile silo, the nuclear warhead must be exploded close to the ground, throwing tons of radioactive dust into the sky and depositing lethal fallout tens and even hundreds of miles downwind.

Nor does this strategy take into account the full scale of the nuclear arsenals on both sides. Like most discussions of nuclear strategy, it focuses on land-based intercontinental missiles. They are vulnerable to attack, and thus the analysts can play computer-simulated war games, imagine offense-defense strategies, and so on. Meanwhile, both sides retain hundreds of missiles on submarines cruising unseen beneath the oceans, and hundreds of intercontinental bombers that would be airborne at the first sign of a nuclear crisis. All the strikes and counterstrikes between land-based ICBMs will have no effect whatsoever on thousands of warheads carried on submarines and aircraft, invulnerable to attack and ready for use at any time.*

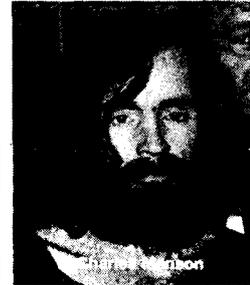
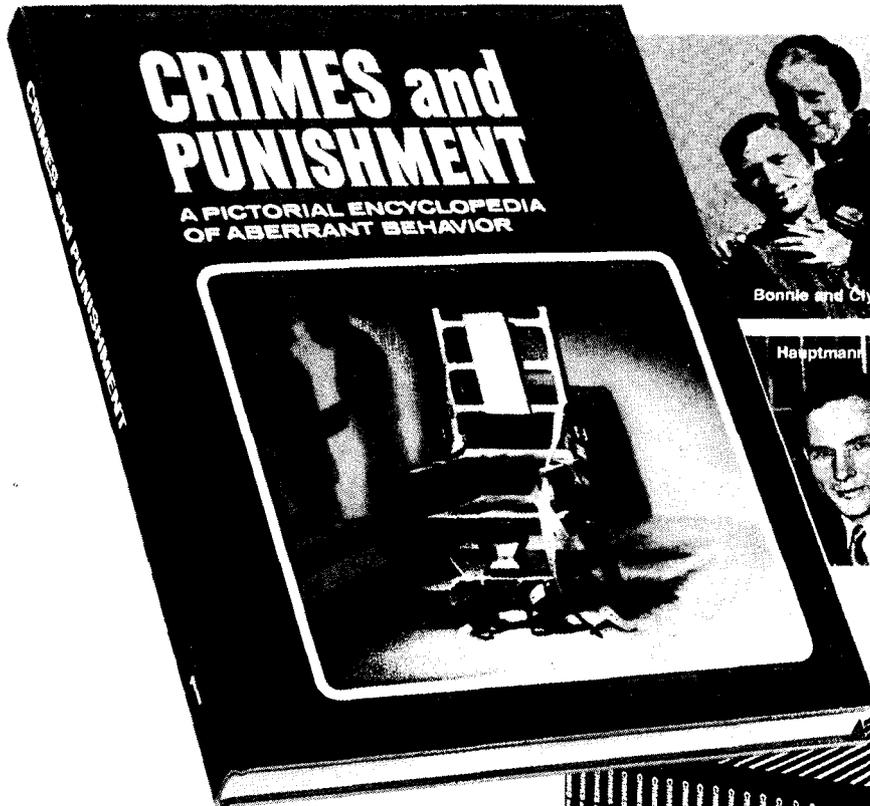
The new strategy is a barrier to further negotiations that could reduce the present absurd levels of nuclear arms on both sides. If new weapons must be developed and new war-fighting capacities introduced, so the old argument goes, this is no time to be cutting back. Indeed, if the other side is so dangerous that we must be readying new modes of confronting him, we should not even be entering negotiations. In other words, the new emphasis on war-fighting is ready-made for those who oppose any negotiations with the Soviet Union over

* And these are not some insignificant residual force. On the contrary, the United States has 41 nuclear submarines, each carrying as many as 160 nuclear warheads, enough to wipe out civilization on this planet. (And, as if that were not bad enough, there have been persistent reports of heavy drug use among the crews of these boats, subjected to monotonous 90-day undersea cruises aboard these floating Doomsday Machines.)

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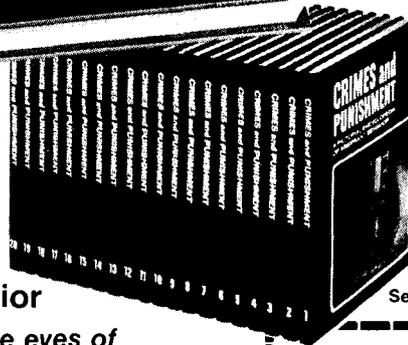
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strategic weapons.

The alternative has been suggested by, among others, Fred Ikle, the recently appointed director of the U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency. He has proposed getting rid of the increasingly vulnerable land-based missiles, either through SALT negotiations or by unilateral decision, rather than attempting to prolong their life by making them more powerful and more accurate, or by planning to conduct inter-ICBM combat. (It was presumed in Washington that Ikle was speaking for Henry Kissinger, under whom he works in the foreign policy chain-of-command, but the peripatetic secretary of state has not been heard from publicly on this issue.) The

answer to the growing problem of missile vulnerability is not to make Russian missiles equally vulnerable, but to eliminate them on both sides. They do nothing but threaten each other. Once vulnerable, they are of no use for deterrence, since they no longer provide a "credible" threat; they only provoke the fears they are supposed to assuage.

In any case, Schlesinger will probably have his way on the new strategy and technology. Only in the Senate is there any possibility of opposition to the counterforce strategy, and that body can control only the funds for specific weapons, not the contents of Defense Department planning. If history is any guide, the Congress will cut back the MaRV program, but will be

unable to stop it, and it will have no impact at all on the new targeting.

Meanwhile, negotiations on the next stage of SALT will be moving ahead towards Nixon's June trip to Russia where he and Brezhnev are publicly committed to reaching agreement. With the Pentagon committed to a new strategy and new technologies, the most likely outcome is an agreement to discard a few obsolete missiles. The new program will go forward, and the Pentagon will have added to its catalogue of death a few more ways to atomize us all.

Leonard Rodberg is a fellow of the Institute for Policy Studies in Washington DC.

.....and Its Runaway Budget



THE INTERGOVERNMENTAL BALLISTIC BALLOON

5/11/71

Neither war nor peace nor in between shall hold the Pentagon in its appointed bounds. American ground combat troops have been withdrawn from Indochina, relations between Washington on the one hand and Moscow and Peking on the other have improved considerably, and President Nixon has proclaimed a "generation of peace." Therefore, using the impeccable logic of the Nixon Administration, the country needs the biggest military budget in history.

Military funds can be calculated two ways: as "outlays" (total annual expenditures) and as "obligational authority" (which includes some down payments on new weapons systems spread over several years). In Fiscal 1975 the total obligational authority for the military will exceed \$100 billion when the Pentagon's supplemental requests and the AEC's weapons programs are included. That sum approximates Lyndon Johnson's total federal budget before the upsurge in Vietnam War costs, and surpasses in current dollars any military budget anywhere at any time.

The Pentagon and its new chief, James Schlesinger, are quick to lay out a whole range of rationales for this continuing hike in military costs. (1) Inflation brings price rises for the Pentagon as well as the housewife. (2) The all-volunteer army requires higher pay rates. (3) The Soviets are aggressively developing new weapons. (4) The U.S. needs "bargaining chips" for the SALT II negotiations. (5) The war in the Mideast revealed shortcomings in military preparedness. (6) Besides, "national defense" is only 29 percent of the federal budget.

Let us examine these rationales in turn, then look at the Pentagon's semi-hidden agenda.

* * *

(1) Inflation does affect the military's budget. However the Pentagon is requesting funds which exceed by eight percent the rate of inflation, according to a staff study prepared for the Joint Economic Committee. Moreover the military is itself a major cause of inflation. The Pentagon pumps large sums into the economy for goods and services which cannot be further utilized by American consumers. For all their economic (as separate from military) value, the weapons produced by Lockheed, General Dynamics *et. al.* might as well be scrapped now.

* * *

(2) The all-volunteer army does require higher pay rates to make it competitive with civilian employment. However it does *not* require a top-heavy command structure or a small minority assigned to combat jobs. There are today more senior officers commanding armed forces of 2.2 million than there were in World War II commanding 12 million. Last year Admiral Hyman Rickover told the House Appropriations Committee, "I would also reduce over a period of five years the number of flag and senior officers by 50 percent from what they are now. If you would do that we would have a far more efficient military organization." Not to mention a cheaper one. As for the combat-support ratio,

by Sanford Gottlieb

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