

Ointment

MAYBE PRESIDENT Clinton could stiffen his wobbly foreign policy reputation by making some long-deferred decisions on a couple of issues that are on the edge of more dramatic concerns like Bosnia, Haiti and Rwanda.

He has been deferential to the military-industrial complex in the hope that it would let him alone while he pursues more appealing domestic goals. The result has been that the secretary of defense and the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff do the talking and sometimes make the leader of the Western world look like an also-ran. He was knowledgeable in his marathon CNN session with foreign correspondents, but many questions related to campaign promises not kept.

Two issues beg for resolution: the role of the CIA in a post-Cold War world and U.S. weapons sales abroad, which amounted to \$31 billion in 1993.

To be fair, Sen. Daniel P. Moynihan (D-N.Y.) is probably the only public man in Washington who knows exactly what he wants done with the CIA. He wants it to be eliminated. He knew before the case of Aldrich Ames and his wife, who spied at will for eight years before CIA spies caught them. The scandal

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Mary McGrory is a Washington Post columnist.

Chit - Control

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has prompted the usual calls for reform and reorganization.

President Clinton would seem to be the ideal person to rein in the agency and open it up for examination. Its budget, unbelievably, is still a state secret. And at a time when he is prodding the rest of the world toward democracy, you might think he would nudge the spooks towards it too. But when his turn came to do something, Clinton ducked.

Minutes before senators unveiled their plans to avert another Ames case, he submitted a scheme that gives the agency another layer of bureaucracy and consigns it to another depot of delayed decisions, the office of the National Security Council. National security adviser Anthony Lake,

who already has too much on his plate, is to be the referee between the CIA and the FBI when they lock horns over the jurisdiction of spies within the spy agency. George Bush, onetime director of central intelligence, could not have done more for the agency.

You could see how serious the Senate Intelligence Committee is about change when you saw its members listen for an hour to a former committee chairman, one of the biggest cloak-and-dagger freaks on the Hill, the retiring David L. Boren of Oklahoma. He rambled on happily for almost an hour about bills he had introduced long ago and about MOUs (memos of understanding, stupid) of yesteryear.

The current chairman, Dennis DeConcini of Arizona, conducts himself

MARY McGRORY

Spies in the Ointment

with the humility befitting a member of the Keating Five. He was nonetheless sufficiently aroused by the arrogance of R. James Woolsey, the cold Cold Warrior who runs the agency as if nothing happened, to threaten that the Moynihan solution would prevail if he didn't watch out.

DeConcini was certainly provoked. After Louis Freeh, the new director of the FBI, made an impassioned plea for a truce in the turf wars that kept us from noticing a traitor at work, Woolsey unreconstructedly argued that turf wars from overseas would be revived if the FBI was given precedence.

"That was 40 years ago during the Cold War," DeConcini sputtered.

As great a scandal is the arms sales that have made us the world's No. 1 weapons salesman—surely not a characterization

that Bill Clinton sought for his tombstone. We don't just encourage the sale of weapons around the world. We subsidize it to the tune of \$8 billion.

For a trading president like Clinton—one who wishes to supplant military power with economic power—arms sales are probably a dilemma. During the 1992 campaign he spoke of curbing the arms trade, but since he took office, it has flourished, with the active encouragement of Commerce Secretary Ron Brown.

In a new book called "And Weapons for All," William Hartung of the World Policy Institute examines the reasons why the unbridled arms traffic is such a bad idea: The customers are bad nations, and our wares kill our own soldiers, as in Somalia. He points out that the land-office arms

business is a consequence of a failure to make another decision—about the pace of industrial conversion in the defense industry.

Politics is a factor. Where would California be without weapons? That's why we keep making and peddling promiscuously. Rep. Cynthia McKinney, the first black woman to be sent to Congress by Georgia voters, is co-sponsor of a code of conduct to be imposed on would-be weapons buyers: promotion of democracy, respect for human rights and rejection of aggression. Her rural constituency, which didn't care for her opposition to the Gulf War, approved her stand. They lost men in Somalia to bullets that we had sold the country's deposed dictator.
