

# House Sustains B-2 Funds, Blocks

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Washington Post Staff Writers

The House dealt a double blow to the Clinton administration's defense program yesterday evening by approving more money to keep the B-2 bomber program alive and by blocking aid to help former Soviet states dismantle their nuclear arsenals until Russia halts its offensive biological weapons program.

In a 219 to 203 ballot to reject a proposed amendment on the B-2, the House voted to keep \$553 million in the fiscal 1996 defense authorization act to sustain the bomber production line and allow for procurement beyond the 20 planes that the administration had sought.

Budget Committee Chairman John R. Kasich (R-Ohio) broke with his party leadership to join with Rep. Ronald V. Dellums (D-Calif.) to

sponsor the amendment to strike the \$553 million of spending.

Kasich got some support in the House from his own party, including among freshman Republicans. But a majority of GOP representatives was joined by more than 70 Democrats, particularly from B-2 production states such as California and New York, to support production of the additional planes.

The advocates of additional B-2s challenged the administration's bomber strategy, saying the B-2 remains the most cost-effective means of projecting force and warning against the risk of closing the production lines.

Opponents argued in floor debate that building more B-2s, conceived during the Cold War, would be too costly and unnecessary. They said the same mission could be per-

formed by purchasing less expensive, precision-guided munitions.

In a separate ballot, on an amendment sponsored by Rep. Robert K. Dornan (R-Calif.), the House voted 244 to 180 to hold up all spending under the Nunn-Lugar program to finance dismantling and destruction of nuclear weapons by Russia, Ukraine, Belarus and Kazakhstan.

The proposed bill had already reduced spending under the program, named for Sens. Sam Nunn (D-Ga.) and Richard G. Lugar (R-Ind.), from the administration's request of \$371 million to \$171 million. Dornan contended that continued Russian work on biological weapons posed a serious threat to the United States and required withholding of all the U.S. aid.

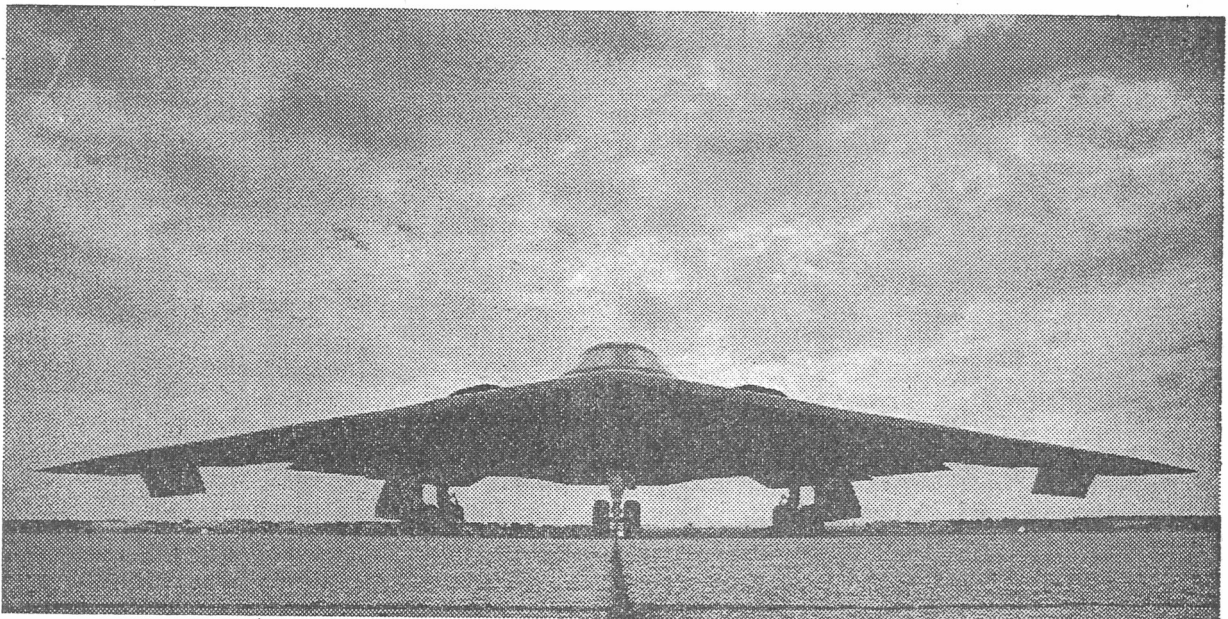
"We're not taking away the money, we're fencing it," Dornan said.

The Nunn-Lugar program has the strong support of Secretary of Defense William J. Perry, who has argued that the funds have succeeded enormously in denuclearizing former Soviet states.

Rep. John M. Spratt Jr. (D-S.C.), who led the opposition on the floor to Dornan's amendment, said that 2,800 nuclear warheads have been removed from the former Soviet Union, and he cited Pentagon estimates that three of the four former nuclear weapons states would be free of nuclear weapons by autumn 1997.

Yesterday's votes came at the opening of three days of planned debate in the House on the 1996 defense authorization bill. The debate demonstrates Republican defiance of President Clinton on a number of issues, including on the Seawolf subma-

# Aid to Destroy Soviet Nuclear Arms



BY JAMES M. THRESHER—THE WASHINGTON POST

**The vote to keep \$553 million for the B-2 bomber allows for procurement beyond the 20 planes the president wanted.**

rine, where a contradictory pattern emerged. Where the president wants to save money, as on the B-2, the House GOP leadership said it was time to buy more. And where the White House tries to spend precious military funds, as on the Seawolf, the House Republicans want to shift the money elsewhere.

"It's a reflection of how irrelevant the Clinton administration is in this debate," said a defense company executive who favors both the B-2, built by Northrop Grumman Corp., and the Seawolf, built by General Dynamics Corp. "Counting on the Democrats for a military procurement in this polarized political world is dangerous."

The defense budget authorization bill being debated this week calls for

a \$267.3 billion military budget, \$9.7 billion more than the Pentagon budget requested by the White House.

Most of the increase is in military procurement and a 2.4 percent military pay raise. It also would cut funds from what Republicans consider nondefense areas, such as cleaning up toxic waste at military facilities, granting humanitarian assistance to foreign countries and developing commercial products based on military technologies.

"For the first time in a decade, the defense authorization bill says 'Stop!'" said Rep. Floyd Spence (R-S.C.), chairman of the House National Security Committee. "Stop the slide in defense spending. . . . Stop

the decline in our defense industrial base. Stop the erosion of service members' quality of life."

Spence's committee voted to cancel construction of the third \$2.4 billion Seawolf submarine, and it is likely that decision will be upheld by the House later this week because the House Rules Committee has essentially cut off amendments to that part of the bill.

In another development, the full House Appropriations Committee approved the first of 13 spending bills for fiscal 1996: \$11.2 billion for military construction. That's up more than \$2.5 billion from the current year and up \$500 million from Clinton's request.