

FRANK GAFFNEY JR.

# Snow jobs that try to blur CWC's effects

7  
8  
9  
10  
11  
12  
13  
14  
15  
16  
17  
18  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25  
26  
27  
28  
29  
30  
31  
32  
33  
34  
35  
36  
37  
38  
39  
40  
41  
42  
43  
44  
45  
46  
47  
48  
49  
50



Perhaps it is an omen. Last Friday, just as the Clinton administration was launching its final push to coerce the U.S. Senate into ratifying a defective Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) with a public relations extravaganza at the White House, that morning's Washington Post published a stunning bit of news:

Even as former Bush administration Secretary of State James Baker was warning of dire repercussions if America failed to approve the Convention he helped to negotiate, people all over town were reading that Russia was deliberately violating another chemical weapons accord for which he was directly responsible. Under the U.S.-Russian Bilateral Destruction Agreement (BDA) first outlined in Wyoming in 1989 by Mr. Baker and then-Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze, the Russians were not supposed to be

**The Clinton administration's real concern is that this arms control house-of-cards may collapse if the United States does not ratify the treaty.**

producing any more chemical weapons. But, The Post reported that Jane's Land-Based Air Defense 1997-98 — a highly respected London-based defense publication — confirmed that the Russians have recently developed three, extremely lethal nerve agents.

What is more, according to Jane's, these weapons "could be made without using any of the precursor chemicals which are banned under the 1993 Chemical Weapons Convention." In other words, the Russians are not only cheating on a deal they struck with Secretary Baker personally; they are doing so with a view to systematically violating his beloved, multilaterally negotiated CWC.

Unfortunately, Mr. Baker was not the only luminary participating in the White House fandango for the CWC whose rhetoric seemed disconnected from reality. Alas, not a few of them were Republicans, notably Defense Secretary William Cohen, former Joint Chiefs Chairman Gen. Colin Powell, and former National Security Adviser Brent Scowcroft.

Compared to President Clinton's performance on this occasion, however, these gentlemen appeared more deluded than disingenuous. By contrast, Mr. Clinton persisted on this issue after issue in grossly overselling the benefits of this Convention, misrepresenting its terms and/or understating its costs. Consider the following:

• The president declared that by ratifying the CWC, the United States has "an opportunity now to forge a widening international commitment to banish poison gas from the Earth in the 21st Century." This is the sort of wish-masquerading-as-fact that has been much in evidence in presidential statements to the effect that "there are no Russian missiles pointed at our children."

The truth — as even more-honest CWC advocates acknowledge — is that not a single country of concern, or for that matter no sub-national terrorist group, that wishes to maintain a covert chemical weapons program will be prevented from doing so by this treaty. Neither are they likely to be caught at it if they do. And even if they are, there is a negligible chance the international community will be willing to punish them for doing so. This is hardly the stuff of which effective banishment is made.

• The president claimed that: "The Convention requires other nations to follow our lead, to eliminate their arsenals of poison gas and to give up developing, producing and acquiring such weapons in the future." There is clearly no such requirement on the rogue states that decline to participate in this treaty (e.g., Iraq, Syria, Libya, Sudan and North Korea).

What is more, the Convention's Articles X and XI may well accelerate the proliferation of chemical weapon technology. This is because these provisions obligate parties to

"facilitate the fullest possible" transfers of technology directly relevant to the manufacture of chemical weapons and those used to defend against chemical attack — a highly desirable capability for people interested in waging chemical wars.

• President Clinton repeated a grievous misrepresentation featured in his State of the Union address: On the South Lawn he declared, that "by ratifying the Chemical Weapons Convention... we can help shield our soldiers from one of the battlefield's deadliest killers." As noted above, the CWC may actually make our soldiers more vulnerable to one of the battlefield's deadliest killers — not least as a result of the insights shared defensive technology will afford potential adversaries about how to reverse-engineer Western protective equipment, the better to exploit its vulnerabilities.

• President Clinton shamelessly claimed that "We can give our children something our parents and grandparents never had — broad protection against the threat of chemical attack." Just how irresponsible this statement is can be seen from a cover article published last month by Washington City Paper. The report disclosed that the people of the D.C. area and, indeed, the rest of the nation are sitting ducks for chemical attacks. This problem, which arises from a systematic failure to apply resources to civil defense that are even remotely commensurate with the danger, will only grow as people like the president compound the CWC's placebo effect of this treaty by exaggerating its benefits.

• While the president proclaimed that ratifying the CWC will "bolster our leadership in the fight against terrorism," the reality is that this treaty may actually facilitate terrorism. This could come about as a result not only of the dispersion of chemical warfare relevant technology and the placebo effect but also by dint of the sensitive information the Convention expects the United States to share with foreign nationals. At least some of these folks will be working for potentially hostile intelligence services — including those of states, like Iran, known to sponsor terrorism. Compromising what U.S. intelligence knows about international terrorists and their sponsors will only intensify the danger posed by such actors.

• The president further claimed that "America needs to ratify the Chemical Weapons Convention and we must do it before it takes effect on April 29." While the treaty will enter into force on that date, with or without the U.S. as a party, the dire consequences that are predicted if America is not in are being wildly exaggerated. Anytime the United States joins, the 25 percent of the tab that it is supposed to pick up will give Washington considerable influence in the new U.N. bureaucracy set up to implement the CWC.

The Clinton administration's real — but largely unacknowledged concern — is that this arms control house-of-cards may collapse if the United States does not ratify the treaty. After all, in its absence, not one party to the Convention is likely to be an acknowledged chemical weapons state. The unfunded costs, combined with the inability to inspect American companies while possibly exposing their own to undesired inspections, will almost certainly prompt most parties to think better of the whole idea.

Fortunately, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee today will begin taking testimony designed to establish precisely where the truths lie on the Chemical Weapons Convention. The committee's hearings will begin with a historic first: Three former defense secretaries — James Schlesinger, Donald Rumsfeld and Caspar Weinberger — will testify against a signed arms control agreement. It can only be hoped that the Senate will be guided by the sober counsel of these distinguished public servants rather than by those who seek to substitute misleading razzle-dazzle for real debate over the CWC.

Frank J. Gaffney Jr. is the director of the Center for Security Policy and a columnist for The Washington Times.

There is a distinct possibility that the Republican-led Senate will cast some of the most important votes of the 105th Congress over the next two weeks.

Depending on the outcome, these votes may profoundly — and adversely — affect our nation's security, our businesses' competitiveness, the U.S. embargoes on Cuba and Iran and American constitutional rights. Irrespective of the outcome, however, they will be defining moments for the Republican Party.

The votes are expected to occur in connection with a Republican alternative to the increasingly controversial Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) and on the resolution of ratification for the treaty itself. The most interesting aspect of this legislative drama arises from the fact that President Clinton is counting on a gaggle of primarily Bush administration officials to deliver the Republican senators needed to get the treaty ratified before April 29.

On the other side are the Reaganites and some of the more robust members of the Bush administration, notably Cabinet officers Richard Cheney and Jack Kemp. Last week, this team argued powerfully against ratification of the CWC, and for an alternative offered by Sen. Jon Kyl on behalf of virtually the entire Senate Republican leadership. This alternative is known as the "Chemical and Biological Weapons Threat Reduction Act of 1997." It affords the Congress an opportunity to do something useful — through a unilateral and enforceable U.S. statute — to deal with the growing threat posed by such weapons at home and abroad, without embracing the false

promise and immense costs of the Chemical Weapons Convention.

The quality of the opposition to this treaty is unprecedented. For example, never before have four former defense secretaries testified against a signed arms control agreement as James Schlesinger, Donald Rumsfeld, Caspar Weinberger and (in written form) Dick Cheney did last week. These sober, internationally minded Republicans of the Reagan School were joined in their opposition to the CWC before the Foreign Relations Committee by four other, estimable Reagan officials: U.N. Ambassador Jeane Kirkpatrick, Arms Control and Disarmament Agency Director Fred Ikle and top Defense Department officials Richard Perle and Douglas Feith.

Meanwhile, Mr. Cheney's Bush administration colleagues — notably, James Baker, Brent Scowcroft and Colin Powell — have the unenviable task of legitimating the likes of John Holum, the current occupant of Mr. Ikle's post at ACDA and a longtime aide to George McGovern, who has taken in these pages to dismissing as "rubbish" the sorts of concerns expressed by such credible Republican witnesses.

Last Thursday, Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott met with some 40 leading conservative activists representing a wide range of interests and millions of grass-roots constituents. They urged him to resist the Clinton-Bush gang's demands for hasty and favorable action on the Chemical Weapons Convention.

## Chemical weapons moment of truth

him with a national poll taken by Frank Luntz's organization that showed Americans — and most especially Republicans — overwhelmingly opposed to a treaty with the flaws inherent in the CWC.

If Mr. Lott nonetheless accedes to the proponents' blackmail (the Democrats have threatened to prevent the Senate from doing any business if the treaty is not acted on before April 29), his Republican colleagues will shortly be forced to choose. It is important, however, to understand what the choice is about.

It is not, of course, a choice between being in favor of poison gas or opposed to it. One can safely stipulate that no one in this debate is in favor of chemical warfare. The disagreement is over whether the Chemical Weapons Convention will reduce the danger posed by such weapons, or increase it.

Neither will Senate Republicans be choosing, as President Clinton contends, between internationalism and U.S. leadership on the one hand or isolationism and relegating our nation to pariah status on the other. It is — to use Jim Baker's term — "outrageous" to suggest that the Reaganites would advocate policies that would diminish American power and equate the United States with Libya.

Republicans in the Senate will instead be deciding whether to stick with President Reagan's rejection of unverifiable, unenforceable and ultimately ineffectual international norms or embrace them as the Clinton-Bush team is wont to do. It is a decision that transcends the immediate issue of this defective Chemical Weapons Convention. The answer will help determine the fate of even more loopy arms control ideas (for example, bans on land mines, fissile materials and, yes, even nuclear weapons) and the rest of the Clinton administration's "global agenda" (including multilateral agreements to dictate climate control, family planning, the rights of women and children, international taxes to support U.N. operations, patent rights, etc.)

No less importantly, it will help establish the character of the Republican Party as it prepares for the next national election cycle. Will it present itself as virtually indistinguishable from the Clinton-Gore administration on security policy matters? Or will it, once again, show itself to be the party of hard-nosed realists in the Reagan tradition, committed to this country's exceptionalism and willing to stand alone, if necessary, to protect this nation's interests and essential character? With the help of radio advertisements being aired by Steve Forbes around the country, the choice for forward-looking Republicans should clearly be to vote for the Kyl bill and against the irreparable Chemical Weapons Convention.



Jon Kyl