

SENT TO PRESIDENT

Yesterday, the Senate adopted an amendment to the Authorization Bill in connection with the FY 77 budget -- an amendment which, in effect, would defer decision on production of the B-1 bomber until February, 1977.

That was a bad decision. Let me tell you why.

First, a few words about the role of the manned bomber in the U.S. strategic nuclear force structure. You know we have a "Triad" of forces -- landbased ICBMs, submarine launched ballistic missiles, and manned bomb-and-missile-carrying aircraft. Together, the elements of the Triad provide the diversity, flexibility, and survivability which guarantee that the strategic balance will remain balanced ... that no power on earth will be able to conceive of getting away with a nuclear attack on us or our allies.

Of these elements, the bomber is our only manned system -- it is discriminating in its attack, recallable, reusable, and flexible. It carries 55% of the total megatonnage of our strategic force. As our present force of B-52s ages, and these fine aircraft are aging, it is clear that they will require replacement in the period ahead. We plan to modify and modernize the B-52s every way we can, to get our money's worth. But we will have to initiate an orderly replacement program.

I am so certain of the need for a manned bomber that I do not believe the American people would permit a mistake to be made in the strategic nuclear area, an area of such overwhelming importance to our future strength.



SEC DEF HAS SEEN
DONALD RUMSFELD
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I am certain that the American people will feel as I that on such a vital vote almost one-fifth of the Senate should not have been absent. The House defeated a similar amendment on April 8 by 210-177. I am hopeful that the House Senate Conference on this bill will support the House position.

Supporters of the amendment argue that more information and test data are needed before a production decision can be made on the B-1. B-1 tests are continuing in a satisfactory manner. 90% of the testing has been completed. By any measure, pre-production testing of the B-1 exceeds that of any military aircraft in history. Because of such successful tests in the past, the B-1 has proceeded in research and development. It has been examined by 3 Presidents, seven Secretaries of Defense and the Congress each year since 1970.

We are certain enough of our progress to have budgeted money for B-1 production in the fiscal year which begins October first. That money will be spent when, and if, the remaining test data justifies production ... something we expect to know late this fall. To build in a mandatory delay to this orderly process by law can only result in wasted time and increased costs.

My determination that B-1 production is in the national interest is as clear as it can be right now.



Yesterday the Senate adopted an amendment which would defer the production decision on the B-1 bomber until February 1977. There is no substantive reason to mandate a delay in the B-1 program. This vote appears to be an effort to politicize consideration of the Defense Budget by delaying the B-1 decision until after the Presidential election. Our national security is too important to fall victim to politics.

I was disappointed by this action but I am not discouraged. I am confident that the American people will not allow Congress to make a misjudgment relating to something as important as our strategic nuclear balance. I am hopeful that the House/Senate Conference on the Authorization Bill will support money for the B-1 bomber.

