

WHY IS THE STATE DEPARTMENT IGNORING THE LOWERY AMENDMENT?

The State Department curiously is passing up an opportunity to reduce the federal deficit and simultaneously eliminate a jarring inconsistency in American foreign policy. The Department is refusing to enforce a new amendment to Public Law 99-190, drafted last year by Representative Bill Lowery, a California Republican. Lowery attached his amendment to House Joint Resolution 465 and it was included in the Continuing Resolution passed by the House and Senate and signed by the President (Sec. 528, H.J. Res. 465). The Lowery Amendment, now the law of the land, empowers the President, at his discretion, to eliminate U.S. contributions to those United Nations programs conducted in communist countries cited in section 620(f) of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, which includes most Soviet bloc states.

There is a powerful precedent for the Lowery Amendment. The 1961 Foreign Assistance Act prohibits the U.S. from giving direct bilateral assistance to the Eastern European Soviet satellites and other communist countries on the grounds that such aid would be used to consolidate the grip of totalitarian regimes. A quarter-century and seven presidents after the enactment of this legislation, it has been waived formally in the case of Yugoslavia. Informally, however, the unmistakable intent of the measure has been violated by the hundreds of millions of U.S. tax dollars which the U.N. has funneled to North Korea, Bulgaria, Cuba, and other communist states, as well as to those controlled by Moscow, such as Afghanistan.

Research conducted for Lowery by Marjorie Browne of the Congressional Research Service revealed that in 1984 alone, nine U.N. bodies and programs provided almost \$250 million in various forms of assistance to communist countries. According to the CRS, the U.S. share of this assistance exceeds \$64 million. Some of this money may be spent on worthy programs, such as those administered by the World Food Program and UNICEF. Yet even here, the Administration should make sure that U.S. contributions are not being diverted to other purposes, a likelihood given the character of the recipient governments.

Other U.N. programs in communist countries, however, clearly fall under the letter and spirit of the Lowery Amendment. Example: the United Nations Development Program provided \$38 million in 1984 to communist countries for development activities. Of this, the U.S. contributed \$8.9 million. Among the UNDP programs, according to the 1984 UNDP "Compendium of Approved Projects" (total cost estimated through 1984) were:

North Korea: "Establishment of a Pilot Plant and Training Centre for Bipolar Digital Integrated Circuits"--\$5,977,300

Bulgaria: "Consolidation of the Bulgarian Ship Hydrodynamics Centre"--\$545,000

Albania: "Development of Telecommunications Network"--\$2,460,000

Cuba: "Introduction of Nuclear Techniques to the National Economy"--\$1,578,815

China (PRC): "Information Processing and Training Centre for Development and Economic Cooperation"--\$6,718,000

Afghanistan: "Civil Aviation Fellowships"--\$1,710,982

Vietnam: "Building Sites Surveying and Investigations"--\$10,658,743.

Although the State Department has proposed reducing the FY 1987 U.S. contribution to UNDP, the Department should advise the President to invoke the Lowery Amendment and terminate all such technical assistance programs to communist countries. Warns one former senior official of the U.S. Mission to the U.N.: "It's impossible for us to be sure that our contributions do not go to support these programs."

Since funding for almost all of the U.N. agencies which provide assistance to communist countries is entirely voluntary, each U.N. member-state contributes what it wishes. Selective reductions in U.S. contributions, therefore, are entirely permitted by the U.N. Charter, and would not affect such primary U.N. bodies as the Secretariat, General Assembly or Security Council.

At a time when virtually every federal agency and program faces budget cuts under the Gramm-Rudman-Hollings deficit act, enforcing the Lowery Amendment is simply a matter of common sense: the Reagan Administration should cut U.S. contributions to the U.N. bodies which provide assistance to communist regimes whose policies and actions are fundamentally antagonistic not only to the United States, but to the ideals of the United Nations.

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For further information:

Roger A. Brooks and Juliana Geran Pilon, "The U.N. is Not Exempt From Budget Belt-Tightening," Heritage Foundation Background No. 492, February 28, 1986.
Juliana Geran Pilon, "The Many Ways the U.N. Serves the U.S.S.R.," Heritage Foundation Background No. 349, April 3, 1984.