

## COLUMNISTS

## Country still pursues arms, not life

The good news is that military spending is down. Ninety nations have reduced their forces since 1990.

The bad news is that, despite procurement cuts and base closings, U.S. military spending (which accounts for a third of the world outlays) stands at about 7 percent of the gross domestic product.

There is worse news. The U.S. arms industry is offsetting procurement cuts in the armed forces by aggressive marketing of high-tech weaponry to foreign customers. The departments of commerce, state and defense spend about \$2.6 billion a year subsidizing these foreign arms transfers — in addition to the foreign military aid — by loaning equipment and transporting it to arms bazaars, by staffing trade missions, and through loan guarantees.

The military services themselves also compete vigorously in the weapons market, selling used and unneeded equipment, because income from these sales is off-budget and allows some non-Congressionally-approved purchases. Besides all this, the Pentagon receives a 3 percent cut on every foreign arms sale it negotiates on behalf of the manufacturers.

This military-industrial complex is now orchestrating huge lobbying efforts to market a new level of weapons tech-



BY MARY ANN MCGIVERN, SL

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nology throughout Latin America. Opponents object to these sales because of the human rights violations of some of the would-be purchasers and because introducing new military equipment will heighten regional arms races.

The arms dealers say that if we don't sell weapons, others will. They have distorted the export figures to South America, saying that they "lost" \$4 billion in potential sales to France. But the majority of the French sales were 15 years ago. According to the U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency's (ACDA) "World Military Expenditures and Arms Transfers 1995," France actually sold only 30 combat aircraft to Latin America between 1983 and 1994 while the United States sold 196.

The above is all bad news, but the worst news is that U.S. military spending

will probably increase significantly in the new millennium. Congress has made a commitment to spend nearly a trillion dollars building a new joint-force strike fighter because, as one Air Force officer said off the record to corporate procurement officers at a meeting in 1993, "It would be tragic for our children to defend this country in fighter planes designed in the '70s."

Edward Teller is leading the renewed call for a "Star Wars" system, this time to protect us from asteroids. Smarter landmines that can be seeded from the air and monitored by satellite are on the drawing boards. The Defense Mapping Agency continues, even while layoffs are in progress, to translate the entire surface of the world into numbers at points probably 10 feet apart. This digitalization process means DMA is entering altitude, average daily temperatures, and numerical codes for buildings, trees and water, as well as latitude and longitude, into a computer. The purpose is to provide maps that smart bombs and missile guidance systems can read. That new capacity will further tempt us to resolve international disputes by force, not diplomacy.

The generals and industrial moguls are fond of telling us that it is a dangerous world out there. But many of the dangers were made in the United States.

U.S. soldiers in Panama, Iraq, Somalia, Haiti and Bosnia faced adversaries who had received either U.S. weaponry, U.S. military technology, or military training in the period leading up to the conflict. Our landmines are still crippling children in Cambodia. Our fighter planes have armed all sides in the Middle East. Indeed, we need a new fighter airplane because we've released much of our current technology to allies that the State Department term unstable.

I believe our national choices for violent death at conception, when gravely ill and as the final punishment are all linked to our potentially tragic delusion that we can impose a global pax Americana by force. "Where our treasure is, there is our heart," and our treasure most certainly is spent on tools for killing. We won't be able to choose life as a nation until we reduce our military spending.

There's nothing brave about an automated air war and nothing free in a nation bound by the chains of violence. Our nation's birthday is a day to celebrate our vision and pray for the courage to seek peace and justice.

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Sister McGivern is executive director of the St. Louis Economic Conversion Project based in St. Louis, Mo.

## Catholic senators skirt moral duty

On May 20, the U.S. Senate voted 64-36 to ban partial-birth abortions in the United States. The vote was three short of being veto-proof. Ten Catholics voted against the ban: Sue Collins, Christopher Dodd, Richard Durbin, Tom Harkin, Edward Kennedy, John Kerry, Barbara Mikulski, Carol Moseley-Braun, Patty Murray, Jack Reed. The margin of safety for partial-birth abortion was provided by Catholic legislators.

What did these men and women think they were doing? Sen. Patty Murray of Washington state doesn't even know the constitutional law involved. In the floor debate she claimed that it was "illegal" in the United States for a "healthy woman" to "terminate a healthy pregnancy" post-viability "simply because she no longer wants to be a mother."

As a matter of law, this is simply false. As a matter of moral responsibility, the question is whether Sen. Murray is blissfully ignorant or merely mendacious about American abortion law since *Roe vs. Wade* and *Doe vs. Bolton*.

The American Medical Association stated before the recent Senate debate that there was no medical reason, ever, to employ this gruesome procedure, in which a child is forcibly extracted, feet-first, from its mother's womb, up to the neck — and then killed by having its brains auctioned out. Why would anyone



BY GEORGE WEIGEL

the  
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defend such barbarism? What does it say about our national political culture, that 36 United States senators can defend this grotesque practice and not be subject to massive public condemnation?

In the order of ideas, the three most likely suspects for bringing us this sorry state of affairs are individualism, the sexual revolution and gender feminism. The sexual revolution's radical detachment of the procreative from the unitive dimension of human sexuality intensified, even as it fed upon, one of the most powerful dynamics of baby-boomer culture: the devolution of liberty into license.

Gender feminism's insistence that nature has nothing to do with personhood further confused the argument, to the point where it can now be argued on the floor of the United States Senate (once known as the "world's greatest delibera-

tive body") that the legal protection of what normal people recognize as infanticide is all that stands between women and the loss of their democratic liberties.

To give the devil her due, there is a certain grim logic to the feminist case. Pro-abortion activists have always recognized (but have rarely admitted) that theirs is the true seamless garment, and that one good tug on a loose thread in the fabric of abortion-on-demand threatens to unravel the whole business.

That is why fanatics like Kate Michelman of the National Abortion and Reproductive Rights Action League fight tooth-and-nail to maintain the current American abortion regime, the most permissive in the entire democratic world. And that, I suspect, is the real reason why senators like Barbara Mikulski, who are intelligent enough to follow a logical trail, are prepared to defy the pope, the bishops and overwhelming public opinion in order to defend the indefensible.

I am no canon lawyer, so I do not know whether the Catholic senators who voted in favor of partial-birth abortion have thereby incurred automatic excommunication for materially assisting in abortion. I do know that they have violated the "grave and clear obligation to oppose" legalized abortion that John Paul II identified in the encyclical "The

Gospel of Life" ("Evangelium Vitae") (#73). Will their bishops be bringing the incongruity of their position to their attention? Will their bishops bring it to the attention of the voters?

Catholic legislators who vote to defend crimes such as partial-birth abortion could learn something from Poland's Constitutional Tribunal, the equivalent of our Supreme Court. On May 28, the Constitutional Tribunal struck down Poland's permissive abortion law, a major plank in the platform of the current government, which is primarily formed by ex-communists.

But it was the Constitutional Tribunal's reasoning that I would commend to pro-choice Catholic legislators: "The first article of our constitution names Poland as a democratic state based on the rule of law. The highest value in a democracy is human life, which must be protected from its start to the end."

In Poland, the world's most intensely Catholic country, the constitutional court made a genuinely public argument about the inalienability of the right to life. Thomas Jefferson and Susan B. Anthony would have agreed. Why don't Patty Murray and Barbara Mikulski?

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George Weigel is a senior fellow of the Ethics and Public Policy Center in Washington, D.C.

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