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BUREAUCRATIC POLITICS AND THE SILVER BULLET

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BUREAUCRATIC POLITICS AND THE SILVER BULLET

The FY96 National Defense Appropriations Act recently passed by Congress contains \$493 million in long-lead funding for additional B-2s that the Department of Defense did not request. This essay investigates the multiple strands underlying the B-2 funding decision, including conflicting messages sent by various Air Force sources, fiscal concerns that drove the position of the Office of the Secretary of Defense, and the impact of selected influences on Congress. It concludes the decision to provide additional funds was a compromise driven by bureaucratic politics that failed to determine how national security is enhanced by continuing the B-2 program past its previous mandate of 20 aircraft

B-2 program history

At the beginning of the last decade of the Cold War, the Air Force planned to procure 132 B-2s for \$72 billion. With its next-generation stealth technology, the B-2 was designed to penetrate the Soviet Union's increasingly lethal air defenses, ensuring the viability of the bomber leg of the nuclear triad well into the 21st Century. The end of the Cold War and concomitant pressure to decrease defense spending prompted the DoD to reduce the B-2 buy to 75 aircraft early in 1990. To help forestall additional cuts, the Air Force published a white paper in 1992 that emphasized the B-2's potential in conventional conflicts. Despite this mission reorientation, DoD eventually capped procurement at 20 aircraft. As the end of B-2 production approached, Congress provided \$125 million in the FY95 defense budget to preserve the bomber industrial base and directed DoD to review future bomber requirements. The conclusions of the DoD study and a concurrent analysis by the Commission on Roles and Missions set the stage for the 1995 debate over B-2 funding.

The Air Force Strand

No additional B-2s?

Official and unofficial Air Force sources sent conflicting messages concerning the B-2 to Congress over the past year. The official position of the Air Force is that while it might like additional B-2s, it cannot afford them.¹ This fails to fully clarify if the Air Force has a *requirement* for additional B-2s. In fact, the official

¹ In his testimony to the Senate Appropriations Committee, the Air Force Chief of Staff General Ronald R. Fogleman stated "the Air Force does not plan to procure more than the 20 B-2s already purchased. The total funding required for 20 more B-2s is

Air Force position is the product of a bureaucratic compromise that seeks to preserve funding for higher priority programs and avoid antagonizing B-2 supporters in Congress

Following the November 1994 election of a Republican majority to Congress, the Air Force believed it could reasonably anticipate an increase in defense spending. To prepare for the 1995 round of budget hearings, senior Air Force leaders agreed on a prioritized list of applications in case Congress asked what they would do with more funding. They considered and rejected buying additional B-2s for several reasons. First, the Air Force had higher priority programs for which increased funding could make a significant difference.² Second, they feared Congress would demand Air Force budget offsets in return for more B-2s. Twenty B-2s would cost \$15.8 billion to acquire and \$25.8 billion to operate over a 30 year life cycle.³ If Congress required the Air Force to fund part of this out of its own TOA, other major weapons systems would suffer. Senior Air Force leaders were particularly concerned Congress would look to the controversial F-22 as a possible source of funds. Previous cuts had already stretched the F-22 program to the breaking point and increased costs to about \$75 million per aircraft. Additional cuts could drive unit costs above what Congress could reasonably support, leading to a smaller buy or even program cancellation. In other words, the F-22 would be in danger of becoming another "silver bullet" like the B-2.

Faced with these concerns, there was little support for additional B-2s at the highest levels of the Air Force. However, the Air Force did not want to upset members of Congress who supported the B-2, especially with increased funding for other programs in the offing. Therefore, the official Air Force position became "might like, but can't afford." This drew the line on providing offsetting TOA, preserved Air Force solidarity with an OSD fighting for the President's budget, and avoided antagonizing B-2 supporters in Congress who

realistically beyond current Air Force resources. The Air Force is awaiting the results of the Heavy Bomber Study. Should the study identify deficiencies in the bomber force, we will examine a range of potential options for adding affordable additional capability. Since the bomber study results are unknown at this time, it is not possible to specify how we might fund a continuation of the B-2 production program. Since OSD completed its Heavy Bomber Force Study, General Fogleman has stated that while the Air Force might like additional B-2s, it can't afford them. From the author's unpublished notes of the hearing, 18 May 1995.

² Restoring \$200 million to the F-22 program cut by OSD earlier in the budget cycle would decrease program costs by about \$800 million later in the FYDP. Congress restored the \$200 million in the FY96 Defense Appropriations Act.

³ From an unpublished Air Force briefing titled "Cost Estimate for More B-2s." The briefing formed the basis for costs cited to Congress.

could influence other programs. The Air Force's intent was further obscured by apparently conflicting messages sent to Congress by other, less constrained sources.

More B-2s?

The message Air Force B-2 proponents sent Congress in 1995 is that the Nation needs more B-2s. For example, General John M. Loh, Commander of the Air Combat Command, strongly supported a larger bomber force during his 16 April testimony to the House National Security Committee (HNSC) Subcommittee on Military Procurement. Prior to the hearing, congressional staffers notified Air Force Chief of Staff General Ronald R. Fogleman and General Loh they would ask one or the other to testify. As Chief of Staff, General Fogleman supported the President's budget, which did not request additional B-2 funding. General Loh was known for advocating a larger bomber force, and was scheduled to retire within a few months. The Subcommittee chose General Loh. During the hearing, General Loh stated the Nation needs about 180 operational bombers for a two major regional contingency (MRC) strategy as well as a capacity to produce bombers in the future. This force of 180 operational bombers did not include aircraft needed for backup inventory, attrition reserves, and flight test.⁴ In other words, General Loh was saying DoD's plan to maintain 181 bombers was *insufficient* for a two-MRC strategy. When asked by Representative Norm Dicks (D-WA) if he thought the Air Force needed twenty additional B-2s, General Loh answered "the decision to go to 20 is not made on the basis of what is the right number. It was made on the basis of what is the minimum required to provide an operational capability. So we don't know what the right number is. We know what the minimum number is. The minimum number is 20."⁵ Representative Dicks, a B-2 supporter, could not have hoped for a better answer.

By advocating a larger bomber force and implicitly supporting the acquisition of more B-2s, General Loh was acting out of conviction that B-2s are a cost-effective capability, despite their large sticker price.

⁴ From unpublished notes of the 6 April, 1995 hearing of the HNSC Subcommittee on Military Procurement. For an operational force of 180 bombers, this "tail" could add up to at least twenty additional aircraft. General Loh also claimed the BUR supported his position. He was wrong, the BUR determined the *entire* bomber force, including the tail cited by General Loh, should number about 184. This author was responsible for building the BUR bomber numbers that OSD eventually accepted.

⁵ Ibid.

During the 16 April hearing, he stated “you need to compare the cost of doing it with bombers versus the cost of doing it with other systems . . . we are beginning to realize that bombers are a pretty efficient way of getting things done ”⁶ This sentiment was echoed in a letter sent to House Appropriations Committee Chairman Robert L. Livingston (R-LA) by General (ret) Charles A. Horner. General Horner, architect of the Desert Storm air campaign, wrote. “Because the B-2 can safely release its weapons over the target, its munitions don’t need the guidance and propulsion system used by costly standoff weapons . . . cost of munitions is important. In fact, during the Gulf War, we were told to quit using the Tomahawk standoff missile because it was too expensive -- over a million dollars a shot.” General Horner concluded “by any measure 20 B-2s are not enough . . . a force of 40 or more B-2s is a reasonable estimate ”⁷

While these disparate messages may have obscured the Air Force’s intent, they also reduced its exposure to criticism. Through its official position, the Air Force supported the President’s budget and avoided antagonizing powerful members of Congress who wanted more B-2s. Other plausibly deniable statements advocated buying more B-2s, but not at the expense of higher priority programs. The Air Force message, official and deniable, allowed each side of the debate in Congress to claim support for their position.

The OSD Strand

The OSD agenda

OSD’s motivation to hold the line on additional B-2s is primarily fiscal in nature. Following the election of President Clinton, newly appointed Secretary of Defense Les Aspin instigated a Bottom-Up Review (BUR) to determine an appropriate force structure and military strategy for the post-Cold War world. Another reason for the Review was to achieve savings through force reductions and eliminating overlapping functions. The BUR determined a smaller force of “up to 184 bombers,” including twenty B-2s, was sufficient for a two nearly-simultaneous MRC strategy.⁸ DoD would enhance the capabilities of the smaller force by modifying systems and procuring advanced conventional munitions. Secretary Aspin codified the BUR’s results through

⁶ Ibid. Northrup-Grumman offered the Air Force 20 additional B-2s for about \$570 million each.

⁷ Congressional Record, 7 September 1995 vol. 141, no. 138 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1995) H8614.

⁸ Secretary of Defense Les Aspin, Report on the Bottom-Up Review (Washington, D.C.: Office of the Secretary of Defense, October 1993), 28.

planning guidance that capped the B-2 force at twenty aircraft. Since then, OSD has held the line on the BUR. To do otherwise for the B-2 would open the door to requests from other Services, an unacceptable outcome in a time of austere defense budgets.

Let's study the issue . . .

In 1994, members of both houses of Congress declared the BUR did not provide enough bombers for a two MRC strategy. To clarify the issue, Congress directed the Secretary of Defense to conduct another study on bomber forces and related industrial base capabilities.⁹ Congress also tasked the DoD Commission on Roles and Mission (CORM) to address the B-2's critical capabilities and tradeoffs with other forces. These studies should have provided Congress with a fairly concise picture of the Nation's bomber requirements. They did not. In fact, the CORM study appeared to impeach OSD's conclusions, providing additional ammunition for B-2 advocates in Congress. The studies *were* successful in one respect: they supported the agendas of the individuals tasked with performing them.

The OSD Heavy Bomber Force Study

Secretary of Defense William J. Perry tasked Dr. Paul G. Kaminski, USD (Acquisition and Technology) to chair the executive committee overseeing the OSD Heavy Bomber Force Study. EXCOM members included John Hamre, USD (Comptroller), Dr. Edward Warner, ASD (Strategy and Requirements), William Lynn, Director of Program Analysis & Evaluation, and representatives from the Joint Staff, Army, Navy, and Air Force.¹⁰ Dr. Kaminski released part one of the study on 3 May 1995. It concluded the planned bomber force of 66 B-52s, 95 B-1s, and 20 B-2s "Can meet the national security requirements of two nearly simultaneous major regional contingencies" and "additional quantities of accurate guided munitions [are] more cost effective than procuring 20 additional B-2s."¹¹ Part two of the study, released in September 1995, determined there were no compelling reasons to preserve the bomber industrial base, since U.S. commercial

⁹ National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 1995, P.L. 103-337, sec. 133 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 5 October 1994), 108 Stat. 2687. Congress also authorized \$125 million to conduct the study and preserve core bomber industrial base capabilities. The \$125 million could not be used as long-lead funding for additional B-2s.

¹⁰ Hamre, Warner, and Lynn played key roles during the Bottom-Up Review. The Institute for Defense Analyses performed the actual analytical work for the Heavy Bomber Force Study.

¹¹ Dr. Paul G. Kaminski, from a May 1995 briefing titled "Heavy Bomber Force Study," chart 21.

aircraft manufacturing capabilities would provide an adequate basis for future bomber production. DoD and industry would continue to investigate unique technologies through other development efforts, including the F-22 program.¹² The Heavy Bomber Force Study essentially validated the BUR's findings. As a result, OSD informed Congress it would not submit a change to the President's budget.

Other defense-related organizations were not as sure of the study's findings as OSD. The day Dr Kaminski briefed part one of the study to the HNSC Subcommittee on Appropriations, the Center for Security Policy published a decision brief that observed "the utility of this analysis as a guide for congressional deliberations has been greatly diminished, thanks to the debatable assumptions it was apparently directed to use by the Pentagon. . . the United States urgently requires a larger, more flexible and more stealthy manned bomber force than even the Bottom-Up Review envisioned."¹³ The study completed by the DoD Commission on Roles and Missions (CORM) resulted in an even more damning critique.

The CORM study

Members of the CORM staff reviewed 25 previous studies and performed additional analyses of bomber and complementary force capabilities. The CORM's findings, distributed to Congress, concluded "stopping production of the B-2 limits America's future ability to project influence around the world," "B-2s are a cost-effective way to enhance our future national security needs," and "a total force of 40 to 60 B-2s facilitate a two-MRC strategy and meet the demands of the current and emerging security environment."¹⁴ The CORM staff also determined arming older bombers with standoff weapons to achieve a B-2-equivalent strike capability early in a conflict was prohibitively expensive. In other words, the CORM study countered OSD's findings point by point.

¹² The Analytic Science Corporation, "Final Report, Heavy Bomber Industrial Capabilities Study," 15 September 1995.

¹³ The Center for Security Policy, "Garbage In, Garbage Out: Unwarranted Assumptions Skew I.D.A. Study's Findings. U.S. Still Needs More Bombers" (Washington, D.C. 17 May 1995), 1-3. OSD's study failed to consider tradeoffs between carrier-based fighters versus B-2s, and assumed shorter-range fighters would be capable of rapidly deploying to a distant conflict, which favors a smaller bomber force.

¹⁴ DoD Commission on Roles and Missions, "Future Bomber Force" (Washington, D.C. May 1995), 20-22. The report was distributed to Congress but never officially published.

The bureaucratic politics model emphasizes the value of understanding the agenda of an organization responsible for conducting a study or an analysis. The individual who directed the CORM bomber study and wrote the final report was an Air Force colonel assigned to the CORM staff. This colonel was previously on the personal staff of Secretary of the Air Force Donald B. Rice, who led the B-2 effort during his term of office.¹⁵ The colonel was also a passionate critic of carrier aviation, and had conducted several studies earlier in his career that demonstrated the value of bombers over carriers in conventional conflicts. Not surprisingly, the CORM report included a cost analysis of carrier battlegroups, implying Congress could apply the savings from retiring several carriers to buying additional B-2s. In addition, the majority of the 25 studies selected for review by the CORM staff were authored by agencies sympathetic to heavy bombers, including RAND, Boeing, Rockwell Aerospace, and the Air Force Studies and Analysis Agency.¹⁶ The evidence suggests the agenda of the individual who directed the CORM bomber study influenced its conclusions.

Congress and the B-2

The players

Since DoD froze production at 20 aircraft, B-2 supporters in Congress have attempted to add funding for additional aircraft. Leading House proponents include the current Chairman of the HNSC Military Procurement Subcommittee Duncan Hunter (R-CA), House Majority Leader Dick Armey (R-Texas), Norman Dicks (D-WA), Jane Harman (D-CA), Jerry Lewis (D-CA), Howard P. McKeon (R-CA), and Ike Skelton (D-MO). An unlikely coalition that includes former Chairman of the House Armed Services Committee Ronald V. Dellums (D-CA), Chairman of the House Budget Committee John R. Kasich (R-OH), and David R. Obey (D-WI) has consistently opposed the B-2 program.¹⁷ The Senate has been more resistant to procuring additional B-2s than the House, with strong opposition coming from long-time incumbents John McCain (R-AZ), Edward M. Kennedy (D-MA), and William S. Cohen (D-ME).

¹⁵ Secretary Rice published the 1992 Air Force B-2 white paper mentioned in the introduction.

¹⁶ "Future Bomber Force." 23. Arguing carrier versus bomber tradeoffs has become a tradition between the Navy and the Air Force; both sides have provided Congress with "information" about the other's forces. For example, a Navy staffer sent a study titled "Mission Performance and Life-Cycle Cost of a Navy Aircraft Carrier and Airwing" to Representative Hunter in April 1995. The study concluded carrier air was significantly more cost-effective than B-2s.

¹⁷ Representatives Kasich and Dellums led the effort to pare the B-2 force down to 20 aircraft.

\$493 million . . .

With the election of a Republican majority to both houses of Congress, B-2 advocates saw another opportunity to revitalize the program. In May 1995, the HNSC added \$493 million to the House Defense Authorization Bill for long-lead funding for additional B-2s.¹⁸ The HAC followed suit by adding \$493 million for continuing production. On 13 June, an amendment sponsored by Representative Kasich to cut the B-2 funding increase from the House Defense Authorization Act was defeated in a floor vote by a margin of 203 to 219. The House defeated a similar amendment offered by Representatives Kasich, Dellums, and Obey during debate on the House Defense Appropriations Act, 211 to 214. While the Senate did not appropriate funds for additional B-2s, it did agree to the House initiative in conference. What actually drove the decision to increase appropriations for the B-2 program? The easy answer would be a Congress dominated by Republicans. However, the close votes on the Kasich amendments and diverse mix of B-2 advocates in Congress indicate something more than partisan politics was at work.

The impact of conflicting testimony and studies

Conflicting testimony and analyses allowed both sides of the B-2 question to cite support for their position. During the floor debate over the second Kasich Amendment, Representative Dicks referred to a letter sent to President Clinton by seven former Secretaries of Defense that concluded “stopping the B-2 at 20 was a serious mistake in judgment.”¹⁹ Representative Young supported Representative Dicks with a positive reference to General Horner’s letter that advocated buying more B-2s, Representative Ganske countered by saying “the results of the heavy bomber industrial capabilities study . . . contradict assertions that new B-2s are needed to keep a bomber industrial base alive.”²⁰ Representative Dicks then referred to two analyses cited by the CORM bomber study that concluded “somewhere between 40 and 60 B-2’s are what are required to give our Nation a deterrent force for the next 30 years.” Representative Obey responded “Mr. Chairman, the gentleman from Washington says that the studies show that we need to have 40 B-2 bombers rather than 20

¹⁸ The amount added was actually \$553 million; the \$60 million difference is due to the savings from production termination costs.

¹⁹ Congressional Record, 7 September 1995, H8610.

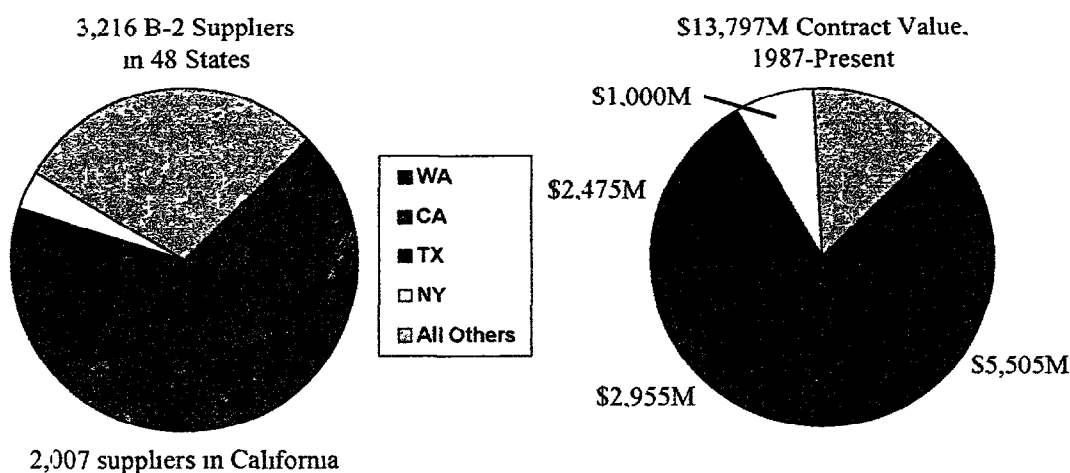
²⁰ Ibid. H8611.

That is not true. The major study done, the Kaminski study . . . indicated the best buy for the United States was not 40 B-2s, but 20.”²¹ Lacking perfect insight into the minds of our legislators, it is difficult to assess the exact impact of conflicting analyses, posture statements, and expert testimony on the House votes. As this debate indicates, they probably offset each other, reinforcing, instead of changing, established positions.

Jobs and dollars

During the 7 September debate, Representative Dixon declared “for those of us representing regions whose economies have been driven by the defense and aerospace industry, there are certainly other factors motivating our support for the B-2.”²² Representative Dixon was referring to B-2-related jobs and dollars in his district. Northrop-Grumman, B-2 prime contractor, heavily lobbied the House prior to the votes on the Kasich Amendments. A major tactic was giving each Representative B-2 supplier and contract information for their district. To support this effort, Northrop-Grumman built a comprehensive list of every subcontractor and supplier remotely connected with the B-2. The list included companies that supplied software, hydraulic pumps, radios, and even ink and aluminum ladders. It was a masterful job of accounting -- and lobbying

Figure 1: Northrop-Grumman B-2 Suppliers and Contract Data Provided to Congress²³



²¹ Ibid. H8618

²² Ibid. H8615

²³ Compiled from an unpublished Northrop-Grumman data base used to lobby Congress. It does not include amounts allocated to the prime contractor, or data for Alaska and Hawaii. The total B-2 program cost is \$38.3 billion for the first 20 aircraft.

Figure 1 shows the top four states that benefited from the B-2 program are Washington, California, Texas, and New York. Comparing the vote from the top four states against the votes of Representatives from the remaining states indicates jobs and dollars may have had an impact on Congress.

Figure 2: Voting Record for the 13 June Kasich Amendment²⁴

	Fund \$493M		Cut \$493M	
	Republicans	Democrats	Republicans	Democrats
Top Four States	80%	50%	20%	50%
Remaining States	61%	32%	39%	68%

Figure 2 shows a significant drop in support for increased B-2 funding between the top four and the remaining states, supporting the thesis that jobs and dollars *do* impact voting habits. The vote tally for first-term Republicans is also enlightening. Conventional wisdom has it that the 1994 class of first-term Republicans may be more concerned with cutting the budget deficit (deficit hawks) than increasing defense spending. First-term Republicans from the top four states voted 11 to 4 in favor of the \$493 million, the remaining states split 32 in favor (56%) versus 25 against (44%). Counting the Democrats, a total of 47 first-term Representatives voted for funding (54%) and 39 voted against (46%). This trend shows conventional wisdom may very well be right. It also reaffirms the impact of B-2-related jobs and dollars on members of Congress.

The voting record of Representatives from California, which has the greatest number of B-2 suppliers and second largest contact value in the United States, also substantiates this finding. California has experienced a massive hemorrhage of defense-related jobs and military bases. Since 1987, California has lost more major bases (ten) than any other state and the actual or impending loss of about 540,000 jobs related to the aerospace industry alone.²⁵ California's Representatives voted 33 for increasing B-2 funding (66%) and 17 against (34%). Atypically, three of the four members of the Congressional Black Caucus from California also voted for additional B-2s, the lone holdout was Representative Dellums. Perhaps Black Caucus member

²⁴ Compiled from an Air Force vote tally sheet on file at the Air Force B-2 Program Office, Headquarters USAF, Pentagon, Washington, D.C. The voting split was almost identical for the second Kasich Amendment.

²⁵ Eric Schmitt, 'Military Officials Seek Way To Save Jobs In California,' The New York Times, 4 July 1995, A2. Congressional Record, 7 September 1995, H8615. The Base Realignment And Closure Commission released their latest list of candidates for closure on 10 May 1995, in time to impact the vote on the Kasich Amendments.

Representative Julian C. Davis (D-CA) best summarized the rationale behind this voting behavior when he said cutting funds for the B-2 may “unnecessarily harm the Nation’s military preparedness, *further erode the economies of areas already suffering from defense downsizing*, and undermine potential technological advancements possible with a strong Stealth industrial base” [emphasis added]²⁶

Conclusion

“We have heard about capabilities, performance, and jobs. But the B-2 is about people. It is about our fighting men and women who serve this country in uniform. It is about giving them the equipment and technology to defend and protect our Nation and its principles in time of conflict.”²⁷

Representative Tom DeLay (R-TX)

Did Congress do what’s right for the Nation by approving an additional \$493 million for the B-2 in the FY96 Department of Defense Appropriations Act? While a majority voted for the \$493 million in the House, and the Senate recently agreed to it in conference, there was no consensus on *why* more bombers are needed. Positions taken by organizations and individuals involved in the debate were driven by their separate agendas. The need to support the OSD position, avoid antagonizing B-2 supporters in Congress, and preserve TOA for higher priority programs shaped the official Air Force position. Motivated by fiscal concerns, OSD was unwilling support a larger bomber force, while B-2 proponents inside and outside the DoD strongly advocated extending production. The resulting contradictory testimony and analyses probably did not have as great an impact on Congress as did B-2-related jobs and dollars. The defense draw-down coupled with base closures has exacted a heavy toll on the economies of many states. Jobs and dollars may have been the pivotal issue that determined how a Member voted, as shown by the Kasich Amendments. In summary, the evidence indicates bureaucratic politics, as well as concern for national security, drove the decision to provide \$493 million in long-lead funding for additional B-2s.

²⁶ Congressional Record, 7 September 1995. H8614. The White House did not strongly object to the \$493 million. California’s 54 electoral votes may have been a factor in the President’s decision calculus.

²⁷ *Ibid.* H8616.