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THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

OLC #78-3015/2

August 25, 1978

MEMORANDUM FOR THE WHITE HOUSE STAFF
CABINET OFFICERS

FROM: Jerry Rafshoon JK

SUBJECT: Defense Veto Editorial Reaction

Attached are recent editorials in support of the President's veto of the Defense Appropriations Bill. The editorials have been running about 9-1 in favor of the President.

I would stress the importance of emphasizing that the President vetoed the bill in order to assure a strong flexible defense capability in your private and public discussions of this issue.

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"Mr. Carter is properly concerned that in earmarking $2 billion for the construction of a new nuclear carrier, Congress deleted money designed to develop new and more sophisticated weapons and to improve NATO's defense capabilities in western Europe.

"...At the same time, it is essential that our NATO allies in Europe be reinforced in light of the large conventional force the Soviets have built up in the communist bloc countries of eastern Europe.

"Mr. Carter's view is not only militarily sound but in the best fiscal interests of the United States. His exercise of the presidential veto in this instance was wise."

Akron Beacon Journal
August 19, 1978

"With his veto, the President has done the Navy a service that it seemed unable to find the discipline to do for itself....By opting for fantastically expensive nuclear aircraft carriers, the Navy was in essence deciding it would try to keep the world's sea lanes open with a small fleet of high-cost nuclear ships.

"...What ex Navy-man Carter wants to do is spend the money on larger numbers of less expensive vessels. As the United States already has 11 aircraft carriers, four of them nuclear-powered, that seems a sensible decision. A ship-building program in which a few super-vessels soak up most of the money does not serve U.S. interests."

The Charlotte Observer
August 21, 1978

"President Carter is acting more presidential these days, as evidenced by his unprecedented veto of a Defense Department authorization bill.

"...The House Democratic leadership is reported to be lining up behind Carter in anticipation of a move to override the veto. That is a good sign for the President, who will need all the help he can get in making his defense policies stick."

Austin American-Statesman
August 21, 1978

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"...as Mr. Carter said in his veto message, he considers an adequate defense to be the single most important concern he has. However, he pointed out that the bill passed by the Congress ignores 'our most serious and immediate defense needs.'

"The President said that it isn't a question of money, but how that money is spent. He had requested a $1 billion increase to strengthen U.S. ground forces, especially the NATO-oriented forces, by providing more helicopters, combat vehicles and ammunition for front-line forces. Adding the $2 billion carrier would mean eliminating $800 million of that increase.

"...President Carter is right and the Democratically-controlled Congress ought to support him and uphold the veto."

The Tennessean
August 22, 1978

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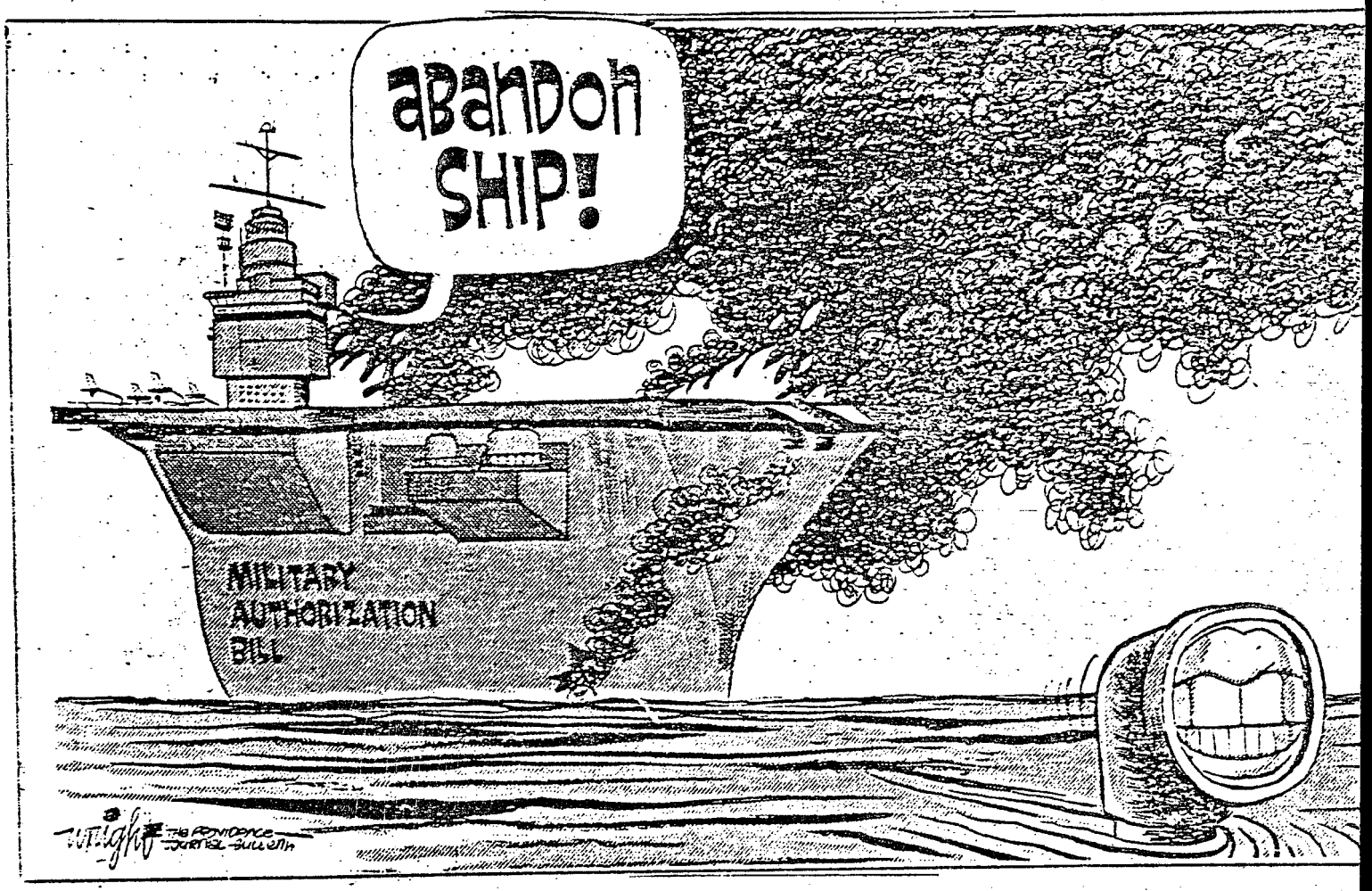
The Providence Sunday Journal

AUGUST 20, 1978



LOS ANGELES TIMES 8/22/78

Congress as Defense Strategist

The Carter Administration is concerned that Congress, by voting to spend some $10 billion of defense funds for purposes other than those proposed by the Pentagon, is really trying to wrest control of defense strategy from the executive branch. We believe that the concern and the President's related veto of a $37 billion weapons-authorization bill are justified.

Congress always tinkers with defense-money bills, adding an item here and subtracting one there. And the amendments are sometimes for the better. This year, however, changes in the makeup of the military budget have gone so far that the real question has become: Who is to control U.S. defense strategy—the Defense Department or Congress?

Critics of Carter on Capitol Hill like to pretend that the President, by his vetoing of the weapons-authorization bill and his demanding that Congress produce a more acceptable version, was demonstrating a lack of interest in a stronger defense. They know better.

The quarrel between Congress and the White House does not revolve around how much should be spent for defense—the two sides are very close on that—but rather around how the total should be divided.

Carter's most highly publicized objection was to [illegible] powered aircraft carrier instead of settling for a conventional-fueled carrier that would cost $1 billion less. As Navy Secretary W. Graham Claytor Jr. has pointed out, the saving could buy five frigates—"fine, capable ships that we badly need."

The President was perhaps even more disturbed, however, by the cuts that Congress made in other programs to provide the wherewithal to pay the extra billion dollars for a nuclear carrier.

As reported by Jack Nelson, Times Washington bureau chief, the Administration was alarmed by the cut in funds for a top-secret spy-satellite project that is vitally needed to monitor Soviet military activities.

Congress also cut $500 million from the Pentagon's request for spare parts, equipment repair and other workaday but essential items of military operation and maintenance, and $200 million in projected Air Force funds for, among other things, an increased airlift capacity to Europe.

It is being taken for granted that Congress will not override the President's veto of the weapons-authorization bill. Carter is unlikely to insist that Congress, in rewriting the measure, go along with him on every point; the Administration, for example, would probably bow to congressional insistence on continuing development of a new, surface-skimming type of warship. But Carter is right in drawing the line at allowing Congress to make sweeping changes in weapons plans that, if not the Defense Department, would be the chief architect of this country's national-security strategy.

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MILWAUKEE SENTINEL 8/19/78

Carter Shows Grit, Astuteness in Veto

In terms of both policy and politics, President Carter made a smart move in attempting to sink congressional plans for a nuclear powered aircraft carrier which he opposed.

In order to do so, Carter had to take the dramatic step of vetoing the entire $37 billion defense procurement authorization bill. Congress now has the choice of giving in to the president or holding up this substantial part of the defense budget.

It looks as if the president will be a winner in this battle, as well he should be. If Congress tries to hold up other vital defense funding by insisting on spending an extra $700 million (the approximate difference in cost between the nuclear craft and the conventionally powered carrier Carter preferred) members had better think up some good excuses for the voters before election time.

Some critics are already berating Carter for creating still another confrontation with Congress. That isn't the case. The president worked hard to obtain a compromise on the issue before it came to a vote in the House, advocating the conventionally powered flattop instead of the nuclear ship. Despite his pleas, however, the proposal met defeat by an unexpectedly large margin.

Carter's basic contention is that the supercarrier is too vulnerable and that future Navy policy should involve the use of smaller and more varied vessels. As commander in chief of the armed forces, he should have a strong say on this matter and the veto was his only recourse if his policy was to survive.

The situation, as many have noted, also offers the president an opportunity to come off as a strong chief executive by challenging a belligerent Congress on a major issue.

Congress, with its obstinate refusal to bend to compromise, played right into Carter's hands. And in using the veto as a trump card, in this instance, the president shows not only strength, but a degree of political astuteness which should gain him some congressional respect in the future.

Sentinel Star

James D. Squires, Editor
Charles T. Brumback, President
Joseph J. McGovern, Executive Editor
Robert J. Bonnell, Managing Editor
Emily Bavar, Senior Editorial Writer

Orlando, Florida, Monday, August 21, 1978

Justified veto

PRESIDENT Carter was standing on solid ground when he vetoed that $37 billion military weapons authorization bill. Two billion dollars is entirely too large a chunk of the total allocation to spend on a single ship that could be sunk by a lone missile.

The culprit in the bill was an atomic powered super carrier that Carter had not requested but the Navy and Congress kept insisting was needed. The ship's projected cost was far out of line even without the usual cost overruns.

There's no question but that carriers still are needed today, and will be for some years to come. A nation so dependent on importing critical materials must keep its sea lanes open, and there is always the necessity of protection from attack by sea.

But there is growing reason to the argument that today's aircraft carrier admirals are becoming as blinded as were the battleship admirals of the 1920s when they were staving off floating airfields. The Navy has always been more plagued than the other services by hidebound tradition that stalled new concepts.

Not all the blame is the Navy's. From some of the squawking already heard from Congressional hawks one would have to question also the possibility of pork barrel influence.

THE NAVY already has 12 big carriers, four of them nuclear powered, and the president plans to ask for another next year (at $1.25 billion, more modest in size and cost).

What the Navy must recognize is that there is a limit to money and if it is to get the fleet it envisions in the 1990s it must come up with less expensive ships.

The Congress should recognize its mistake by upholding this veto and by following the president's suggestion of spreading the defense money around. This is no time to put all our defensive reliance in a single bullet.

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AKRON BEACON JOURNAL

8/19/78

Carter right in vetoing wasteful weapons bill

PRESIDENT CARTER'S veto of the $36 billion weapons procurement bill was sound.

He took this action, which obviously places him in a new confrontation with Congress, because he opposed a new, fifth nuclear-powered carrier for the Navy.

Mr. Carter is properly concerned that in earmarking $2 billion for the construction of a new nuclear carrier, Congress deleted money designed to develop new and more sophisticated weapons and to improve NATO's defense capabilities in western Europe.

In choosing not to knuckle under to Congress on this issue, Mr. Carter has displayed a new resolve that is appropriate.

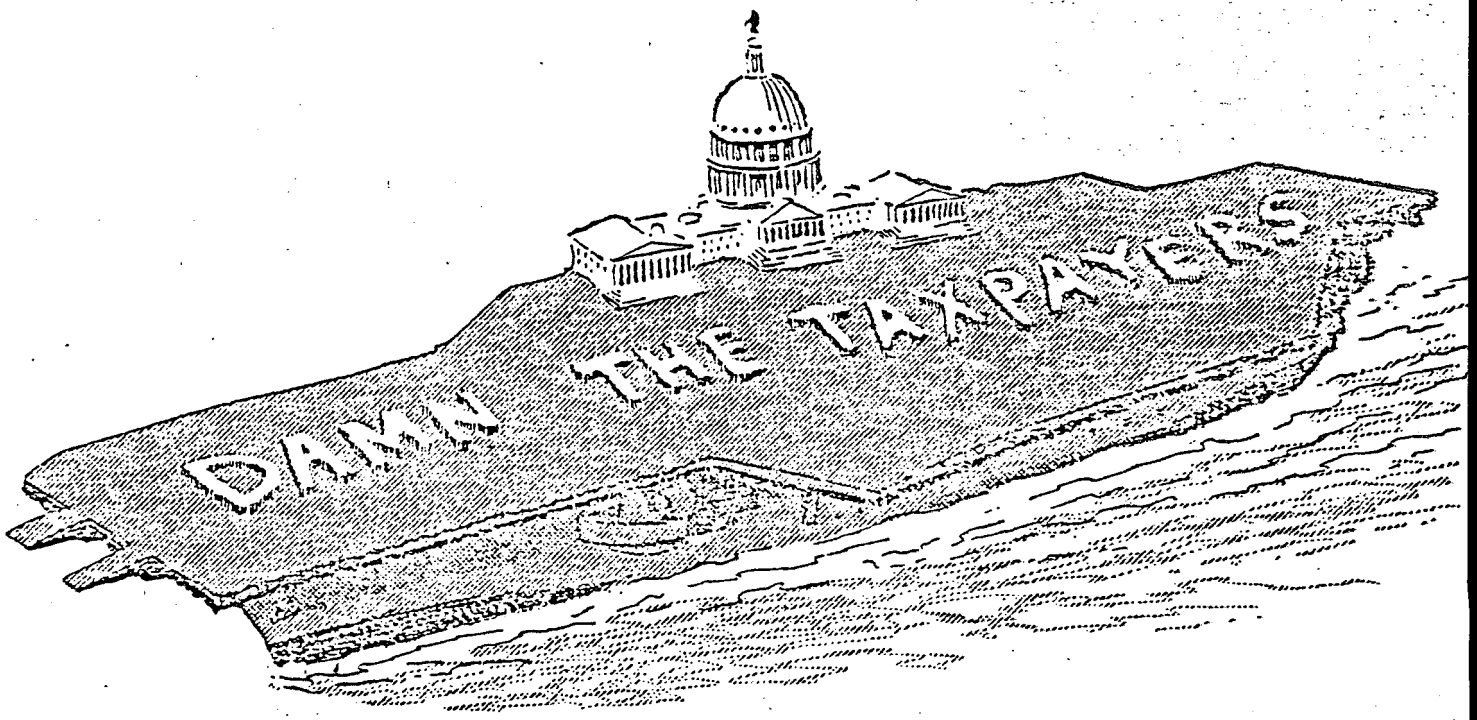
A debate has been raging in Washington for months about the Navy's desires for a new nuclear carrier. While there is an emotional appeal involved in the Navy's wishes, the arguments against an expensive nuclear carrier are strong.

As the General Accounting Office pointed out in an independent study of this controversy, the Soviet Union has developed an impressive strike capability against large warships. Therefore, our most effective strategic forces no longer include huge carriers, but involve land-based air power, submarine-launched missiles, the cruise missile, and our intercontinental ballistic missile force, as well as the development of new weapons systems.

Even so, the President is not opposed to carriers. He had proposed the construction of several smaller, nonnuclear carriers with funding to begin in 1980. These would be more effective in protecting world sea lanes and far less costly.

In short, Mr. Carter views a new nuclear carrier as practically useless and a defenseless target in any global war. At the same time, it is essential that our NATO allies in Europe be reinforced in light of the large conventional force the Soviets have built up in the communist bloc countries of eastern Europe.

Mr. Carter's view is not only militarily sound but in the best fiscal interests of the United States. His exercise of the presidential veto in this instance was wise.



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ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH
Founded by JOSEPH PULITZER
December 12, 1878

A Courageous Veto

President Carter has earned the gratitude of every American taxpayer for his intelligent and politically courageous decision to veto the $37 billion weapons bill because it includes authority for a new $2 billion nuclear aircraft carrier that the nation plainly does not need. But like his decision a year ago to halt production on the redundant and anachronistic B-1 bomber—and like his refusal to authorize deployment of the extremely dangerous neutron bomb—his press conference announcement yesterday on the weapons bill no doubt will generate an overkill of flak from the congressional hawks and their allies in the Pentagon and among the military contractors. No matter. On this issue, the president is as right as right can be.

As Mr. Carter said, the carrier issue "is not a question of money" but of "how that money is to be spent." Even a nation as affluent as America "cannot afford to waste defense dollars." Construction of the nuclear carrier would waste money because the vessel is clearly unnecessary in light of the U.S. Navy's overwhelming advantage in attack carriers. The fleet already includes 10 conventionally powered carriers plus three gigantic nuclear-powered aircraft platforms; a fourth nuclear carrier, the Vinson, is under construction. By contrast, the Soviet navy has only one small conventional carrier, the Kiev; and significantly it is not even an attack carrier. It carries only relatively slow vertical-takeoff planes that are designed primarily for anti-submarine warfare, and it is no match for even one of the U.S. attack carriers.

But beyond that, there is every indication in this age of the nuclear-tipped guided missile that the giant carrier would be a sitting duck for enemy action. And given the existence of the intercontinental ballistic missile that can travel from North America to Europe and vice versa in 30 minutes, the attack carrier and its planes are as essentially anachronistic and redundant as the manned bomber. In a nuclear war, they would arrive on the scene after it was all over. Their only function would be to stir the rubble. Spending $2 billion on a new carrier would add nothing to the real level of American security.

Indeed, a good case can be made that it would lead to an erosion of security to the extent that the $2 billion for the carrier would amount only to a down payment, as the president suggested. For example, Earl Ravenal, a former Defense Department official now teaching at Johns Hopkins and Georgetown universities, is quoted in *The Progressive* as noting that another $3 billion would be required for the carrier's 90 aircraft—most designed solely to defend the vessel. Another $3 billion would be necessary for six defending escort ships, with still another $3 billion needed for various support vessels and shore facilities—or well over $11 billion just for starters. Another $22 billion would have to be extracted from the taxpayers to operate the ship and its supporting complex over its 35-year life.

The president would redirect the money saved on the carrier into strengthening conventional military forces, particularly those assigned to support of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. A strong NATO is a vital link in the genuine security interests of the country, and if $2 billion has to go for military hardware it is obviously better to spend it where it will be effective rather than on redundancy. Still, $2 billion is a lot of money—more, for instance, than all we are spending on the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act, the Job Corps and summer jobs for the disadvantaged.

But that is another issue. For the moment, the overriding need is for the Democratic-controlled Congress to sustain the president's veto. No other course will serve the public interest in a strong and effective defense.

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The Charlotte Observer

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DAVID LAWRENCE JR., Editor
ROBERT SUAREZ, General Manager
ED WILLIAMS, Editor of the Editorial Pages
STUART DIM, Managing Editor
JACK CLAIBORNE, Associate Editor

MONDAY, AUGUST 21, 1978

Editorials

Carter's Veto

He's Right To Block Carrier

The U.S. Navy has 459 ships, down from 976 a mere 10 years ago. It believes that to accomplish its mission of assuring continued U.S. superiority at sea, it must have 600 ships. But President Carter has now vetoed the $37-billion weapons-authorization bill, to the anger of the Navy and its give-'em-what-they-ask-for allies on Capitol Hill.

With his veto, the president has done the Navy a service that it seemed unable to find the discipline to do for itself. For, helped along by the House Armed Services Committee, the Navy has been headed straight for an era of even fewer ships. By opting for fantastically expensive nuclear aircraft carriers, the Navy was in essence deciding it would try to keep the world's sea lanes open with a small fleet of high-cost nuclear ships.

The Navy was wrong and Mr. Carter is right, we think. As the president made plain, he has no objection to the generous size of the appropriation. Nor do we. There is no longer serious doubt that Soviet military forces are building up far beyond what a prudent defensive policy would warrant, even allowing for the paranoia to be expected of a nation invaded as often as Russia has been.

The issue, rather, is how those dollars shall be spent. The bill Mr. Carter vetoed authorized spending $2.13 billion on a nuclear aircraft carrier. With planes and the other gear such a ship must have, the total cost becomes over $5 billion. And it takes eight to 10 years to build and fit out the ship.

The issue, rather, is how those dollars shall be spent. The bill Mr. Carter vetoed authorized spending $2.13 billion on a nuclear aircraft carrier. With planes and the other gear such a ship must have, the total cost becomes more than $5 billion. And it takes eight to 10 years to build and fit out the ship.

Because of that complexity and expense, the Navy's ship-building program has been incredibly snarled. As of a few months ago, its construction projects were cumulatively 100 years behind schedule and billions of dollars over budget.

What ex-Navy-man Carter wants to do is spend the money on larger numbers of less expensive vessels. As the United States already has 11 aircraft carriers, four of them nuclear-powered, that seems a sensible decision. A ship-building program in which a few super-vessels soak up most of the money does not serve U.S. interests.

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San Antonio Express
EDITORIALS

Charles O. Kilpatrick
Editor and Publisher

William J. Reddell
Editor of Editorial Page

George Carmack
Associate Editor

Fane L. Burr
Managing Editor

Carter turns down too-costly carrier

President Carter vetoed the $36 billion military appropriations bill Thursday because it includes $2 billion for a nuclear aircraft carrier.

The Pentagon said the carrier would divert money needed the fighting fitness of machines already in use and to keep military capability from deteriorating.

House Majority Leader Jim Wright predicted the veto will be sustained. A senior Defense Department official had argued prior to congressional passage of the bill that building the glamorous new weapons system — his description of the carrier — would "degrade our military capability below what it would otherwise be."

In voting for the carrier, Congress displaced funds the Department of Defense had earmarked for needed supplies of bombs, electronic equipment and the repair and overhaul of warships and aircraft.

We had inquired of a pro-carrier senator in recent days what the effect would be for the U.S. to add a nuclear carrier to the fleet. He said the spending for the carrier would have important spin-off in the economy.

We asked whether the same thing would occur if an amount of money were paid to unemployed youth to cut grass and do other such work.

His reply was that the carrier would buttress our diplomacy.

Mr. Carter will be criticized for his veto, but it seems abundantly clear that the public mood is for scaling down public spending habits of Congress. Aside from the self-inflicted doubt about American strength and resolve that followed the Vietnam war, our diplomacy seems sound and supportable in its main thrust. Congress stopped President Ford from armed adventure in Angola and restrained excitable overtures in Portugal. The country is in better shape because of that.

A combat-ready defense establishment, kept in repair and supplied, permits credible diplomacy. A nuclear carrier — when it would have been ready to sail — would be an impressive piece of machinery but what else does America need above and beyond the capacity to sow devastation on any target it chooses?

The veto should be sustained as a prudent use of relatively-restricted funds available to the federal government — whose current deficit is in the $40 billion range.

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THE TENNESSEAN
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SILLIMAN EVANS SR. (Publisher, 1937-1955) SILLIMAN EVANS JR. (Publisher, 1955-1961)

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Mr. Carter's Decision Right In Vetoing Weapons Bill

PRESIDENT Carter made the right decision in vetoing the $37 billion weapons bill because it included $2 billion for a nuclear aircraft carrier.

It is certain to bring down on the president's head all kinds of political criticism from the defense contractors and Pentagon supporters in the Congress. His decision to halt production of the B-1 bomber and to postpone deployment of the neutron bomb will be called up to buttress charges he is undercutting the nation's defense.

But, as Mr. Carter said in his veto message, he considers an adequate defense to be the single most important concern he has. However, he pointed out that the bill passed by the Congress ignores "our most serious and immediate defense needs."

The president said that it isn't a question of money, but how that money is spent. He had requested a $1 billion increase to strengthen U.S. ground forces, especially the NATO-oriented forces, by providing more helicopters, combat vehicles and ammunition for front-line forces. Adding the $2 billion carrier would mean eliminating $800 million of that increase.

The president had also asked more funds for airlift, electronics warfare equipment and electronically-guided ordnance. The congressional proposal would eliminate $800 million for this increase.

Mr. Carter had requested an increase of $1 billion in readiness funds for military forces. This would include repairs of weapons, spare parts for vehicles and aircraft, ship overhauls, and training of communications and logistical support personnel. The nuclear carrier would eliminate about half of that increase.

In recent years the Navy has moved in the direction of building larger and more costly ships. The nuclear carrier it wants would cost an estimated $2.4 billion. At that price, it would be the most expensive ship in history. But like most shipbuilding contracts, the nuclear carrier would probably involve cost-overruns, so the ultimate price would be anyone's guess.

Mr. Carter's position is that the Navy ought to have a fleet with larger numbers of relatively inexpensive ships that can perform the necessary strategic functions.

A huge, nuclear-powered carrier might be the envy of the world, but there is some question whether it might also be something of a "sitting duck" in an age of missiles that do not have to hit right on target to do their destruction.

In any case, the billions that would go into such a carrier can surely be used to more advantage in strengthening other capabilities. President Carter is right and the Democratically-controlled Congress ought to support him and uphold the veto.

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DAYTON DAILY NEWS 8/18/78

Carter right to veto $2 billion toy

Congress's irresponsibile attempt to buy the Pentagon a $2 billion toy that it doesn't want left President Carter little choice but to take the unusual step of vetoing the national defense budget. He said at his new conference yesterday that he will do that.

At issue is the allocation for a huge aircraft carrier that some in the Navy want, and that many there think would only be a sitting duck in a major war. The administration and the some in the Pentagon don't think the ship is worth the money.

Congress is trying to insist on the carrier mainly as a make-work for the shipbuilding industry and the benefiting districts; the carrier is in the authorization bill thanks not to any serious defense planning but as the result of a lot of political trade-outs.

And it is worse then merely wasteful. As a senior military official has said, the $2 billion spent on an unwanted and mostly useless carrier would have to come out of the hide of other military needs, probably maintenance to keep up the fitness of ships, planes and other equipment.

Maintenance, however, is not a very sexy proposition to congressmen who, come reelection time, would rather boast of protecting the nation with a swell new aircraft carrier than of protecting it with a lot of grease and shop time.

U.S. defense is poorly served by legislators who embrace it dramatically than rather than supporting it sensibly; and in this supposed era of Proposition 13 it is bizarre to the point of nuttiness to spend $2 billion for a ship that the joint military planners don't want.

Mr. Carter will briefly gum up the military and will anger Congress when he vetoes the appropriations, but even so. Congress ought to compelled to go back and do the military bill right.

Torpedo!

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the HAWK EYE

EDITOR & PUBLISHER: John McCormally
NEWS: Jim Hitch
COMPOSING: Don Close
ADVERTISING: Nelson Showalter
PRESS: Ken Howard
CIRCULATION-BUSINESS: Dick Weiss

Burlington, Iowa Page 4 August 18, 1978

Veto power

President Carter appears to have acted correctly in his veto of a $36 billion weapons procurement bill passed by Congress.

He vetoed the measure largely because of the inclusion of a $2 billion nuclear powered aircraft carrier.

The President had warned repeatedly that he was opposed to the construction of the carrier.

It was not Carter's first veto, but it was the first time he had exercised his power on a piece of legislation of this magnitude. And it carried shock waves because it was the first time in more than 125 years that a major defense bill had been vetoed.

His central point was that, under pressure to hold down spending, Congress, in order to include the aircraft carrier, cut funds for other, more important needs.

He said the bill would reduce tha nation's commitment to NATO, waste the resources available for defense and weaken the nation's military capabilities in the future.

He pointed to cuts of $800 million for army weapons and equipment, $200 million for Air Force Weapons and Equipment, $500 million in military operational funds for such things as spare parts and logistical support and a cut that could range up to $500 million for research and development.

Congress might try to override the President's veto, but most observers believe this would prove difficult, if not impossible. The administration hopes Congress will eliminate the carrier and restore some of the programs Carter prefers, but it is obvious Carter will settle for the mere elimination of the carrier.

The president still makes conciliatory noises when speaking of the Congress. Even during his news conference to announce the veto he said, "I would say that in general the Congress has been very cooperative and very constructive."

But he also emphasised his view that the presidential veto is soundly anchored in the Constitution and an important leverage for the presidency in helping to mold policy.

He added that there had been signed several bills during his administration that he would now veto if he had it to do again. It sounded like a clear warning that he is seeking the cooperation of Congress and knows what to do if he is ignored.

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