Magruder in White House: SST Man Plans New Technology Take-Off

A new appointment to the White House staff may signal an important uplift for national policy on research and development as well as a downward shift in the White House pecking order of the Office of Science and Technology (OST) and its director Edward E. David, Jr. William M. Magruder, leader of the Administration's fight to continue funding of the supersonic transport plane (SST), was appointed on 13 September to become program manager in the White House of a government-wide study into ways the United States can maintain its technological lead over other nations.

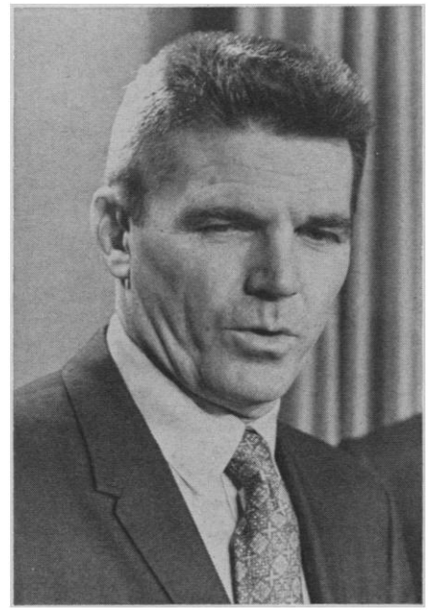
Magruder is an aeronautical engineer, formerly with Douglas Aircraft Co. and then with Lockheed Aircraft Corp., who was tapped by Transportation Secretary John A. Volpe in April 1970 to head the Office of Supersonic Transport. The ardor displayed by Magruder in trying to win approval of the giant plane from Congress—an attempt which failed in March 1971—earned him the title of the Administration's "Mr. SST." He is, in short, the hero of the nation's pining aerospace industry.

In his new job, Magruder is "special consultant" to the President and a member of the White House inner circle—even to the extent of sharing one of the President's secretaries and using one of his offices. Magruder insists he has the personal backing of presidential assistants John D. Ehrlichman, Peter Peterson, and Peter M. Flanigan—all key advisers who are known for their closeness to the President in an Administration in which few men are.

Magruder's new job is to manage a broad-based study on means to exploit technology for solving basic national needs ranging from health care to the balance of trade. The New Technological Opportunities Program, as Magruder likes to call the study, may eventually embrace up to 400 individual projects. The program could publicly surface sometime next year in the form of a presidential announcement.

Ideas for converting technology to domestic social purposes have been kicking around the OST for years, and a systematic study of existing proposals was begun by science adviser David last spring. During the summer, the work went on under the aegis of a domestic council subcommittee headed by David. How, then, did Magruder take over the project's direction from David? According to Magruder, the President and key White House advisers "asked me to stop over in late July and take a look at this thing to see where it could go." The result: Magruder is now coordinating the study, which has broadened to include several other committees looking at the economic, legal, and political aspects of "regaining America's technological lead." Although David's committee continues to review proposals to see that they are technically and scientifically sound, the study now involves some 300 people in more than 14 government agencies, and there is no doubt that Magruder is in charge.

The idea of beating swords into plowshares—by applying advanced technology to the fields of health care, housing, education, and so on—has long been a favorite theme of the liberal, academic-oriented community of scientists and engineers. Hence, the appointment of Magruder—an outsider whose name is linked with their symbol of runaway technology—to oversee proposals for this conversion has caused predictable consternation.



William M. Magruder

Some of the anxiety about the appointment has arisen from the fear that Magruder—whose main concerns have been with the aerospace industries and the business community—will shortchange the interests of academic science and engineering, which have been quietly and ably tended by David and OST.

One Democratic staff aide who opposed the SST put it this way: "It's clear that Magruder's a driving, dynamic, take-charge kind of guy, and most of the people in the OST environment aren't like that. It's possible he's thrust himself into that situation. I don't think OST would stand a chance against that guy. He's a Nixon type of guy and he gets along with that crew in the White House, whereas the OST guys are a little more scholarly and scientific. When the guys judging it are the Haldemans and the Ehrlichmans in the White House, Magruder's going to come out ahead."

David, for his part, denies that the Magruder appointment diminishes his own role or that of OST. He says he reports to Magruder for the purposes of this study, while having his own, direct contacts with the President. The device of a single White House staff man pulling together inputs from OST and other groups was used in compiling the President's energy message last year, he says, and the Magruder appointment is a similar arrangement.

Despite early rumors that the OST staff was irked by the Magruder appointment, the staff now appears to take the opposite view: that Magruder's links with the White House and his talents as a salesman will aid their common cause. "We've got a lot more visibility now," said one OST staff member. Another, intimately connected with the technology initiatives study, said, "Magruder is going to be a big help getting a program like this through. It's not downgrading OST in the slightest."

A former OST staffer explains the situation this way: "David has the President's ear as much as any science adviser does. The idea of the President

and the science adviser having lunch together every day is a dream world. Magruder's job is completely independent of David's status."

After the theories and denials of a palace revolt subside, however, what will be left is the technology initiatives study itself. Although many of those involved with the work are fairly tight-lipped, the project, particularly in its post-Magruder phase, seems to be an interesting attempt to square the swords-into-plowshares idea with the national economic situation.

The project (*Science*, 27 August) consists of an amorphous collection of interagency groups and task forces, often drawn from staffs fairly high up in particular agencies.* David's committee is the largest, and its job is to review virtually every technical proposal made by the government, including expansions of ongoing programs and changes in direction of current ones. David's committee, which consists of 11 working groups, totaling some 200 staff, reviews projects for their scientific and technical feasibility. As David said in a recent Washington speech, the projects range "all the way from advanced transportation systems to increased protection from national disasters and improved air quality. . . . I would be less than frank if I did not say that some of the ideas and proposals are warmed-over rejects. They range all the way from outright nonsense and pet projects with little or no contribution to make, to first-class new ideas which are very likely to provide entirely new thrusts and directions." Once the sheep are separated from the technological goats, the proposals will be given financial and other reviews by additional working groups.

Beyond David's realm, the rest of the technological initiatives involve economic and political means of improving the nation's international technological position. The Council of Economic Advisors has a working group headed by its newest member Ezra Solomon, formerly of Stanford. The group is charged with finding resources to finance the technological projects. One method under study is the use of tax incentives to encourage the private sector to invest more heavily in R&D. Large government outlays are another possibility.

A third group is based in the Treasury Department under Assistant Secretary John Petty. It is dealing with technology transfer, or licensing and patent procedures through which tech-

* Represented are: the departments of Defense, Health, Education, and Welfare, Commerce, Agriculture, Transportation, Justice, State, Treasury, as well as the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, Atomic Energy Commission, National Science Foundation, Office of Economic Opportunity, Smithsonian Institution, Environmental Protection Agency, and Office of Management and Budget.

Germ War Lab Salvaged

The Army's biological warfare research center at Fort Detrick in Maryland, whose ultimate fate has hung in the balance for almost 2 years, will play a part in the nation's anticancer crusade, President Nixon has announced.

Nixon visited the complex Monday to proclaim that henceforth Detrick will be the locus of a program of basic research on cancer viruses to be administered by the National Cancer Institute under contract with a private company. The first-year budget is estimated at $6 million, which will come out of the $100 million for cancer that the President requested early this year. At full capacity, the program will require $15 to $20 million a year and employ 600 scientific workers, including visiting scientists from other countries as well as NIH workers and the contractor's employes.

The success of efforts to involve Fort Detrick in civilian biomedical research is in large part the result of strenuous behind-the-scene maneuvering by Maryland's two Republican senators, Charles McC. Mathias and J. Glenn Beall. "Everything that could possibly be done was done," said a Mathias aide. "No stone was left unturned, no arm untwisted." The senators devoted long hours to haranguing the Army, HEW, budget officials, and presidential advisers, and worked closely with the Committee of Concerned Scientists, a Detrick group that labored—until most of them were laid off—at keeping the scientific team there intact.

Detrick first seemed fated for mothballs when Nixon announced in 1969 a total ban on biological warfare research. No federal agency, including HEW, wanted to take on the responsibilities of being landlord for the elaborate complex that costs $15 million a year to maintain at full capacity.

However, the Army's decision to hold on to the fort and keep its modified "biodefensive" research program there solved the problem of proprietorship. Getting the Army to share its facility with a civilian tenant was another major problem, says the Mathias aide. But the Department of Agriculture set an important precedent last spring when it obtained permission to start a small program to study plant diseases at Detrick.

Nonetheless, in view of the obstacles posed by bureaucratic inertia and the current tight-budget atmosphere, it is highly unlikely that Detrick's new assignment would have come about were it not for the glamor and urgency that has lately surrounded the subject of cancer research. The new program will only use a fraction of Detrick's abundant facilities and is considerably more modest than another scheme proposed by HEW Secretary Elliot Richardson, which would have involved several of the institutes within the National Institutes of Health to the tune of $20.1 million the first year of operation.

The fort has an unparalleled assortment of facilities for doing virus research, including containment facilities for handling dangerous materials, pilot plants for production of biological and chemical materials, and extensive animal facilities (*Science*, 22 January). One of the main arguing points for converting Detrick has been that both staff and equipment could be reoriented almost overnight to do cancer research. But the plan came too late to retain the scientific team—over the 2-year period the staff has withered from 2000 scientific workers to 250.

—CONSTANCE HOLDEN

nologies developed in one country escape to another.

In the White House, Peter Peterson, assistant to the President for international economic affairs, is directing studies of foreign trade and U.S. international competitiveness. Another White House group, including lawyers from the Justice Department, is reviewing technical proposals from antitrust, patent, and state code viewpoints.

An OMB official involved in the study explained that there are four issues which concern the Administration: productivity, balance of trade, unemployment, and the use of technology to solve civilian problems. For all four, the Administration needs to know both the federal and the nonfederal funding options, and Magruder's job is to orchestrate the study and the presentation of the complex package that results.

Magruder himself is confident that the result will alter the nation's research and development priorities. Since he happens to be the man now in charge of this effort, his own unique views of research and development may indicate which way the winds of change will blow.

"Look at the anti-technology feeling in the country now. After the defeat of the SST, a distinguished senator got up on the floor of the Senate and said how great it was that 'we've turned our back on technology.' That feeling is an unfortunate symptom. And the cure for that feeling is to show them evidence that things are better as a result of technology."

Magruder clearly wants business and industry to have some say in achieving whatever changes are made. "When I came on board here, I didn't see any input from private industry. So I sent out letters to hundreds of trade organizations, which in turn sent them on to hundreds of companies. The results are now pouring in. We think we made half a million contacts. I also set up groups of blue-ribbon advisory committees to look at the work we're doing. They included the first secretary of transportation, airline presidents, industrial leaders, people from universities, and conservation groups."

On the future of basic research, Magruder says: "I prefer the term exploratory research—that's more acceptable. That's the wellspring from which all things come," says the ex-engineer. "You don't tamper with that."

Magruder blames inflation for the recent decline in funds for basic research. "Now let's start it up again," he says, "but let's do it with a program manager instead of just funding it in any old way the way we did before. Let's do it in a controlled way."

Magruder sounds confident that he can devise a program of technology initiatives which will rescue American industry—including the aerospace business—from its economic ills, and, at the same time, boost basic research that is somehow "program managed." The SST lost, he says, with some emotion, but the technology initiatives program won't lose. "This time we must not lose. This one is different."

—DEBORAH SHAPLEY

Cancer Legislation: Pro-NIH Bill Advances in House

Backers of a bill to prevent the National Institutes of Health from losing authority over cancer research have won an important and possibly decisive move in the legislative contest now being played out on Capitol Hill. Despite heavy pressure from the White House and lobbyists for an independent cancer agency, the ten-man House Subcommittee on Public Health and the Environment last week reported out a bill that would keep cancer research under the control of the NIH.

The subcommittee's action, if approved by the full committee (Interstate and Foreign Commerce) and by the House, sets the stage for direct conflict with a Senate version that legislates for an independent cancer agency. The Senate bill, which was passed by a 79 to 1 vote in July, is backed by a tripartite alliance of the Administration, chairman of the Senate health subcommittee Edward M. Kennedy (D–Mass.), and New York philanthropist Mary Lasker, the begetter of the proposal (*Science*, 8 October, p. 127).

In the House, opposition to this imposing alliance seemed slight until last month, when Representative Paul G. Rogers (D–Fla.), chairman of the House Subcommittee on Public Health and the Environment, introduced a rival bill designed to streamline the administration of cancer research, but within the framework of the NIH. After taking evidence from 51 witnesses over 4 weeks of hearings, the subcommittee has unanimously approved a version of the Rogers bill that makes surprisingly few concessions to its opponents.

The major change from the Rogers bill as first introduced is the provision for a three-man panel to report to the President on the state of cancer research. The provision was suggested by the ranking minority member of the subcommittee, Ancher Nelsen (R–Minn.) and was assented to by James Cavanaugh, a White House staff aide who sat in on the subcommittee's two meetings last week to mark up the bill.

At a press conference held to announce the subcommittee's decision, Rogers stressed the unanimity of the vote despite the "considerable pressures" that had been exerted on individual members, particularly Representative James F. Hastings (R–N.Y.), whose support of the bill Rogers called a "Profile in Courage."

Until last week, the backers of an independent cancer agency had expected to erode the 6 to 4 majority of the subcommittee who had cosponsored the Rogers bill, and to force Rogers to abandon his bill for the Senate version. But lobbyists for the Administration and Lasker forces seem to have underestimated Rogers's sway over his subcommittee. Despite all contrary pressures during the last month, members went into mark-up session 8 to 2 in favor of the Rogers bill.

These pressures included a series of full-page advertisements which, following Rogers's failure to concede on crucial points, appeared in 24 newspapers, including those of the 10 congressional districts of the subcommittee members. The advertisements, in the form of a letter from H. Marvin Pollard, presi-