

# MX Faces Stiff Political Test in Nevada

*Nevadans want compensation for a project that may change their state's character*

Patriots though they be, Nevadans and Utahans are not thrilled to find themselves being drafted to serve in the front lines against the Soviets in a nuclear showdown. That is the role the Defense Department has proposed for the two states in its basing plan for the MX missile, known as the "racetrack," which is to be built in the desert valleys of the Southwest later this decade (*Science*, 12 October 1979).

Partly because the SALT II treaty has been shelved in Congress and partly because the full dimensions of the racetrack scheme are becoming known, local resistance seems to be growing. The project will change rural life in the area radically and perhaps leave a permanent blot on the land. Opposition comes from those who sincerely wish to preserve their way of life, and from those who hope only to make the terms of the violation as favorable as possible. There is a feeling, even among dedicated opponents, that the momentum for building the racetrack is irresistible. The best approach in the circumstances, some think, is to wrack the Pentagon for promises of good conduct and money.

The federal government is finding the Southwesterners to be able negotiators in these weapons talks—perhaps the equal of General Zia ul-Haq of Pakistan. The governors of Nevada and Utah have said that Washington, D.C., will have to pay for the cooperation it seeks: reasonable compensation, they have said, may amount to \$1 billion in economic aid divided between the two states.

Although the critics are divided in their reasons for wanting to hold the MX hostage, their combined opposition has had an effect not only on the governors but on Congress as well. On 8 February, four senators from the area—Jake Garn (R-Utah), Orrin Hatch (R-Utah), Howard Cannon (D-Nev.), and Paul Laxalt (R-Nev.)—sent a letter to the President asking him to "direct your senior national security policy-makers to take a comprehensive new look at alternative basing modes . . . as quickly as possible." The review is needed, they argue, because the world has changed since the racetrack was designed: "Soviet tanks

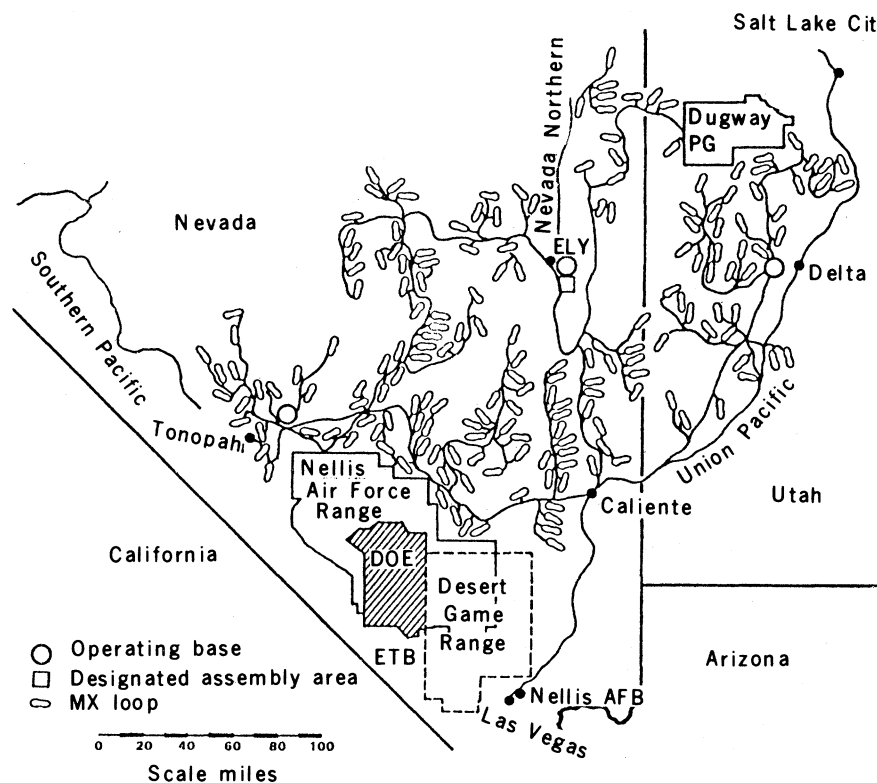
are in Kabul. SALT II is now on the shelf." It ought to be possible, they claim, to devise a plan that is cheaper, more effective, less time-consuming, and less disruptive of the environment.

A spokesman for the President's National Security Council said that no grand revision is being planned. And an Air Force spokesman said that no amount of reviewing will change the fact that Nevada and Utah are the best available sites for the MX.

Many of the objections raised against the MX racetrack are familiar, but they have been given new currency by the crisis in Soviet-American relations. They are essentially of two kinds: those related to strategic defense and the technical suitability of this system in a "SALT-free world," and those related to its cost and inconvenience.

One of the racetrack's novel technical aspects is that it is designed to achieve two seemingly contradictory goals, giv-

ing it a schizoid quality which some think will make it unworkable. For self-protection, it must deceive the Soviets most of the time about the true location of the missiles, but at other moments it must be able to open itself up to the enemy for weapons-counting exercises required by the SALT treaty. The racetrack solves the problem by having the roofs of missile shelters and carriers slide open during inspection. The rest of the time, the system will labor mightily to fool Soviet satellites and spies by shuffling the 200 missiles surreptitiously among 4600 bombproof shelters. The shelters must be numerous and widely scattered (about a mile apart) so that at least 50 percent of them will survive a full-scale attack by Soviet missiles. This is how the theory works: the Soviets, with a limited number of warheads to use in an attack, ignorant of the exact location of American missiles within the shelters, will realize that they cannot successfully attack and



Adapted from U.S. Air Force map

*Schematic adaptation of an Air Force map showing how the 4600 missile shelters in the basic version of the MX racetrack might be deployed.*

knock out the entire MX system. This realization, it is said, will prevent the Russians from attempting risky military ventures that would threaten American interests.

One weak link in this reasoning, as some defense analysts have noted, is the assumption that the Soviets will have a limited number of warheads. Why build a costly and cumbersome system like the racetrack, they ask, if it depends for success on Soviet self-restraint? What will happen if the Soviets ignore the SALT treaty and accelerate the production of warheads?

The answer given by the Defense Department's Under Secretary for Research and Engineering, William Perry, is that the United States can build more shelters, and it can build each one for less than it costs the Soviets to build a new warhead. In testimony given last September, Perry said the MX racetrack could be doubled in size from 4,600 shelters to 9,200, or boosted if necessary to 13,500. A study done by the Congressional Budget Office estimated that if the worst-case projections were played out for Soviet weapons production, and if the U.S. adhered to the logic of the racetrack, the Air Force might need to build 23,000 shelters. The cost could jump from the present estimate of \$33 billion in today's dollars to \$55 billion or more.

A tripling of the scale is not likely to occur, even if there were no physical constraints, because a massive breakdown of arms control agreements would bring about other short-term defense remedies. But some expansion of the racetrack may be necessary. Under Secretary of the Air Force Antonia Chayes confirmed this possibility in hearings on 23 January before the House interior subcommittee on public lands. How large an expansion will depend on the Russians' behavior. Thus the design problems of the racetrack and the health of American-Soviet arms agreements will directly affect the people of the Southwest.

Nevadans will bear most of the burden, for 65 to 70 percent of the missile's road loops will be built in their state. Although the state motto pledges "all for our country," some Nevadans are saying that 25 percent may be enough. Nevada's only U.S. Representative, James Santini (D), asked Congress to stipulate that no more than 25 percent of the MX system would be built in one state. His amendment failed last year, but Santini continues to badger the Pentagon for promises to limit its use of water and for detailed information about the scope of the project. As he put it in his own elu-

sive metaphor, "getting a handle on the impact [of the MX] is like punching Jello."

Billed as mankind's largest capital construction project, the racetrack scheme could turn out to be exactly that, times two. The open-ended quality of the project troubles Santini, as does its indeterminacy. Recently he emphasized his worries by citing some fluctuations in Air Force estimates. An early impact statement predicted that the MX project would consume 25 billion gallons of water during its lifetime. The new estimate is that it will use 121 billion gallons. Last October, the plan called for 2 million tons of cement. Now the Air Force thinks it will need 2.7 million tons. In September, the weight of the missile transporter was put at 670,000 pounds. Now it will weigh 1 million pounds (an increase of nearly 50 percent in 4 months). "Every time I blink my eyes," Santini said, "the project gets bigger, costs more, requires more materials and manpower and takes more public land."

The last is a sore point in Nevada, where 87 percent of the land is already owned by the federal government. Nevadans think that in addition to being denied ownership, they may be denied the use of their land. This is an unreasonable fear, the Air Force says, for it will not need to seal off more than 25 square miles of land in the 37,000-square-mile area where the missiles will be based. But during construction, it may be necessary to withdraw 300 square miles.

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## The MX racetrack will be a quarter the length of the federal interstate highway system.

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People suspect a much larger area than this will be disrupted in the building of the racetrack's 2,000 miles of railway and 10,000 miles of roads. (To grasp the awesome proportions of this network, consider that the entire federal interstate highway system is about 42,000 miles long, just four times the racetrack's minimum dimensions.)

(Continued on page 965)

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## Hazardous Wastes Cause International Stink

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Third World citizens are frequently the unintended beneficiaries of product safety regulation within the United States. When the Consumer Product Safety Commission banned children's sleepwear treated with the carcinogen Tris, for example, manufacturers instantly made it available at cut-rate prices in Puerto Rico and elsewhere. When the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) clamped down on exposure to asbestos, several asbestos manufacturers moved their plants to Mexican border towns.

Now, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is about to impose substantial restrictions on the dumping of hazardous wastes, and the industry is apparently preparing to dump the wastes overseas. The State Department has uncovered plans by at least one firm to ship to the African nation of Sierra Leone, and has gathered information that the countries of Haiti, Chile, Liberia, Senegal, and Nigeria may also have been approached as potential waste sites. The Sierra Leone president has been personally negotiating with a Colorado hazardous wastes firm, which promised \$25 million a year in payment for the privilege.

Officials of the State Department, fearing that exports of waste might prove highly embarrassing, met last week with agents of the Colorado firm in an attempt to learn more about its plans and possibly to dissuade it from going ahead. Simultaneously, the department cabled its embassies in African, Latin American, and European capitals, seeking evidence of any other waste export plans.

"On the technical side, turning toxic wastes over to people of questionable technical qualifications could present serious health problems in any of these countries," reads an internal State Department memo on the topic. "Second, the political ramifications could be very serious, although there may be countries which do not currently object to such a disposal plan. . . . There is great opportunity for corruption and for long-term political damage to American interests if such programs are allowed to proliferate."

(Continued from page 962)

The Air Force is trying to persuade cattlemen that the racetrack will not chase cattle from their grazing lands. It is telling nervous mining companies that they will still have access to the rich mineral deposits of Nevada's Great Basin. Hunters, Indians, and environmentalists are being assured that wildlife refuges, parks, archeological sites, and scenic areas will be left relatively undisturbed. All of these promises incur costs which must be added to the tab of the weapons race.

Douglas Bell, a planner on the Clark County, Nevada, MX oversight committee, gave some of the reasons for the locals' concern and recited an impressive list of demands being presented to the federal government. Because Nevada and Utah are so sparsely populated (with half a person per square mile), the MX project will hit the area like an alien invasion. The current estimate is that the local population will be increased by more than 100,000 because of the project. This influx will add stresses to a system bracing for the strains of a planned synthetic fuel from shale project and a large electric power plant construction program in Utah. Bell said that bringing even 450 workers into one of the upstate communities to prepare a worksite could mean a doubling of the local population. The Air Force intends to begin construction in 1982. How will the Nevada coun-

ties be able to install water mains, sewer systems, schools, and houses in time?

The Air Force hopes to limit the impact of the project by confining it within sealed construction camps and bases, at a distance of 30 or 40 miles from existing towns. Mobile casinos and brothels would find their way to the workers, and the latter would be discouraged from going to town. Bell said that many Nevadans like this concept, but he doubts that it will work. He thinks that, contrary to the Pentagon's predictions, many workers will bring families with them. They will not choose to live in camps but will settle in town or between town and the construction sites. Bell envisioned a flood tide of 20,000 mobile homes rolling into the state. He expects to see boomtown crime, inflation, clutter, and waste.

Because local planners think the Air Force is somewhat indifferent to the problems it is creating, they have drawn up a list of requests designed to bring negotiations down to earth. Bell recited some of them. The Air Force wants "fast-track" legislation permitting it to win quick approval from zoning and environmental protection authorities. The four-county MX oversight committee wants fast-track federal aid in return, and it wants all negotiations channeled through a single federal agency. It would like the military to build only low-income housing on its bases. Officers, the com-

mittee says, should be asked to find houses in town. A certain share (maybe 10 percent) of all jobs related to the project should go to Nevadans. Water and sewer projects should be built as often as possible so that they will serve civilian as well as military purposes. The Air Force should abide by state water rights laws and not use federal power to override them. It should develop a long-term water supply system for Nevada by tapping the deep carbonate aquifers and should keep its hands off the more accessible subsurface water. Congress should reimburse cattlemen for economic losses caused by the MX project. Nevada should receive an increased federal fuel allocation for the duration of the project. There are a dozen more demands.

The fundamental problem is that the proportions of the arms race have grown so that almost any significant new land-based missile system will be hugely costly. The MX racetrack system will take 10 years to build, yet is expected to enjoy a useful lifetime of only 10 to 15 years. Its impact on the people and state of Nevada will be so profound that the state may never be the same again. Nevada's political leaders are demanding a high price from Washington in compensation. It remains to be seen whether the Air Force can meet their demands without placing an intolerable new burden on the MX's political vulnerability.

—ELIOT MARSHALL

## Congress Moves to Relax Curbs on CIA

### *Proposed bills may allow academics to be used as agents*

Congress, acting in concert with the Carter Administration and in reaction to recent foreign policy problems, is backing away from the intelligence community reforms it proposed after the revelation of Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and Federal Bureau of Investigation skullduggery in the mid-1970's. Sensing a shift in the mood of the public at large, the Congress no longer supports restrictions on the use of covert intelligence actions to influence world events, or the normalization of contacts between spies and university professors, or the disclosure of historical and nonessential information about what the CIA has been up to.

The Senate Select Committee on In-

telligence introduced legislation on 8 February that abandons these reforms and also permits the burglary and wiretapping of U.S. citizens both at home and abroad under certain circumstances without a court order. Earlier prohibitions on the use of university professors as covert spies—which some leading spokesmen for the academic community decried as too weak—have now disappeared. Nothing in the proposal prevents the CIA from paying a professor to gather intelligence or to conduct secret intelligence operations without the knowledge of the school at which he or she is employed. Similarly, nothing in the bill prevents the CIA from conducting extensive background investiga-

tions of foreign students on American campuses without their knowledge, so long as they are being considered as potential agency recruits. Referring to the pleas of Harvard University president Derek Bok for guidelines along these lines, Senator Walter Huddleston (D-Ky.), a principal sponsor of the bill, said, "We just threw the ball back in Mr. Bok's court." Huddleston said that academic institutions were welcome to create their own prohibitions if they wished, but that it would not be done at the federal level.

The House intelligence committee is at present considering a much narrower bill than the Senate's, but one that is similar in one respect: It exempts the CIA