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MILITARY VS. FINANCIAL SUPERIORITY

An old Greek legend describes a king reputed to have the largest gold treasure in the ancient world. One day the king proudly displayed his vaults of gold bars, coins, and other pieces to a traveling philosopher.

As the visitor departed, the king noted that he did not seem overly impressed by the tremendous cache of gold. The philosopher replied, "Your golden treasure is, indeed, impressive. But remember, it can a11 be taken away from you if another king has more iron than you have."

"Iron" in that legend was used to mean the swords, spears and other military weapons of the ancient world. The story teaches the lesson that military superiority can defeat financial superiority.

The United States has far more economic wealth than any other nation in the world. We have a Gross National Product more than twice that of the Soviet Union. But all our financial power cannot defend us against the Soviet Union if it has superiority in iron (in the sense of the Greek legend).

Since the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962, the Soviets have been building a military machine at a crash wartime rate. Nothing in all history can compare with the tremendous destructive power built by the Russians during the past 15 years.

Despite a la,rge defense budget, it's been ten years since the United States added an intercontinental ballistic missile or a nuclear missile-firing submarine to our forces. Our self-imposed nuclear weapons freeze began in 1967, and the figures have not changed since then: 1,054 ICBMs and 41 Polaris/Poseidon submarines. The number of our strategic bombers has shrunk from about 600 to about 450.

A recent article in the New York Times Magazine admitted that the "Soviet Union now has about a two-to-one advantage in megatonnage -- the total nuclear payload ...

of its missile forces." Three days later, on November 30, the Defense Department

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announced the most searching review of our strategic forces since the 1960s.

The Pentagon said this study is the result of Soviet missile advances that will "make the American land-based missile force vulnerable by the mid-l980s." However, the Carter Administration is living in some kind of dream world if it thinks it can defer concern about U.S. vulnerability until the 1980s.

After President Carter came out against the B-1 bomber, the Congress dutifully backed him up and knocked out the funds for a fleet of B-ls. Since then, the Congress has had second thoughts.

The Administration planned to administer the final coup de grace to the B-1 on December 6 by scratching the last bit of funding from research and development on two test models. To the surprise and chagrin of the Administration, more than 30 Congressmen switched over and voted for the B-1.

On the morning of December 15, the news media announced that the Senate would do the knifing that the House had failed to do. But lo and behold, the Senate adjourned for Christmas without bringing it up to a vote.

The Senate and House are more in tune with what America needs and what Americans want than the Carter Administration. Senators and Congressmen who are starting to hit the campaign trail over this holiday season don't care to hang around their necks the albatross of a vote against the greatest plane ever built.

In 1939 there was a vote in Congress on fortifications for Guam. After Pearl Harbor, many Congressmen discovered that their nay vote was the biggest political mistake of their careers. Unfortified Guam was quickly captured by the Japanese and we lost many men when we had to recapture it.

A vote against the B-1 will be perceived by the voters as a similar mistake unless the United States soon starts to use its financial superiority to regain its former military superiority.

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