P.S. to the NEWS
by PHYLLIS SCHLAFLY

Box 618, Alton, Illinois 62002
Phone: 618-462-5415

RELEASE: JANUARY 16

IMAGE-MAKING AND SALT

The appointment of Lieutenant General George M. Seignious 2d (U.S.A., Ret.) to head the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency is another public relations ploy of the Carter Administration. The new White House strategy is to seek to cover the substance of SALT II with the trappings of "image" on the theory that what is said is more important than what is done.

The thought processes of the White House staff must have proceeded along these lines. Objective: to sell the Senate on the SALT II agreement with the Soviets. Problem: pro-defense and conservative Senators are likely to sound off with a counterattack making such charges as "SALT is soft on Communism," "appeasement of the Soviets," "sellout of U.S. security," and "it smacks too much of disarmament-salesman Paul Warnke."

How to defuse this attack on SALT II: co-opt a career military man and use him as the up-front salesman for SALT II. The American public will never read the treaty itself, but the public will buy the fine print in the document if a military man assures them it is good for America.

Whether Gerald Rafshoon ever wrote a memorandum along these lines, we may never know. But the above assessment of the American public is realistic. Despite enormous anti-military propaganda, the American people still have confidence that our Armed Forces are genuinely trying to protect our country. And, by and large, the American people never read the text of SALT I.

SALT I was signed by our President near midnight Moscow time on May 26, 1972, just in time to make the U.S. network television newscasts on Friday night, American time. TV coverage consisted principally of pictures of the large trays of champagne brought to the VIPs for the celebration. By Monday night, it was stale news and the TV cameras had moved on to other events.

(more)

We can count on one hand the newspapers that ever printed the full text of the SALT I agreements, although in toto they consumed only one full newspaper page. Those few newspapers that did print the text, did so in their light-circulation Saturday editions. The text was not published by any major newsmagazine.

General Seignious' unique appointment as disarmament chief also enables him to do double duty as a Carter Administration salesman. Not only can he pump for disarmament as a SALT-seller, but he can also lend credibility to his image as a pro-defense disarmament chief by lobbying for a bigger defense budget, and thereby secure the cooperation of the active-duty military. The average American will be soothed with the ploy that, because we are increasing the defense budget, we must be improving our defense against the Russians.

Of course, that is not true at all, as our unhappy years of experience during the Vietnam War amply proved. Each year we spent more of the taxpayers' money, but each year the Soviets increased their lead in strategic nuclear weapons. The explanation for this anomaly is that our money was spent mostly on personnel and on conventional weapons that are now destroyed or captured by the enemy.

Even today, at least half of the defense budget goes for the volunteer army, which does very little to protect us against the Soviet nuclear missile and submarine forces.

General Seignious' appointment has not yet achieved its goal of allaying the fears of the pro-defense Senators. But it has achieved a secondary goal of diverting attention away from the crucial terms of SALT II and into such trivial questions as: did he know that the American Security Council (a private group) is opposed to SALT when he joined one of its affiliated groups.

Such questions are full of sound and fury, signifying nothing. When all the Seignious controversy is swept away, the policy underneath is the same as that instituted by Defense Secretary Robert S. McNamara in the 1960s: spend more billions, build a bigger Pentagon bureaucracy, but don't increase our numbers of strategic nuclear weapons past 1,054 ICBMs and 656 SLBMs even though the Russians have 50 percent more of both, and don't build a new longrange bomber even though the Russians are building theirs as fast as they can.

(end)