

Readers' Forum

B-1 bomber needed

By ROBERT G. OLER

One of the tough questions facing Mr. Carter, indeed the nation, is that of defense. This question has been brought to the forefront with the recent dismal failure of the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks in Moscow.

Coupled with this failure has been a alarming and overwhelming Soviet strategic buildup, featuring both qualitative and quantitative improvements in weapons. Along with this has been a drastic improvement in Soviet Civil Defense capabilities.

To counter this massive Soviet threat, the United States is exploring plans to upgrade its nuclear deterrent force. One of these weapon systems is the B-1 bomber and this is why the United States must build it.

Our current bomber, the B-52, is an aging aircraft. It is based principally on three-decade old technology. Moreover the B-52 was designed for high altitude penetration. This strategy was abandoned in the 60s, following development of Soviet air defenses, in favor of low altitude penetration, which permits a bomber to evade enemy radar, interceptors, and missiles. Electronic modifications have helped modernize the aircraft but it is structurally ill-designed for its attack mode. It is noteworthy that none of our previous strategic bombers have stayed in service over 10 years, although the newest B-52 is 11 years old and by its expected replacement date will be near 18.

The B-1 is designed to meet the demands of modern air warfare. One of these demands is the ability to fly at high subsonic speed at tree-top height. Even at high altitude, the B-1 is twice as fast as the B-52. Only advanced Soviet interceptors — not yet in their arsenals — would be able to attack the B-1, although all current Soviet interceptors can attack the B-52. Further-

more the weapons payload is twice that of the B-52. The B-1 will carry twenty-four S.R.A.M. (Short Range Attack Missiles) internally and another eight externally. It will also carry 75,000 pounds of conventional or nuclear bombs with another 40,000 pounds externally.

Many people have wondered why, in the missile age, we even need a manned bomber? For this reason it is essential to look at the strategic deterrent of this country — triad. Triad has three elements: land based missiles, sea based missiles, and manned bombers. These elements are mutually protective and supporting. Together, they provide a capability greater than the sum of the parts. These elements are deployed and operate in a diversity of options, locations, and modes. While Soviet technological advances may jeopardize one leg of the triad, it is unlikely that those advances could, at any one time, seriously affect the other elements of triad. The triad provides insurance of strategic sufficiency by denying the enemy the chance to concentrate its defenses against a single force.

The manned bomber is the most flexible leg of triad and is its only combat-proven element. It is also highly visible to a potential enemy in crises and can be recalled and re-targeted at ease. The cruise missile while useful as a supplement, can hardly supplant the manned bomber.

A legitimate question is what will the B-1 cost? It is not cheap — not at 90 million dollars per aircraft. The cost is a reflection of the sophisticated capabilities necessary for the B-1 to operate in a very hostile and distant environment.

Some advocate extending the life of the B-52. The inherent defects of the B-52 have already been discussed. To attempt to correct these would cost about as much as the B-1 program, but leaves us with an old airframe. Another option is to use the F-111. This aircraft, even in

larger numbers, cannot perform the strategic manned bomber mission due to its small payload and the lack of the sophisticated design and construction needed to survive in a hostile environment.

One indicator of the success of the B-1 program is the attention paid to it by the Soviet Union. The Soviets are very adamant that, as a condition to a Strategic Arms Limitation Agreement, the B-1 be either cancelled or limited in deployment. This is hardly a desire to save the U.S. money. Indeed, to the dismay of manned bomber critics in this country, the Russians are busily deploying their supersonic bomber, code named Backfire.

In closing, manned bombers make a fundamental contribution to America's deterrent. Our present bomber is structurally ill-designed for its job. The B-52 has finally been confronted with a challenge it cannot meet. To insure timely modernization of the triad and continued deterrence of growing Soviet strategic capabilities we must build the B-1 Bomber.

Bad attitudes seen

Editor:

Upon reading the April 12 issue of The Battalion, I was not only disappointed in some Aggie's attitudes, but mostly the hostility which has been shown between Aggies during election time. Voting is a privilege to be respected and not to be degraded so that the candidates are in any way jeopardized. Viewpoints are another.

I think a few Aggies better start thinking before they speak and wake up to find their selfish criticisms on the front page where over 30,000 people can read about tragedy. Tragedy is when one Aggie

Editorial
Where did all the Aggies go...

The Student Government elections are over. In their wake lies a student body attitude not at all like the one written about so glowingly or spoken of so boldly. Those Fightin' Texas Aggies with their unsurpassed unity and incredible school spirit seem to be a rather embittered lot today.

Not everyone is upset over the various goings-on that characterized this year's Student Government elections. Many who are upset, however, are people in the public eye, and their stands on how they view the actions of such-and-such a group and person have publicized those thoughts shared by a significant number of this student body. While various factions on campus are battling out their differences of opinion, the less politically moved sit back with a cold Lone Star and watch like it was Saturday Night Wrestling.

The time has come to call a halt to this carrying-on. A new slate of Student Government officers has been elected and, favored or not, they need the support of a unified student body. Moreover, they need the support of an active and thinking student body, one that is faster with its reasoning than its mouth.

Too often, we jump to the defense of traditional causes at the slightest hint of something else com-

ing along a little bit different. Without just consideration of the alternatives we battle to the death for the popular cause. It takes merely a sideways glance to gear up a group to defend itself, without a word being spoken. We jealously guard our reputations, whether we be Greeks, Gays, Non-regs, Corps—yes, The Battalion, too.

The point is we jump too harshly and too fast too often. A university is, after all, a forum of learning and exchanging new and different ideas. We come here to digest new material and patiently consider different ways of thinking. Understanding is the key and cooperation a necessity. This is where we learn to deal with ourselves and those around us.

Many harsh words have been said and many feelings hurt in the quest to see who will be the leaders of this University. It is my hope that our student leaders will put last week behind them and deeply consider the jobs ahead of them. A school of this size has tremendous potential for student activity, but it takes a great amount of dedication and sincere diplomacy to fashion a campus this large into a viable community.

As long as there are groups there will be rivalries. To the extent that friendliness prevails over mock grudges, such rivalries nurture a

healthy atmosphere, all taken together in "that certain spirit."

What is needed right about now is a Texas A&M-U.T. football game. A midnight yell practice would be as the doctor ordered to mix everyone together for one noble cause. We are capable of pulling together, though, without the aid of a crutch or two aspirin. There is no reason a school full of rational human beings can't shrug off a bad experience and get back to being Aggies. During the last few weeks Aggies didn't die, they just seemed to have forgotten who they were.

This is the most hallowed week of the year at Texas A&M and for Aggies everywhere, Aggie Muster takes place Thursday. This is a time to honor those Aggies who have died during the past year and renew that Aggie loyalty that is recognized around the world. We recall the many years in which this ceremony was observed even in war-time. What better time than Muster for the students of Texas A&M — the individuals making up a myriad of clubs and organizations — to regroup under that certain spirit that impressed us all the first time we visited here. Let's remember who we are and understand what an awful thing it is to lose sight of the common denominator that holds us all together.

This is a time to work together, get things done. Students have what they need at their fingertips to make a contribution to A&M. The place start is helping those newly elected Aggies put together a viable Student Government. Is Student Government too detached from you, a student body it represents? Change it. There are people waiting to be from you. Is the administration closed door? Open it. It takes the interest.

Student Government needs the support of the student body, not just 'yes man' but its boss. Student Government needs to be critical when it fails in its duties, and it requires student input to make it representative. Without input, can hardly be expected to be efficient. Who's fault is it really if a student body is dissatisfied with representation?

Those loyal Aggs on a battlefield didn't need football, pull them together, and it should be necessary now. A little more positive thinking and a little less picking would go a long way in making something substantial happen here.

See you at Muster to remember the good Aggs and break out the howdies and handshakes to those around.

Flunking percentage unfair

Grading policy needs review

Editor:

In Thursday's Battalion, Carlton Stolle made comments concerning the accounting department policy on flunking out more students. One statement was that faculty quality has gone up with course quality and therefore student grades have gone down. Somehow this does not

make sense to me. If a teacher is better, why should his students do worse? Is this the way it was when Mr. Stolle went to school? If this is the way things are supposed to go, perhaps we as students should request horrible teachers in order to keep our grades decent.

Notice I said decent. Last semester I enrolled in Accounting 327. On the first test, over half of all the 327 students flunked. (Approximately 21 per cent made A's.) Over 400 students were enrolled. Is this what Larry Pointer calls "realistic grading"? I was with the majority. I consulted Mr. Stolle; he suggested I drop the course and change majors because accounting would get worse instead of better. I followed his advice. I hope this does not cause me to be labeled an unhireable "Rum-dumb", as Rondal Schorn states. I have been a member of Alpha Lambda Delta and am currently in Sigma Iota Epsilon, both nationally recognized honor societies. I gained

admittance to them on the basis of my grades achieved at A&M.

Schorn feels that not everyone should pass. Few believe everyone should. But when over half of the class flunks, and the class continues to get worse, perhaps the grading system should be reviewed. I have a feeling that many of the employers would prefer to have the majority of students succeed rather than be flunked out. I am not at A&M because I want to take snap courses or because I want it easy. All I want is, a fair grade. That is why I got out of the accounting department.

—Debbie Hicks

Count your friends dearly

Editor:

This message is directed toward all Aggies, but will especially touch

the hearts of the 1975 graduates of Northbrook Senior High in Houston, many of whom are attending Texas A&M.

This past Easter weekend, Northbrook graduates lost classmates who were very close to many of us.

Gene Park was stabbed to death in front of his home by vandals. He was a sophomore at Stephen F. Austin State University.

Aggies, summer vacation is getting close. When you get home, take the time to visit and remember members of your class.

Tears are often shed as the academic year ends in May. We'd like leaving A&M, our friends, and lovers. But how often are the tears shed when we leave home, return to school in the fall? The summer vacation are often people who have been close to us in Junior High or even Elementary school. Their presence is never appreciated more until they're gone for good. Don't wait until a class reunion is organized, some of your classmates may not be there. Morbid yes, but it's reality.

When Gene and I speculated during our senior year of change within the class by our fifth year reunion, neither one of us thought the possibility of the other not being there.

The Battalion

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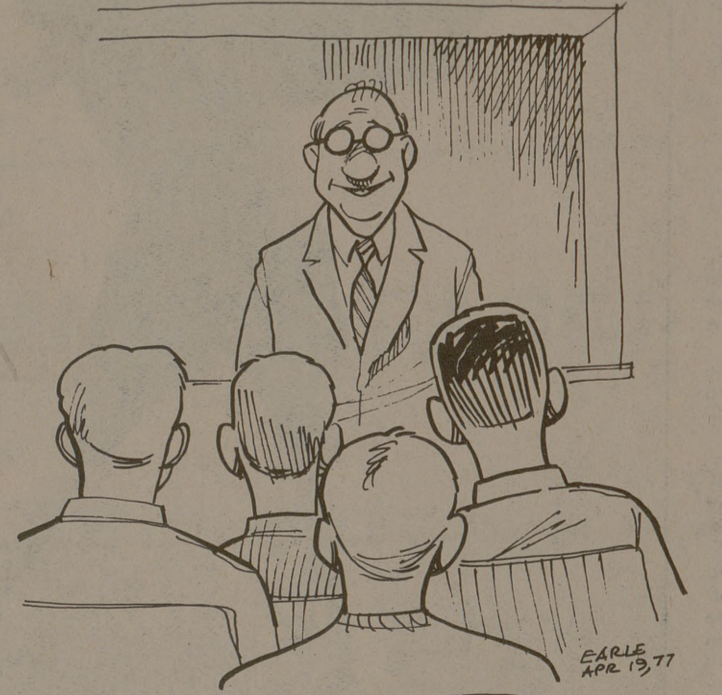
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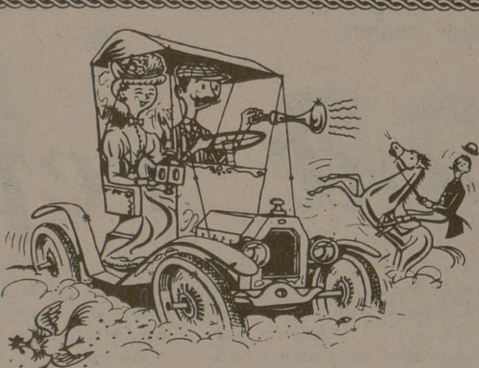
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