

OPERA – fiche sociographique - défense

Prénom, Nom:

Warren L. Nelson

Contact :

Catégorie : Législatif

Dates de naissance / décès :

29 décembre 1940

Lieu de naissance :

Abington, Pa.

Genre : Male

Lieu de résidence (si DC avant l'accèsion à un poste retenu, avec si possible l'année de l'emménagement à DC):

Formation :

BA/BS	American Un., Washington, 1967
MA/MS	
PhD	
Law degree (JD...)	
ROTC¹	
Autre	

Profession initiale :

Carrière :

1969-75 : Pentagon corr., UPI

1975-90 : senior aide, Rep. Les Aspin

1990-95 : staff dir., investigations subcom., House armed services comm.

1996 - : newspaper editor, writer

Sources biblio/bio, articles, divers.

B-1B Bomber Inquiry Triggers Aspin Probes of Stealth Weapons --- Paul Mann

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¹ n'est pas une formation mais un programme pour entrer dans l'armée

W. Genieys, Operationalizing Programmatic Elites Research in America, OPERA : ANR-08-BLAN-0032.

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Washington -- The House Armed Services Committee's investigation of the Rockwell B-1B bomber will be followed by inquiries intended to apply B-1B management lessons to other advanced weapons. These inquiries will be reinforced by the committee's desire to dispel its reputation for slack oversight.

"The committee has got to be a lot more alert and chairman Rep. Les Aspin (D.-Wis.) is determined to get the committee back out front on investigations," a long-time committee aide said.

B-1B-related inquiries will be devoted to two weapons involving stealth technology: Northrop's Advanced Technology Bomber (ATB) and, probably, the advanced cruise missile, both of which are secret "black" programs. In each instance, Air Force management will be one of the issues derived from the B-1B investigation.

The importance attached to the B-1B case is reflected by Aspin's decision to assign the investigation jointly to the procurement and research and development subcommittees, rather than the investigations subcommittee alone. Further, in contrast to routine investigations performed by one or two aides in conjunction with Pentagon budget requests, Aspin assembled a bloc of five committee staff members to concentrate on the B-1B and, eventually, the ATB and the advanced cruise missile. They are Peter C. Scrivner (Air Force procurement) and Rudy F. de Leon (procurement), Carl T. Bayer and Anthony R. Battista (research and development), and Aspin's at-large committee aide and press secretary, Warren L. Nelson. Special Counsel Russell Murray, 2nd, assistant secretary of Defense for program analysis and evaluation in the Carter Administration, has assisted in the B-1B investigation.

In concert with the B-1B probe, the committee is examining contractor security practices in handling black programs. Eventually it may examine the entire subject of black program management. Rep. Barbara Boxer (D.-Calif.), a freshman committee liberal, already has introduced two bills (H. R. 1585 and 1586) to stop suspected abuses of black programs and strengthen congressional scrutiny of them.

The desire of senior committee Democrats and Republicans to strengthen oversight stems from their irritation with what they view as poaching by Rep. John D. Dingell (D.-Mich.). In recent years, Dingell's Energy and Commerce subcommittee on oversight has disclosed a number of well-publicized Pentagon and defense contractor abuses, upstaging House Armed Services.

At the latter's organizational meeting Feb. 5 there were bipartisan calls to arrest the decline. Rep. William L. Dickinson (Ala.), the Armed Services' ranking Republican, said, "I am very much concerned about the eroding prestige of our committee. We have seen onslaughts on our jurisdiction . . . and we have been sort of starved as far as investigative staffing is concerned."

To reclaim from Dingell the role of main military watchdog in the House, the committee in recent weeks has secured more staff investigators. Nelson said, however, that at best four more investigators would be granted from an original budget request that Rep. Patricia Schroeder (D.-Colo.), a committee liberal, said had been put at nine. Temporary Investigators Up to 10 more investigators may be borrowed temporarily from the General Accounting Office and probably assigned in teams of three, according to Rep. Bill Nichols (D.-Ala.), conservative chairman of the investigations subcommittee. Nichols has drawn up a list of oversight issues spanning specific weapons and future programs, including the Defense Dept.'s nascent Air Defense Initiative.

It will take time to supplant Dingell. The committee's reexamination of contractor security procedures for black programs, for example, piggybacks on a Dingell inquiry of mid-1986. Ultimately Dingell forced Lockheed Corp., the nation's sixth-ranked defense contractor, to admit it had lost or could not account for almost 1,500

secret documents associated with the stealth fighter. This too is a black program, so highly classified that neither the Defense Dept. nor the Air Force acknowledge its existence (AW&ST July 28, 1986, p. 15).

House Armed Services also has launched investigations of jet engine turbine blade defects and the Defense Dept.'s contracting out of supply and distribution functions. Other inquiries deal with the department's execution of two pieces of recent legislation--the Goldwater-Nichols Dept. of Defense Reorganization Act of 1986 and the charter aircraft safety legislation that grew out of the 1985 crash at Gander, Newfoundland, of a Pentagon-chartered Arrow Air McDonnell Douglas DC-8-63 in which 248 servicemen were killed (AW&ST Oct. 13, 1986, p. 105; Dec. 16, 1985, p. 31).

In addition to the Air Defense Initiative, tentative investigation targets, contingent on staff strength, include:

- Pentagon management of black programs.
- Army problems with forward air defense weapons and the fielding of light antitank weapons.
- Military aircraft accident rates and flying safety.
- Airlift/sealift requirements.
- Close air support, i. e., the need for specific aircraft and the use of Army helicopters.
- An assessment of worldwide U. S. defense commitments.
- Service roles and missions.

Nichols said examination of the Air Defense Initiative is of particular importance, owing to past neglect of conventional air defenses and the renewed funding drain that threatens them, posed by the Strategic Defense Initiative. ADI is intended to supplement strategic antimissile defenses with a companion set of surveillance, tracking and weapons systems to fend off enemy bombers and cruise missiles (AW&ST Feb. 2, p. 18).

"I would want to know how the U. S. Air Force stacks up in a dogfight against Soviet aircraft in any type of confrontation with either Soviet fighters or bombers on our coasts," Nichols said. He said he also would focus on sensors and warning systems, on the assumption that SDI "will be great if it works but it's still pretty iffy at the moment, and we can't turn our back on the conventional aspect of the Air Force. I'm dubious the Congress will approve all Pentagon-requested SDI monies, so money is one of the issues driving my interest. The other is whether we have the actual equipment and expertise and technology for any sort of confrontation in the next five to ten years."

Nichols is not leading the B-1B investigation, which is being handled by the procurement and research and development subcommittees. "I have no quarrel with that," he said.

Disclosure of the B-1B's operational and management problems prompted committee criticism of Air Force candor and competence, breeding an air of suspicion around the service's handling of other programs, a committee aide said. "The members have the feeling they have been seriously and deliberately misled and that makes them mad. I can't figure why the Air Force adopted that attitude. The last thing you want to do is get these guys mad at you."

The Air Force has completed only 62% of scheduled B-1B testing and various problems and delays have forced more than a two and a half year extension of the test program, until February, 1989. That will be eight months after all 100 B-1Bs are scheduled to be fielded.

The incomplete testing has raised questions about the usefulness of concurrency--a compressed timetable in which testing, development, production and delivery are carried out in tandem to save procurement lead time. But the aide said such concerns are cyclical, with congressional members vacillating between concurrency and

fly-before-buy. "So some people now are concerned about how much concurrency there is in ATB. Concurrency came into fashion; now we'll go back to fly-before-buy," he said.

An Air Force official pointed out that Congress mandated the B-1B be operational by 1986 and the resulting concurrency saved about \$1 billion and considerable lead time. Aspin has charged, however, that fixing B-1B flaws could cost up to \$3 billion. The Air Force has argued in reply that the additional funds will enhance the aircraft's capabilities beyond the original design (AW&ST Jan. 12, p. 24).

In addition to concurrency and operational issues, there is committee suspicion that delinquent Air Force management of the B-1B will prove contagious and afflict the ATB with similar ills, despite a major managerial difference between the two aircraft. The Air Force ran B-1B procurement, whereas the ATB is the responsibility of the prime contractor, Northrop. This difference is central to committee thinking, which holds that the B-1B would have fared better had Rockwell been permitted to perform systems integration, as Northrop has done on the ATB.

"There were periods of time when Rockwell knew nothing about what AIL was doing," a senior committee aide charged, referring to the AIL Div. of Eaton Corp., which manufactures the B-1B's ALQ-161 electronic warfare system. An Air Force review last December rated AIL contract management unsatisfactory. Among the B-1B's operational flaws are deficient defensive avionics, as well as flight control and terrain-following radar problems. Management Distinction Several committee aides said that despite awareness of the management distinction between the two bombers, the committee still is concerned about their intergenerational relationship because of heightened congressional expectations that the Defense Dept. fostered about the B-1B. As one analyst said, the committee professed shock at the revelations because the program was "advertised for so long as the most perfectly managed of programs, on schedule, under cost, money back in fact, with Defense Secretary Caspar W. Weinberger reviewing the program every two weeks, held up as a model that turns out in the cold light of day to have warts all over it."

A Nichols aide said committee staff director G. Kim Wincup had concluded that the B-1B experience merited wider application. "The purpose of all this is to learn something about how we look at weapons systems in the future, how we appraise them here on the Hill and what is required by the Pentagon to field a weapon," the aide said. "There's been a lot of talk of concurrency and rapid turnover of Air Force managers and the Air Force as integrating agent instead of the prime contractor Rockwell. This discussion is applicable to all weapons."

Committee staff members denied there were any partisan or public relations overtones in either the B-1B investigation or the committee's attempt to bolster its investigative clout. But an outside defense analyst who at one time worked for a House Republican remarked, "There is no question that the B-1 symbolizes for Les Aspin and the Democrats what went wrong with President Reagan's defense buildup. That doesn't say it was wrong or right to build it, it just became a Republican airplane." "Death of Prestige' Regarding the "long slow death of the prestige of the House Armed Services Committee," this analyst said that because Aspin was unable to strengthen committee oversight activities right away when he took over as chairman in early 1985, "the investigatory vacuum was filled by John Dingell, who took on the B-1 as one of his gadfly investigations. I think all that is happening to the B-1 in House Armed Services is prelude to action to be taken on the ATB. The suspicion is that the Air Force is responsible for this the B-1B problems. I really think this means that the ATB is in big trouble." Air Force Issues RFPs For Chinese F-8-2 Avionic Upgrade Kits Washington--Requests for proposals have gone to 43 contractors for 55 avionics modernization kits for the People's Republic of China Shenyang F-8-2 air defense interceptor, the largest military sale yet to that nation following a U. S. commitment to assist the Chinese in upgrading their defensive capabilities.

Contract proposals are due May 4, and an award is expected in early August for the \$501-million package. The kits are to include airborne radar, inertial navigation equipment, head-up display, mission and air data computers, and a databus for 50 of the single-seat fighters, which have a delta-wing twin-engine design, can reach speeds up to Mach 2.2 and are equipped for all-weather engagements. Five spares are included (AW&ST Feb. 3, 1986, p. 31).

The fighters, which have a limited air-to-ground role, are to be based in Manchuria and northern China to deter reconnaissance overflights and prevent Soviet violations of Chinese airspace.

U. S. officials regard the sale as an important milestone in establishing defense cooperation with the Chinese. The sale fits the Administration's policy of aiding countries that will help contain military threats from the Soviet Union, and also provides a large market for U. S. technology (AW&ST May 19, 1986, p. 18).

The USAF Aeronautical Systems Div. at Wright-Patterson AFB, Ohio, is acting as foreign military sales agent for the transaction and will manage acquisition, development, testing and production. The Chinese will not assemble or coproduce any components but will install the kits. The effort is expected to take six years.

The sale includes no electronic countermeasures or detection equipment and prohibits third-country technology transfer.

This latter provision is attracting interest in Congress, where consideration of omnibus trade legislation includes efforts by lawmakers and industry to erase current controls on U. S. products reexported within nations of the Coordinating Committee on Multilateral Exports Controls.

In a Senate trade hearing last week, for example, Sen. H. John Heinz (R.-Pa.), a leading proponent of export reform legislation, asked Commerce Secretary Malcolm Baldrige why the PRC received more favorable treatment on reexport issues than many more traditional U. S. trading partners. Baldrige responded that the risk of diversion of sensitive technology to the Soviet bloc from the PRC was less than with many European partners, who view trade with the Soviet bloc as important.

Caption: CM-44 Aerial Vehicle Features Low-Observable Characteristics California Microwave CM-44 manned/unmanned aerial vehicle, shown during a demonstration and test flight, resembles a Rutan Long-EZ (AW&ST Mar. 16, p. 19). Although based on the homebuilt, the CM-44 is larger and features low-observable design characteristics such as top-mounted engine inlets, flap fuselage surfaces and a 3-blade, primarily composite propeller. In its unmanned configuration, the UAV is designed to perform autonomous battlefield reconnaissance, communications, intelligence gathering and electronic warfare operations. However, it also can be flown by an onboard pilot, providing additional mission flexibility and reducing risk to ground personnel during training, major exercises and sensor system development flights.

Source : consultée le 13 juin 2012

Sources additionnelles :
First Street, Who's who