

Changes in arms policy?

In calling for reform of the nation's military services, Sen. Gary Hart (D-Colo.) buttresses his suggestions with comments by a former Erie man, retired Air Force colonel John Boyd.

In an article in the magazine section of the Sunday *New York Times*, an article entitled "What's Wrong With the Military," Sen. Hart suggests a shakeup similar in proportions to that enacted by Adm. Sir John Fischer in the British Navy in the early days of this century.

VIEWPOINT

In fact, he quotes Winston Churchill on Fisher's reforms: "There is no doubt whatever that Fisher was right in nine-tenths of what he fought for. His great reforms sustained the power of the Royal Navy at the most critical period in its history. He gave the Navy the kind of shock which the British Army received at the time of the South African War....He forced every department of the Naval Service to review its position and questioned its existence. He shook them

and beat them and cajoled them out of slumber into intense activity."

Then, in calling for reform of the American military, Sen. Hart cites Col. Boyd as one who has suggested a possible course of action.

"A new way of looking at the nature of conflict has been explored in the work of a retired Air Force colonel named John Boyd. While still a captain, Boyd developed the basics for the system of air combat currently used by the United States. His ideas were influential in the design of the F-16, possibly the world's finest fighter plane," Sen. Hart writes.

"Conflict, Boyd argues, is a matter of 'observation-orientation-decision-action cycles,' which each contending commander consistently repeats. First, the commander observes -- not only with his eyes and ears but with his radar, reconnaissance, etc. He orients -- that is, he forms a mental picture of his relationship to his opponent. On the basis of this picture, he determines a course of action -- he decides. He acts. Then he begins observing again, to see the effect of his action.

"The commander with the faster

cycle will eventually win, because he is already doing something different by the time the enemy gets to the action part of his own cycle. The enemy's action becomes irrelevant. If one side is consistently faster, the margin of irrelevance keeps growing, until the enemy either panics or becomes passive. At that point, he has lost."

Continuing, Sen. Hart says "it stands to reason that rapid execution of the Boyd cycle requires commanders with boldness, imagination and initiative."

He adds, too, that "the Boyd theory has implications for military equipment as well. In research and development, as well as in procurement of new weapons, the changes made must be quick and major, so as to make the enemy's equipment irrelevant."

According to Sen. Hart, "in our military establishment, the changes are far too slow. A major new weapons system can be 10 to 20 years in development. Our procurement policy favors weapons so complex and expensive that we must keep them in service for decades to get our

perceived money's worth. The Navy, for instance, has built itself around the big aircraft carrier for more than 30 years. And much of our equipment is too complex to work well on the battlefield."

Sen. Hart then cites the Army's new M-1 tank, so complicated it has to stop for repairs every 43 miles, and with an engine that eats up so much fuel that it gets only one mile for every 3.86 gallons.

At a time when many are claiming that America's armed forces are increasingly bogged down with obsolete theories and cumbersome weaponry, and when the ordinary citizen feels inadequate to question the dictates of the top military brass, it is refreshing to see the thinking of a Strong Vincent high school graduate (class of 1945), and former Lincoln ave. resident, cited as the intellectual source of one possible avenue of needed reform.

We hope Congress (and particularly Sens. John Heinz and Arlen Specter, of Pennsylvania) joins with Sen. Hart in giving Col. Boyd's ideas the serious consideration they so obviously deserve.