What's Ahead (Cont.)

HARD SELL: Clinton Administration plan to overhaul foreign assistance program runs into congressional resistance, with the House Foreign Affairs Committee waiting to see if there is any movement in the Senate. Sen. Paul Sarbanes (D-Md.), a senior member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, has his subcommittee staff working on a reform bill, but Sarbanes himself is up for re-election and pushing foreign aid doesn't win any votes at home. The Administration plan would scrap the existing law and link assistance to goals, such as promoting peace and democracy, that correspond to President Clinton's foreign policy objectives. Congress has not enacted a foreign aid authorization since 1985, relying on the foreign operations appropriations bill to provide assistance.

SELLING ALARM: Gen. Charles Horner, head of Air Force Space Command, is slated to visit Capitol Hill later this month to testify in favor of the Air Force's new ALARM early warning satellite system. That's good, say some Hill sources, because they want more details before signing off on the project, a lower-cost version of the canceled FEWS program (DAILY, March 28, page 476). "I don't know what the hell's going on and I don't know if they (the Air Force) do either," one Hill source said. Horner last week called ALARM his top priority.

THE LIGHTER SIDE: Army unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) program officials and the Dismounted Battle Lab at Ft. Benning, Ga., have been evaluating the hand-launched Pointer as an other-than-war tool for light divisions. Pointer is slated to participate in a Joint Readiness Training Center exercise in August with the 25th Infantry Division. Program officials go to Hawaii this month to brief soldiers on the system and will train them in June.

POINTER WISH LIST: Pointer program managers have high hopes for their high-flying drone. Not only would they like to eventually integrate the aircraft's Global Positioning System data with digital information collected by the Army's weapons systems, but they'd like to give it a night-vision capability. Army Lt. Col. Timothy Lindsay, DOD's program manager for hand-launched UAVs, and Air Force Capt. Ronald Stauffer, special projects officer for the UAV joint program office, say they are in the early stages of looking at image intensifier (12) devices. "It's pretty clear that there are some promising candidates," Lindsay says. Although program managers are less interested in heavier, more expensive forward-looking infrared (FLIR) sensors, "we're going to track that and see where the technology leads. We want to take advantage of what's going on commercially," Lindsay says.

SIGNALLING ASIA: With more than 100 reporters from 15 countries—overwhelmingly from Pacific Rim nations—in attendance for weekend 777 rollout ceremonies, Boeing Chairman Frank Shrontz took the opportunity to send a signal to the organizers of Asia's so-called "Asian Airbus" group that Boeing wants to be involved. "We're willing to be a partner," he says. "We don't have to be prime.

CONFIDENT ARIANESPAC: Europe's Arianespace consortium, recovering from a January launch mishap, is still on track to resume launches in late May at an ambitious clip of one every three weeks. Arianespace has set a target date of May 27 for the launch of the Intelsat VII-F2 from Kourou, French Guiana.

REALLY FLYING TESTBED: Maintenance workers discovered five kilograms of cocaine hidden in a Boeing 757 NASA bought from the Eastern bankruptcy estate for Langley Research Center to use as a flying testbed. Discovered during a C-check of the aircraft at a commercial facility in Greenville, S.C., the illicit cargo was turned over to the federal Drug Enforcement Administration, according to a NASA spokeswoman. Used by the defunct airline for its Latin America runs, the aircraft went to NASA for $24 million (DAILY, March 15, page 402).