

Sacred Cows and Sacrificial Lambs

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Hundreds of government programs and agencies are being made into sacrificial lambs in the rush to balance the federal budget by the year 2002. Affected are assistance to poor people and areas such as education, health care, and the environment that are vital to our society. Amid the sacrificial lambs, however, grazes one sacred cow: our nation's military budget. This budget, which accounts for about 17 percent of total federal outlays, should be competing on its merits against other federal expenditures and contributing its fair share to budget cuts. Instead, it has escaped the budget ax entirely. Far from being reduced, government spending on the military is being increased!

Continued high levels of military spending exceed our nation's security requirements and place undue burdens on our economy and society. Over the six years between fiscal years 1996 and 2001, our military spending will total \$1.6 trillion, an amount equal to the budget of the entire federal government in fiscal 1996! This includes a \$25 billion military spending increase announced by President Clinton in December, 1994 (in what was primarily an attempt to silence

Dissent from \$267 Billion Defense Authorization Bill

"It buys more weapons whose design, function, and purposes are rooted in Cold War strategy and doctrine. It pushes away from an aggressive arms control strategy and potentially back toward global brinkmanship. It seeks to impede effective efforts by the Defense Department to ready itself for the challenges of the current time and the next century—all in the name of keeping it 'ready' for the types of challenges which arose in the past."

-Reps. Ronald Dellums (D-CA), Patricia Schroeder (D-CO), Lane Evans (D-IL), Martin Meehan (D-MA), Members, House Committee on National Security, June 1, 1995

Source: *The Defense Monitor*, Vol. XXIV, No. 6, p. 3, July, 1995.

critics' charges that he was "soft on defense").

With a fiscal 1996 military budget set at \$265 billion, the United States this year will continue to spend on the military at a rate of \$5 billion a week, \$700 million a day, \$500,000 a minute, and \$8,000 a second! This latest budget includes \$7 billion more in spending than even the Pentagon had requested! Most of this unrequested money is for additional research, development, and procurement of weapons and equipment. For example, Congress added \$493 million for the first two of what supporters hope will be as many as 20 additional B-2 bombers beyond the 20 that are already on order. In so doing, they

disregarded Pentagon assertions that it neither needs nor wants more of the bombers.

Currently, America's military spending accounts for almost half of all discretionary, or controllable, federal spending. These are the dollars not earmarked for mandatory entitlement programs such as Social Security or for paying interest on the national debt (See page 21 for details). Expenditures on the latter, like the military budget, are excluded from budget cuts and projected to increase. All of the savings that would be necessary to balance the federal budget are to be squeezed from Medicare, Medicaid, and the remaining slice of the federal budget pie that consists of domestic programs covering everything from education and the environment to highways and national parks.

"A Position of Great Military Strength"

"The United States is currently dealing from a position of great military strength. No one doubts that the United States possesses the best military in the world. Our nuclear deterrent is sound. Our equipment is the most advanced and most capable of any nation and our uniformed personnel exhibit a high degree of competence and technical skill. The resources the nation commits to defense are substantial. Our defense spending is equal to that of the next six nations combined and we and our allies account for 80 percent of the world's expenditures on defense."

-Hans Binnendijk, Director, Institute for National Strategic Studies, National Defense University, Washington, D.C., February, 1995

Source: *The Defense Monitor*, Vol. XXIV, No. 6, p. 2, July, 1995.

Understanding the Problem

Advocates of a larger military budget talk about "a decade of decline" in military spending. They point out that military spending today is about 35 percent lower in real terms than in 1985. Or that the share of our gross domestic product consumed by defense — about 4 percent — is at a 70-year low. But while such comparisons may be historically interesting,

they are less than useful as a guide for policy. To compare current military spending with that of 1985 is to measure it against the high point of the largest peacetime military buildup in recorded history — an anomaly even by Cold War standards. A more accurate accounting would reveal that, despite the fact that the Cold War has ended and despite the absence of any serious threats to the U.S. today, military spending continues at close to average Cold War levels. The U.S. spent \$30 billion more for defense in 1995, in inflation-adjusted dollars, than it did in 1980, a

“Walk Away from the Two-War Strategy”

“We should walk away from the two-war strategy. Neither our historical experience nor our common sense leads us to think we need to do this. We’ve had to fight three major regional contingencies in the past 45 years. One comes along every 15 years or so — two have never come along simultaneously.”

—Gen. Merrill McPeak, Air Force Chief of Staff (1991-94), *Time*, June 5, 1995

Source: *The Defense Monitor*, Vol. XXIV, No. 6, p. 4.

time of great Cold War tension in the wake of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.

Current military spending should be measured not against the past, but against the current capabilities and efforts of potential adversaries and allies. Instead of basing our military spending on the premise that “defense has been cut enough,” we must ask ourselves what credible threats to our security exist today. They are hard to identify. Currently, no nation or group of nations poses a serious military threat to the United States. In the recent past, when we have engaged our military, whether in Panama, Haiti, Somalia, Iraq, or Bosnia, we have done so voluntarily and not because our national security was substantially threatened.

We must as a nation understand the nature and extent of the threats to U.S. national security. It is dangerous to overestimate the threats as well as to underestimate them. In times of lower threat, too much expenditure of our national treasure on excessively large military forces will seriously undermine other avenues of security and threaten to jeopardize the readiness of existing forces. Over time the threats for which the armed forces prepare change. The size and makeup of the armed forces should also change.

Our \$265 billion military budget is more than three times that of the second largest

spender, Russia. It is six times more than our ally Japan’s budget, and eight times more than Germany’s. It is 17 times as large as the combined spending of the six countries often identified by the Pentagon as our most likely adversaries: North Korea, Iran, Iraq, Syria, Libya, and Cuba. The United States will spend more money in three weeks than these potential “enemies” together will spend in an entire year!

Security Reassessment Needed

Today’s tight budgetary constraints make this an especially opportune time to reassess fundamentally U.S. security requirements in the post-Cold War world. The United States could cut its annual military budget to \$175 billion without endangering national security by adopting a more realistic strategy and paring down the existing excessive military force structure. We can do this and still retain powerful and fully-capable fighting forces.

U.S. military needs should be met with well-trained and well-equipped forces tailored to the threats of today. Excessively large forces — assigned for another era or for implausible scenarios — cannot be maintained at adequate levels of readiness. While the Bush and Clinton Administrations made modest reductions from Cold War force and spending levels, the Pentagon’s current plans are ill-conceived and overloaded with excessive and expensive capabilities.

The Clinton Administration’s September, 1993, “Bottom-Up

U.S. Military Budget Dwarfs Others

Country	Military Budget
United States	\$258 Billion
Russia	\$79 B
Japan	\$42 B
France	\$36 B
United Kingdom	\$34 B
Germany	\$29 B
China	\$27 B
Italy	\$16 B
South Korea	\$14 B
Canada	\$9 B
Australia	\$7 B
India	\$7 B
Netherlands	\$7 B
Spain	\$6 B
North Korea	\$5 B
Turkey	\$5 B
Iraq	\$3 B
Pakistan	\$3 B
Belgium	\$3 B
Denmark	\$3 B
Greece	\$3 B
Norway	\$3 B
Iran	\$2 B
Libya	\$2 B
Syria	\$2 B
Portugal	\$2 B
Vietnam	\$0.4 B
Cuba	\$0.3 B

Figures are for latest year available, usually 1994. Expenditures are used in a few cases where official budgets are much lower than actual spending.
Sources: 11.55, DOD. Tables and charts prepared by Center for Defense Information

Review” of U.S. post-Cold War military requirements provides the basis for current U.S. forces planning. Unfortunately, it overstates potential threats and unnecessarily assumes the United States should be able on short notice to fight and win two nearly simultaneous major regional conflicts. It also assumes that the United States should be prepared to act unilaterally, without the help of our strong allies.

The Bottom-Up Review’s recommended force of one-and-a-half million active duty troops is much larger than is needed to meet valid security requirements for the foreseeable future. It is only 7 percent smaller than President Bush’s “Base Force,” which was designed prior to the collapse of the Soviet Union. Realistically, the United States needs only to maintain military readiness sufficient to fight one major regional conflict. This would enable the Pentagon to reduce its active force structure to under a million troops. A smaller military force would still be able to defend the United States and its territories, evacuate American citizens from foreign trouble spots, make

significant contributions to multilateral operations in support of the United Nations, and intervene militarily to protect our truly vital national interests. As insurance, this active force would be backed by one million well-trained and well-equipped yet far less costly National Guard and Reserve forces.

Discontinue Many Modernization Programs

In addition, the United States can afford to discontinue many of the expensive and ambitious weapons modernization programs of the last decade. The huge number of weapons systems purchased in the 1980s and early 1990s will keep the U.S. arsenal well-stocked, in many cases through the first decade of the next century. Rather than produce new weapons that aren’t needed, the emphasis today should be on selective investments in research and development of

“No Compelling Reason to Buy Weapons”

“There is not one compelling reason to buy a single additional bomber, submarine, or tank today, save the preservation of the industrial base. Yet even that is a dubious cause, since, when tens of billions of dollars are involved, even the most skeptical hawk is apt to be amazed at how quickly the private sector can regenerate a needed production capability.”

-Maj. Ralph Peters, Office of the Army Deputy Chief of Staff for Intelligence, Parameters, U.S. Army War College, Summer, 1995
Source: *The Defense Monitor*, Vol. XXIV, No. 6, p. 6, July, 1995.

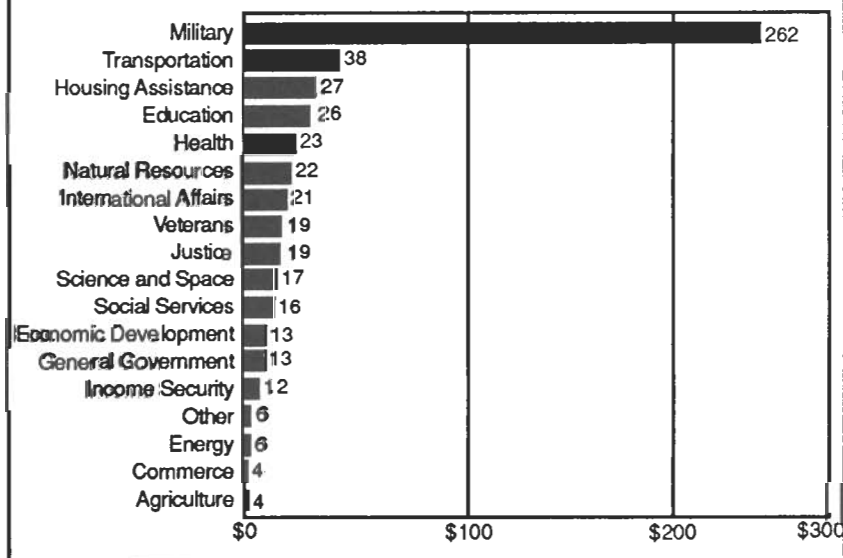
critical new technologies and on upgrades of existing weapons. In the current threat environment, we can afford to wait and see what technologies and weapons are best-suited for the military requirements of the next century.

Any new weapons purchased to replace older ones during the coming period should be specifically designed to respond to post-Cold War threats. Unfortunately, the Pentagon’s weapons procurement strategy remains focused on a few big platform systems which may have little value in non-traditional operations. Technologies that offer a real competitive advantage on the battlefield do not necessarily require whole new platforms to be designed and built. Advanced electronic components and computer systems can be incorporated into older platforms to enhance their effectiveness. Furthermore, these systems are often developed for the commercial market, so military research and development costs can be lowered.

Many of the weapons procurement programs in the current military budget are Cold War relics designed to meet threats and requirements that no longer exist—systems such as the B-2 bomber, MILSTAR communications satellite, and the Seawolf

President Clinton's Proposed 1996 Discretionary Spending

In \$Billions (outlays)



Would You Give More Money to These People?

"We have financial chaos in the Pentagon. We have meaningless accounting numbers. We have meaningless budget numbers. And we have meaningless cost estimates. ...Bad financial information leads to bad decisions. And there is no accountability for fiscal management."

-Sen. Charles Grassley (R-Iowa), U.S. Senate, March 24, 1995.

Source: *The Defense Monitor*, Vol. XXIV, No. 6, p. 6, July, 1995.

submarine. These weapons are far more complicated and costly than required, stuffed with all the latest bells and whistles. In most cases, potential adversaries have weapons and forces that are far less sophisticated and capable than those of the United States, and thus can be overcome at far less effort and cost.

Pentagon Pork

The Pentagon remains the largest source of bureaucratic waste, fraud, and abuse in the federal government. Military contractors and their protectors in Congress fuel wasteful military spending by promoting weapons as jobs programs and stuffing "pork barrel" projects into home districts and states. Much of the \$7 billion in congressional add-ons to the latest military budget was motivated by political and parochial interests, not by legitimate national security concerns. The military budget has become a massive federal program to transfer resources to the "Gun Belt"—those companies and localities that disproportionately benefit from military spending. While a few states and congressional districts are winners, the rest of the country pays more in taxes to the Pentagon than is returned in military contracts and jobs. Meanwhile, calls to "preserve the defense industrial base" have only preserved profits, not jobs.

Besides being laden with unneeded weapons systems, the Pentagon's budget also suffers from duplicated efforts among the armed

services. Retired Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. Merrill A. McPeak has called for reductions in the overlapping roles of the various armed services and cites a need to reduce "excessive overhead" in the military. The Commission on Roles and Missions of the Armed Forces appointed by Congress acknowledges that current military medical readiness is double what even two major regional conflicts would require. Not only do roles overlap, but so do specific capabilities. Currently all four branches of the armed services have an air attack capacity: attack fighters in the Air Force (F-15, F-16), Navy (F-14, F-8) and Marines (F-18, AV-8B); attack helicopters in the Army (Apache, Kiowa) and Marines (Cobra); and bombers in both the Navy (F-18) and Air Force (F15E, B1, B2, B52).

Of course, whether the United States chooses to spend \$175 billion on its military or \$265 billion, in today's world, neither investment by itself can ensure that we will remain strong as a nation. That is because the strength of nations, once more narrowly defined in military terms, now is measured also by the skills of their workers, the imagination of their managers, and the power of their technologies. A strong economy is vital to U.S. security, and we now have the opportunity to make investments vital to our economy. At stake are American jobs, our standard of living, and the quality of life for ourselves and our children.

What do we really need?

The trade-off between high levels of military spending and other societal needs has never been more clear.

Nine nations today spend a higher percentage of their income on kindergarten through 12th grade education than we do,

Virtually every country in the world with an advanced economy spends a much higher percentage of their income on infrastructure, transportation, and communications than we do. We must rebuild our railroads, our highways, and our bridges.

Many of our domestic needs remain unmet. Poverty is worse. Inequality is greater. Jobs are scarce. The squalor and brutality of our cities is a disgrace. Low-cost housing is less affordable. College is getting priced out of reach. Environmental destruction is not a nuisance but a threat. We still devote most of our public research and development money to high-tech weapons, while our competitors invest in civilian technologies to capture the markets of the future. Current spending on our military is four times as much as our government spends on housing, education, job training, community development, and the environment combined. It is sixteen times the amount spent on Aid to Families with Dependent Children, the main federal welfare program, which consumes just one percent of all federal outlays.

In sum, we are spending far more on our military than we need for our security and wasting billions of dollars in the process, dollars that could be reinvested in America. □

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