



# THE DEFENSE MONITOR

The Center for Defense Information believes that strong social, economic, political, and military components and a healthy environment contribute equally to the nation's security. CDI opposes excessive expenditures for weapons and policies that increase the danger of war.

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## The Smallest Warriors: Child Soldiers

### Over 300,000 Affected

Images of civil wars almost always show that children are the heartbreaking victims. But in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, children are not only victims, they are often directly involved in warfare. The United Nations estimates that over 300,000 children are currently active combatants in over 30 countries around the world. In countries as diverse as Afghanistan, Burma, Colombia, Liberia, Peru, Sierra Leone, Sri Lanka, Sudan, and Uganda, children are recruited or impressed into government militaries, paramilitary organizations, and armed opposition groups. Today over 50 countries actively recruit children into their military forces.

Children are affected by armed conflict in several ways. According to UN data, more than 20 million children have been displaced, two million killed, one million orphaned, six million seriously injured or disabled, and 12 million made homeless because of war during the last decade.

Child soldiers – any combatant under 18 – serve alongside adults in government forces, rebel opposition groups, and guerrilla armies. They are used as cooks, couriers, porters, spies, and front line combatants, and in

(continued on page 4)

## Depleted Uranium – A Necessary Evil?

A review of the evidence presented to date about Depleted Uranium – DU – suggests that those who believe that DU is a major threat to humans tend to overstate their case based on existing documented data. Similarly, U.S. officials cavalierly deny there are any dangers without having conducted well-designed studies to document the actual effects of DU munitions. Obviously, what is needed most are more facts and unbiased conclusions.

### The Problem

Depleted uranium has been controversial since the Persian Gulf War in 1991. It was there that U.S. forces first used DU tank and aircraft munitions with DU cores against Iraq's army.

Since the war, Iraqi officials have attributed the increase in cancer rates and birth defects among their people to the residual effects of DU in their soil, water, and air. But Iraq lacks the medical resources to establish a firm link between DU and the deteriorating health of its citizens, and so far it has refused to allow the World Health Organization to conduct a comprehensive survey of DU's possible effects. For its part, the Pentagon denies any connection between DU and the plight of Iraqis. Furthermore, the U.S. military maintains that extensive investigation into the causes of Gulf War Syndrome has not found a direct link to DU.

Recent media stories have raised the level of public awareness on issues regarding DU. More people than just the previous bands of veterans, anti-nuclear, and environmental organizations are now interested in DU.

-In February of this year a Marine aircraft fired 263 DU shells during training at the Navy's Vieques Island bombing range in Puerto Rico. Only 57 of the projectiles were recovered. The Navy admitted the firing violated both Nuclear Regulatory Commission rules and Navy training policies.

-The Air Force has confirmed that 30mm DU rounds were used during the 78 day aerial campaign against Yugoslav forces in Kosovo. The U.N. is undertaking a survey of the province to determine, among other post-war hazards, the levels and extent of contamination. Initial survey results are inconclusive because the U.S. refuses to say where DU was used.

-In August, the Washington Post ran a series of articles on Department of Energy employees exposed to highly radioactive plutonium and other toxic hazards at the Paducah, Kentucky Gaseous Diffusion Plant. The plant reprocesses fuel from military nuclear reactors. One of the byproducts of the reprocessing is DU.

(continued on page 2)

## Question:

***The Pentagon declared its first test of the proposed National Missile Defense system a success. How much of the system just tested will be part of any deployed NMD?***

*see page 5*

**("DU" continued from page 1)**

-A major television network reported that the government is reprocessing 100,000 tons of radioactive metal from the Oak Ridge, Tennessee uranium enrichment plant. Surfaces are being blasted with "steel grit" to remove contaminants, after which the metal is being recycled into everyday products for the home and workplace. No one can tell the extent to which residual radiation (if any) and other potentially toxic substances might be included in products designed for civilian use.

-An August, 1999 preliminary report by a Special Oversight Board on Gulf War Illness reaffirmed conclusions of earlier panels that "available evidence does not support claims that depleted uranium is causing" the illnesses of some Gulf War veterans. But a Canadian researcher has reportedly developed a screening device that is 500,000 times more sensitive to the presence of DU in human urine samples, a chief detection and monitoring medium for DU in humans.

**What Is DU and Why Use It?**

DU is a by-product of "enriching" natural uranium – increasing the proportion of the U235 atom which is the only form of uranium that can sustain a nuclear reaction. Natural uranium has about .71 percent U235; uranium used in power plants must be enriched to 3.2-3.6 percent while nuclear weapons require enrichment as high as 97 percent. After the enriched uranium is recovered, what remains from the process is a large amount of uranium with a concentration of about .3 percent U235 – "depleted" uranium. This makes depleted uranium about half as radioactive as its natural form. However, since depleted uranium is so concentrated, it is more radioactive than its equivalent weight of natural uranium ore.

In the 1960s the U.S. Army noted that armor plating for tanks was

**Those Projected Budget Surpluses**

**"That income and wealth disparities are at record levels should figure in the debate over how to use projected budget surpluses."**

**Center of Budget and Policy Priorities  
September 1999**

becoming too thick to penetrate using traditional high explosive rounds. In addition, main tank armor was being overlaid with layers of material – "stand-off" applique devices – that caused a premature detonation of explosive warheads that dissipated the effect of the incoming rounds. The alternative developed by the Army was a kinetic energy round that could inflict devastation by the sheer force of its impact.

Tungsten, which like lead and uranium is a "heavy metal," had been tested in combination with other metals for use as the core of new tank shells. But the Army discovered that tungsten had a tendency to "mushroom" against rather than penetrate the newer armor. DU, on the other hand, is so hard that it bores through all known tank armor configurations except possibly for DU reinforced tank armor. (No engagements so far have pitted DU armor against DU shells.) Furthermore, when DU strikes armor, small fragments sheer off and ignite spontaneously, increasing the

destructiveness of the hit by setting the target tank on fire. Conversely, when sandwiched between layers of armor plating on a tank, DU increases the resistance of the tank to enemy shells. Indeed, in the Gulf War, Iraqi tank shells failed to penetrate any DU-reinforced parts of U.S. tanks.

DU is the core in many types of ammunition now fired from Army tanks and infantry fighting vehicles, Marine amphibious vehicles, Army and Marine attack helicopters, and Air Force, Navy and Marine aircraft. By early 1994, more than 1.6 million DU tank gun and 55 million smaller caliber rounds of DU ammunition had been produced.

DU rounds used in the Persian Gulf War are detailed in the following table. Since then, the Air Force has used almost 200,000 more DU rounds in attacks against Iraq. A small amount of DU munitions was used in Bosnia in the mid-1990s. The number of DU 30mm rounds used in Kosovo is still undetermined.

**DU Consumed in the Gulf**

Service and Weapon	Projectile Type	# Rounds Used	DU in Tons
Army/USMC Tanks*	105mm	504	2.14
Army/USMC Tanks*	120mm	9,048	48.41
USAF A-10 Warthog	30mm API	783,514	235
Navy Phalanx CIWS	20mm	4-5**	-
Marine AV-8A Harrier	25mm	67,436	11
UK Challenger Tanks	120mm	~100	1

\*Number of DU rounds in pre-positioned USMC stocks that were sent to the Gulf is unknown. M2/M3Bradleys had no DU rounds in the Gulf. These were not available until 1995.

\*\*Accidental firing

## The Controversy

While the military effectiveness of DU seems unquestionable, its effects on human and environmental health remain controversial.

Like all uranium, DU emits Alpha, Beta, and Gamma radiation. Alpha radiation, which cannot penetrate skin or clothing, is not a health hazard as long as uranium is not inhaled (as dust) or consumed when eating or drinking. Exposure to Beta and Gamma radiation is dangerous whether the exposure is external or internal. However, in a Pentagon-directed survey of scientific literature examining the role DU might play in Gulf War Illness, the National Defense Research Institute of the RAND Corporation said that these two forms of radiation "have been measured at levels below those expected to be of concern." The "expected" comparative standard used by RAND is the one set by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) for civilians who routinely work with radioactive substances. The RAND study says that a person would have to hold an "unshielded DU penetrator for more than 250 hours" to reach the NRC limit.

Radiation is not the only hazard. DU, like natural uranium and other heavy metals, is chemically toxic in the body. It can form chemical compounds called oxides that dissolve in moisture, including the human blood stream. Medical tests show that approximately 90% of the dissolved oxides are purged from the body in a 72 hour period. The oxide not purged distributes itself throughout the body, mainly in the skeleton and kidneys.

What is in dispute is the level at which exposure becomes toxic and for how long the exposure must continue

## Congressional Nonsense

For the past two years, Congress has attached a provision to the Defense Authorization Bill which prohibits the President from unilaterally reducing our nuclear arsenal below START I limits (roughly 6,500 warheads) until Russia ratifies START II.

Since the best estimates put the costs of maintaining this arsenal at about \$35 billion per year, even the Pentagon wants to reduce the number of warheads. START II would limit both ours and Russia's arsenal to no more than 3,500 warheads. The U.S. has agreed to that level by ratifying START II, but Russia, because of its concerns about the expansion of NATO and NATO's actions in Kosovo, has not.

Can anyone seriously believe that we jeopardize our military security by having only 3,500 nuclear warheads? One thousand would be more than enough to blow the planet out of orbit.

Senator Robert Kerrey (D-NE) offered an amendment to strike the language preventing reductions in nuclear warheads and came surprisingly close to winning on a vote of 55-44.

Great nations should have no hesitancy in acting boldly. It was George Bush who ordered nuclear testing by the U.S. stopped in 1992 and challenged the Russians to do likewise. Within a week, Gorbachev announced Russia too would stop testing. Neither side has tested since.

to have serious health effects. The RAND study concludes that only "chronic exposure to natural uranium in food or water, except presumably at extraordinary concentrations, is associated with morbidity in man or animals." For inhaled uranium, the report notes that "no increase in overall deaths has been observed" in several medical studies of workers exposed to uranium. On the basis of the scientific literature related to Gulf War Illness, therefore, RAND concludes that "the concentration of uranium used to elicit any observed effects [on reproductive health] through ingestion or inhalation are orders of magnitude greater than the highest exposure that would occur in military or industrial settings."

What is curious about this conclusion is that the U.S. Army Environmental Policy Institute recommended in 1995 that the Army

needed to develop procedures to "minimize exposure to the chemical and radiological hazards of DU." It also seems odd, if the hazards from DU are so minimal, that tank shells with DU cores are not fired in tank gunnery training and – until the Navy's February 1999 admission – were presumed never to have been fired from aircraft engaged in routine training missions. Cost may well be the predominate reason for not using DU rounds in training. Pentagon contracts for 120mm DU tank rounds purchased in 1996 and early 1998 show the average price per shell was approximately \$3,300 while both kinetic energy and high explosive training rounds purchased in the same years were slightly over \$500 each. (Interestingly, non-training, non-DU rounds purchased by Saudi Arabia in late 1996 cost \$5,878 each, but this price includes surcharges associated with the Foreign Military Sales program administered by the Pentagon.) Even with this cost differential, however, avoiding unnecessary exposure to DU to mitigate subsequent health claims undoubtedly enters into the picture.

## Relevancy

"[The Army] cannot simply be what it was and think that it is going to be relevant for this new, complex world that is emerging."

John Hamre  
Deputy Secretary of Defense  
August 1999

## Why We Need to Fund Education

"There are 28 million Americans who cannot locate the United States on a map of the world."

Pollster George Gallup  
September 1999

The Pentagon obviously harbors some concerns about potential adverse effects of nonbattle exposure to DU. But in wartime these concerns disappear. In its Environmental Exposure Report of July 31, 1998, the Pentagon's Office of the Special Assistant for Gulf War Illness said that a review of regulations in effect at the time of the Gulf War "indicates that much of this guidance was in fact excessive and impractical in an operational setting." Even so, on the same page the report concedes that suitable alternative protective measures were unavailable.

### Conclusion

During battle, the potential adverse chemical and radiological effects of DU munitions are relatively small compared to other hazards. However, this "relativity" cannot serve as an excuse to avoid warning soldiers about the potential effects of unnecessary exposure through handling or firing DU shells nor to suspend continuing research into ways to avoid potential adverse health and environmental effects of DU munitions.

Moreover, this research must extend beyond active battlefields and the immediate time frame of engagements. As much as 70 percent of a DU round can become airborne as small particles, travel appreciable distances away from a battle area, and affect noncombatants. Settled dust-size particles can contaminate water tables, posing an increased risk to civilian populations. Furthermore, even if particles settle on the surface, they become airborne again when disturbed by wind, animals or people or when equipment hit by DU

rounds is moved for any reason. Knowing that DU dust could become airborne again led salvage workers to carefully wrap in plastic the remains of 660 DU tank rounds and three DU armored tanks destroyed in a fire in Kuwait in July, 1991, before the cargo was shipped to the U.S. for disposal. This is a curious precaution if the danger from DU is so minimal.

Finally, in spite of the many official statements that DU poses only minimal or no health and environmental risks, the unanswered questions suggest that extra caution is in order for the men and women serving in the armed forces until more definitive information is available. Some type of hazardous substance marking for DU should be standard throughout the U.S. armed services and among our allies, as is the practice for chemical and nuclear hazards. Concerted efforts must be made to publicize to the lowest troop levels the numerous protective measures to be taken for those who come into contact with DU. This applies not just to those in the combat arms but also to medical personnel who might treat wounds caused by DU munitions and maintenance personnel who deal with DU damaged equipment. In addition, the Pentagon should

expedite its work to find alternative materials for armor-piercing projectiles in order to reduce the exposure of tank crews and others who handle DU munitions.

If the new screening device developed in Canada proves reliable in detecting residual DU, denials of responsibility for illnesses suffered by some who fought in the Gulf War and by the civilian populations in Iraq, Bosnia, and Kosovo may have to be revised. Even before the new screening device was developed, pressure had been mounting to eliminate DU in munitions. The United Nations Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities passed a resolution calling for a ban on depleted uranium and other weapons that involve long-term effects on "human life, health and the environment."

We have learned that the actions of one country in even one place can have significant repercussions on the environment that all humans share. DU may be "good" for war, but what seems increasingly clear is that it is bad for our planet and for all forms of life. If we cannot stop war, we should at least be wise enough to mitigate its effects.

### Coming Up

Don't miss the next Defense Monitor. It will contain an analysis of both the FY2000 Defense Budget as well as the status of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty.

#### ("Warriors" continued from page 1)

other combat and non-combat capacities. Child soldiers are subjected to life threatening risks beyond the normal dangers of war. Sometimes, they are made to walk across fields to "ensure" there are no landmines. They also face dehumanizing treatment: rape, torture, and myriad forms of psychological abuse. Often child soldiers are given drugs and alcohol to make it "easier" for them to undertake combat activities.

Even after a conflict has ended, or a child escapes from the armed forces

to which he or she belonged, the hardships these children face do not end immediately. Former child soldiers often have physical disabilities and bear psychological scars from the killing and fighting - much like their adult counterparts. But children have special rehabilitation needs that transcend those required by adult soldiers. Many children were removed from school at an early age and have no skills other than those they have learned as soldiers. In order to ensure that these children are reintegrated into their communities

and become productive members of post-war societies, special educational services and skills training are required.

### International Law

Although child soldiers are subjected to unspeakable horrors, the international community has been slow in outlawing the use of children under 18 in armed conflicts. Today, international law regarding child soldiers is governed primarily by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Convention states that children under 15 cannot be recruited, conscripted, or made to participate in armed conflict. Every country in the United Nations, except the United States and Somalia – a country with no functioning government – has signed the Convention.

Currently, a number of governments are working in Geneva to establish an Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child that would raise the minimum age for recruitment and participation in conflict to 18. The working group has met over the past five years, but so far has been unable to reach consensus as to the wording and terms of the protocol. This delay is in part due to the United States, which does not want to give up its practice of recruiting youths under 18 for military service.

A statute of the International Criminal Court, adopted in July 1998, says that it is a war crime for a child under 15 to be recruited, conscripted, or forced to participate in armed conflict. The statute has not yet been tested, however, and only time will tell if this measure has any effect in preventing or halting the use of child soldiers – or more importantly, punishing those who force children to participate in war.

Due in part to the UN Secretary-General's appointment of Olara Otunnu as the Special Representative for Children in Armed Conflict, more attention has been given to the challenge of eliminating the wide spread use of child soldiers. The United Nations has also embraced the opportunity to take the lead on the child soldier issue within its own peacekeeping forces. A UN policy established in May,

1999, directs governments not to send military observers and civilian police younger than 25 to participate in UN operations. The UN wants other peacekeeping troops to be at least 21, but definitely not younger than 18. The policy affects the 14,000 troops, military observers, and police from 76 countries currently in the United Nation's 17 peacekeeping missions in the field.

### A Split U.S. Policy

The United States has provided over \$20 million in aid to displaced

children and war victims in Angola, Congo, Croatia, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kosovo, Lebanon, Mozambique, Northern Uganda, and Vietnam. But using the international definition of "child soldiers" to mean anyone under 18, the United States itself uses child soldiers.

Although conscription is limited to those 18 and over, the United States military has a long-standing practice of recruiting youths under the age of 18 and allowing them to be designated to fill combat positions. The Pentagon opposes the Optional Protocol because the U.S. wants to preserve its current

CHILD SOLDIERS and U.S. MILITARY TRANSFERS and TRAINING			
	CHILD SOLDIERS		VALUE OF U.S. MILITARY EQUIPMENT TRANSFERS AND TRAINING 1997
COUNTRIES USING CHILD SOLDIERS	Lowest Age Recorded	Estimated Number	Total \$US
Algeria	not available (paramilitary "communal guards")	not available	\$108,000
Angola	14	3,000	~\$174,000
Bangladesh	16	100's	\$2,856,000
Cambodia	8	6,000	\$1,484,000
Colombia	8 (paramilitaries) 15 (national security forces)	>15,000	\$33,061,950
Congo-Brazzaville	15	not available	\$203,000
Pakistan	16	1,000's	\$204,662,000
Peru	11	1,000's	\$1,815,000
Rwanda	7	14-18,000	\$435,000
Sierra Leone	8 (Civilian Defense Forces)	3,000	~\$89,000
Uganda	Legislation allows 13 year old recruits	100's	\$1,350,000
TOTAL			\$246,237,950

Sources: U.S. Campaign to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers; International Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers; Demilitarization for Democracy

### Answer:

**Only one part, the actual kinetic energy "kill" warhead with its close-in sensors. All other elements, the booster rocket, radars to track the target, the interceptor guidance system, and "battle management system" were either substitutes or simulated.**

practice of recruiting those under 18, especially since all services except the Marines have missed their fiscal year 1999 recruiting goals. Yet according to Department of Defense statistics, under-18s make up only one-half of one percent of the total U.S. military force – approximately 7,000 troops. But, U.S. 17 year-olds did serve in Bosnia and the Gulf War.

The United States military also contributes to the militarization of America's youth through its Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (JROTC) programs. Over 200,000 high school boys and girls are currently enrolled in JROTC, learning how to march, act, and think like soldiers. Some programs also teach high school children how to shoot. Recently, former Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Colin Powell and Secretary of the Army Louis Caldera announced the expansion of the JROTC program. Their goal is to add an additional 50 high schools every year for the next five years which will result in a total of 1,620 high schools with a JROTC program.

Beyond using under-18s as soldiers, the U.S. often turns a blind eye to their use by other countries. As the world's number one arms exporter, the United States provides significant amounts of weaponry to half of the countries known to use child soldiers. In 1997 alone, the U.S. transferred almost a quarter billion dollars worth of military weapons and training to governments

### **The Price People Pay**

*"Although prices are low, the social cost of arms sales is high. Countries that are among the world's poorest spend hundreds of millions of dollars buying small arms and other weapons. Funds are diverted, crops are mortgaged, and relief supplies are stolen to finance these purchases. In each case, it is the people who are the losers."*

*-Secretary of State Madeleine Albright  
October, 1999*

### **History Redux in East Timor**

Events in East Timor and the reluctance of the permanent members of the UN Security Council to take or to authorize others to take action to protect East Timorese were hauntingly similar to what occurred in Rwanda in 1995. There the UN pulled out even its lightly armed peacekeepers as the mayhem spread. In East Timor there were no armed UN personnel but countries in the region — notably Australia, New Zealand, and Thailand — volunteered to send in troops when the Security Council acted.

By coincidence, on September 2, just three days after the East Timorese voted overwhelmingly for independence from Indonesia, Jacques Gansler, Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Technology, spoke to a military audience about the nature of future wars. Among other things, Mr. Gansler said that he "would expect that aggression is going to be much more instantaneous, very brutal, very difficult to defend against....Our reaction to that form of aggression has to be very swift and also very decisive...within a 24-hour period."

The clincher, however, was this: "We're going to have relatively short, very intense regional conflicts that are most likely going to be followed up by very extended periods of peacekeeping."

That assumes, of course, that a region's population hasn't been driven off or otherwise decimated by an aggressor.

that used children under the age of 17. In same year, the U.S. provided \$231,832,500 in foreign military sales (government to government sales) and excess defense articles to governments using children under 17 in their armed forces. It also authorized an additional \$10,766,500 in commercial military sales to these countries.

### **What can be done?**

To prevent more children from suffering the horrors of soldiering and combat, steps should be taken to ensure that future generations are not forced to serve in armed conflict or wage adult wars.

First, the United States should adopt a policy barring under-18s from participating in armed conflict. In the short term, the United States should temporarily reassign under-18s to non-combat positions until they reach their eighteenth birthday. This at the very least would bring the United States closer to the emerging international consensus regarding the minimum age for military service.

Second, the United States should drop its objection to an international agreement establishing 18 as the

minimum age for recruitment or participation in armed conflict. Since the United States is not even a party to the parent treaty, U.S. opposition is misplaced. The United States should not object to other countries moving forward in protecting their children even if we choose not to follow suit.

Third, the United States should eliminate military aid that facilitates the use of child soldiers by other governments and armed political groups. Current U.S. law prohibits military assistance and training to units that commit human rights abuses. This concept should be expanded to include the use of child soldiers as a criterion for halting U.S. military aid. Again, at the very least, the United States should bar military aid to any country whose armed forces use children under 17 (to be consistent with current U.S. policy) or which support paramilitary forces that use children below the same age. U.S. diplomats should also urge such governments to stop using child soldiers.

Children have no role in the world's most horrific occupation. The United States has an obligation to help end the practice of forcing children into combat.

("A Story Yet Untold" continued from page 8)

While all these shenanigans have been interesting, the media have not been making clear to the public the underlying reason this is going on. It's not complicated, but it is serious.

In the summer of 1998, the Pentagon's Chiefs of Staff advised the President that the military had to have a \$150 billion increase over the ensuing six years, beginning with the year 2000. The President apparently made no firm commitment at the time, but when he submitted his budget to Congress the following February, he requested a \$112 billion increase for the six-year period beginning in FY2000, a substantial increase although \$38 billion short of what the Pentagon wanted.

The President's proposal deflated congressional defense hawks who were poised to attack the President for being "soft on defense" had his request for the Pentagon been an amount they felt they could convince the American people was woefully inadequate. (There's nothing as exhilarating to a member of the opposite party as catching an adversary voting against anything associated with defense so that the charge of being "soft on defense" can be hurled at the shirker.) Even though the President's proposed \$112 billion increase was more than had been anticipated, the Appropriations Committees of both the House and Senate quickly upped the ante to \$133 billion.

Enter the fly in the ointment – the budget caps on spending set out in the 1997 Balanced Budget Act. That act set a limit on discretionary spending, and while there was no cap set on military spending, all other agencies are left with whatever Defense doesn't get. Both the Senate and House Committees have agreed to a \$20 billion increase in authority for Defense for FY2000, so everyone else has had to fight for what is left, which under the budget caps is very little. Defense got about 50% of the total this year, and Defense budget authority in 2002 will hit \$302 billion.

But members of Congress feel they simply cannot go home having given Defense such a hefty increase while everybody else had to fight just to try to stay even with 1999 appropriation levels.

Thus, all the gimmicks to find increases without "busting" the caps in the 1997 Budget Act.

The real "puzzlement" is why both parties insist that Defense has been slighted over the past few years and that we must "rebuild" our military. Bear in mind that on top of the huge increases for the next six years, the Pentagon also received a handsome supplemental appropriations of \$11 billion earlier this year to pay for Kosovo, an amount far in excess of the costs of the war. (The President had requested only \$5 billion.) This \$11 billion was declared an "emergency," and any time Congress and the President agree that spending is concerned with an "emergency," then that amount doesn't count against the 1997 budget caps. Congress and the President also agreed to spend an additional \$8 billion for "emergency" farm aid.

As a point of interest, Congress has already appropriated enough money to use up the "pure" surplus (revenue in excess of the projected budget, excluding Social Security and Medicare) for FY2000, which was to be part of the much-vaunted trillion dollar surplus. And the rhetoric already surrounding the FY2001 budget suggests that the projected surplus for that year is going fast.

Any way you slice it, of the thirteen appropriations bills, Defense got theirs first, and everybody else is left to fend for themselves. The price for this will be reflected later in more crumbling schools, more under-educated children, environmental superfund sites untended, medical research on hold, national parks deteriorating, and a host of other areas dealing with our quality of life.

There is no new military threat in sight to justify such lavish Pentagon spending, but the danger posed by the poor state of national education alone demands dramatic action. Two years ago Congress passed a bill which now annually gives citizenship to over 100,000 aliens who qualify to perform in high tech jobs. It is a monumental dereliction of our national responsibility that we have to import people, mostly from much poorer countries, to fill high-tech jobs in America. On the other hand, it isn't so hard to understand why this is so when we reflect on the fact that among the 29 nations in the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, we rank 19<sup>th</sup> in education and our teachers are the lowest paid, as a percentage of national income, of any nation on earth.



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## A Story Yet Untold

Among the many suggestions coming from Congress about how to keep government spending in line is talk of authorizing money for Fiscal Year (FY)2000 but not letting the funds actually be spent until FY2001. You may have seen the media's tag for this trial budget balloon: they call it the "thirteen month" year.

In fairness, something similar was done in 1987 when federal pay and benefit checks went out the first day of October, the first day of FY1988, rather than the last day of September, the day checks are normally mailed. By doing so, the amount of the checks was charged to the new fiscal year rather than the year just ended. It was a way to keep from spending money in excess of the amount that had been appropriated for the old (1987) year's budget.

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