

The Center for Defense Information conducts in-depth research on the social, economic, environmental, political and military components of international security. CDI aims to educate the public and inform policymakers on issues of security policy, strategy, operations, weapon systems and defense budgeting, and to produce creative solutions to them.

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Nuclear Recollections

By Bruce G. Blair, President

Rear Adm. Eugene (Gene) Carroll, our beloved colleague who passed away this February, often shared with me his recollections of the role he once played in planning for nuclear war. As quoted in his obituary in the *Washington Post*, Gene once wrote: "During the horrible confrontation with the Soviet Union we called the Cold War, I frequently stood nuclear alert watch on aircraft carriers. For a period of time my assigned target was an industrial complex and transportation hub in a major city in Eastern Europe. . . . My bomb alone would have resulted in

the death of an estimated 600,000 human beings. Multiply that by 40 or 50 times and you can understand what two carriers alone would have done."

Gene and I felt similarly about the impact that our military experiences with nuclear weapons had on our thinking. And we reached the same conclusions about their lack of military utility and about the immorality of their use.

As a Minuteman missile launch officer during the 1970s, I "fought" about 100 nuclear wars in mock underground launch centers in Califor-

nia and Montana. Testers behind a panoramic one-way mirror at our backs watched every move my crewmate and I took. The consoles before us rang bells, spit out print-outs, and sent voice and print messages from the mock chain of command. Every blinking light and alarm and message had been carefully scripted by the master computer. We waited for the opening computer move with apprehension. Only the testers, themselves seasoned launch officers, knew the sequence of events that would unfold

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In Memoriam

It is with deep sadness that CDI must share the news of the recent passing of two of the organization's strongest supporters.

Harold Willens, a co-founder of The Center for Defense Information, died March 17. His wise counsel and financial support sustained CDI in its early years. His efforts on behalf of nuclear nonproliferation helped set a direction for the organization's work. The passion and energy he devoted to the cause of peace will live on as an inspiration to his col-

leagues and the CDI staff.

Rear Adm. Eugene J. Carroll, Jr., U.S. Navy (Ret.), passed away on Feb. 19. Adm. Carroll joined CDI after a 35 year naval career, and was with the organization for 17 years, serving briefly as its director, until he retired in 2001. He was the conscience of CDI and will live on in the hearts and memories of his friends and colleagues at CDI and throughout the world.

Adm. Carroll's family requests that donations in lieu of flowers and other

gifts be made to a CDI memorial fund established in his name. Your contributions will support a special future CDI program to be approved by the Carroll family.

Tax-deductible contributions may be submitted by calling Judy Edwards at 202-797-5260.

Alternatively, checks may be sent to:

Center for Defense Information
Adm. Eugene Carroll Memorial Fund
1779 Massachusetts Ave., N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20036

The Pentagon's Fiscal Year 2004 Budget Request: Still Growing Strong

By Christopher Hellman, Senior Analyst

The administration of President George W. Bush is requesting \$399.1 billion for the military in fiscal year 2004 (\$379.9 billion for the Defense Department and \$19.3 billion for the nuclear weapons functions of the Department of Energy). This is \$16.9 billion above current levels, an increase of 4.4 percent.

According to Pentagon projections, the defense budget will grow to **\$503 billion** in fiscal year 2009. In all, the administration plans to spend **\$2.7 TRILLION** on the military over the next six years – and this as both the Office of Management and Budget and the Congressional Budget Office project a federal deficit as high as \$200 billion to \$300 billion next year.

In presenting the request, the Bush administration stated that the demands placed on the Pentagon in supporting the war on terrorism, coupled

with the need to transform the military to one better suited to meet the demands of the 21st Century, necessitated higher budgets. And with war against Iraq looming, few in Washington were willing to dispute this.

In fact, defense hawks in Congress responded to the proposed budget immediately, saying that the requested spending levels were too low. Rep. Duncan Hunter, R-Calif., the new chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, has made clear his intent to provide additional resources for the Pentagon. This will bring him into direct conflict with fiscal conservatives even in his own party. And with triple digit deficits projected, any increases in Pentagon spending will likely come at the expense of federal domestic programs.

“Myths” about the Annual Defense Budget

Yet there are a number of important issues one needs to remember about the annual Pentagon budget. The first, and most important, is that the defense budget does not pay for wars. There is a simple and valid reason for this; it takes the Defense Department and Congress over two years to develop and pass a one-year budget. You simply can't anticipate that far in advance unexpected events such as war, that will require federal funds. Federal law provides mechanisms for funding these unanticipated requirements outside the normal budget process in the form of supplemental appropriations (See Box). So, while the public perception is that military op-

erations in Iraq and Afghanistan necessitate higher annual defense budgets, this is simply not the case.

A second common misconception is that higher military spending enhances homeland security, when actually homeland security – preventing future acts of terrorism in the United States and responding to such acts should they occur – is primarily a function of state and local governments, and federal agencies outside the Defense Department such as the FBI, FEMA, and the Coast Guard.

The Defense Department's involvement in homeland security is basically limited to the collection and dissemination of intelligence information – a function that the Pentagon would perform with or without the threat of terrorist attacks – the development of ways to respond to biological and chemical attacks, and the flying of air

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Fiscal Year 2003 Supplemental Appropriations

On March 25, the Bush Administration submitted its fiscal year 2003 supplemental appropriations request to Congress. The request totaled \$74.7 billion, including \$63 billion for the military, with the remainder going to homeland security (\$4.3 billion), international assistance (\$5 billion), and reconstruction in Iraq (\$2.4 billion). Congress approved the final version in early April, adding \$2.4 billion to assist the airline industry.

Federal Agencies Facing Funding Cuts Under the Administration's FY 04 Budget Proposal:

	percent cut
Justice Department	5
Agriculture Department	2
Labor Department	3
Department of Interior	2
Department of Housing and Urban Development	1
Environmental Protection Agency	2
Small Business Administration	2

Another War, Another Round of Land Mines?

This article first appeared in the "Christian Science Monitor" on Feb. 18, 2003.

By Eugene Carroll and Rachel Stohl

WASHINGTON – While UN inspectors are searching for dangerous weapons hidden in Iraq by Saddam Hussein, they must also be wary of American weapons already lurking there.

These are not the nuclear, chemical, or biological weapons that President Bush charges Iraq is concealing, but they're equally indiscriminate and dangerous. Antipersonnel land mines emplaced by the US during the Gulf War in 1991, as well as those from the Iran-Iraq war, now continue to kill or maim up to 30 Iraqis each month.

Because land mines are such indiscriminate tools of war – thousands of innocent civilians worldwide are killed each year – the majority of nations in the world have signed the Ottawa Mine Ban Treaty. The treaty prohibits the use, trade, production, or stockpiling of antipersonnel land mines in conflicts anywhere. The US, however, has chosen not to sign this convention.

Now, with war impending, the

US has an important policy decision to make: Will it use land mines in its military operations again?

It is ironic that any US operation in Iraq will have to contend with the snares of its own land mines – both those already in the ground and any new ones emplaced. But beyond the military pros and cons of using land mines, the US must also consider their humanitarian impact.

Today, Iraq already has an estimated 600,000 to 1 million internally displaced people. A US attack and an increased presence of land mines will only make this growing population more vulnerable and cause humanitarian aid to be more difficult. With new land mines in place, the present rate of land-mine casualties can only grow.

Internationally, there are concerns over whether the US will ask other countries to violate the terms of the Mine Ban Treaty. All members of NATO, except the US and Turkey, have joined the treaty. Additionally, Qatar, which will serve

as headquarters for future US military action in Iraq, is a party to the Mine Ban Treaty. Allowing the US to transfer mines across its borders for use in Iraq would put Qatar in direct violation of the treaty.

During the Gulf War, US war-fighting doctrine listed four types and uses for land mines:

- Protective minefields to add temporary strength to weapons positions, or other obstacles.
- Tactical minefields emplaced as part of an overall obstacle plan to stop, delay, and disrupt enemy attacks; reduce enemy mobility, channel enemy formations, block enemy penetrations, and protect friendly flanks.
- Point minefields emplaced in friendly or uncontested areas and intended to disorganize enemy forces or block an enemy counter-attack.
- Interdiction minefields emplaced in enemy-held areas to disrupt lines of communication.

However, even with clear-cut rationales for using land mines, some US commanders were fearful that their own mines would endanger friendly forces and decrease battlefield mobility. In fact, as in all previous wars, US troops were not immune to the dangers of land mines in the Gulf War. Of the 1,364 US casualties in the Gulf War, 81 – 6 percent – were caused by land mines.

Moreover, the military benefit of land-mine usage in the Gulf War is unclear. According to a September 2002 General Accounting Office re-

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Effects of Sept. 11 Attacks on Annual Defense Budget	
	\$ in Billions
Defense Budget on Sept. 11 (Fiscal Year 2001)	\$310.6
Defense Budget on Sept. 11 in current (FY'03) dollars	\$327.1
Current Defense Budget (FY'03)	\$382.2
Increase since Sept. 11	\$55.1
	(16.8%)
Projected Defense Budget (FY'09)	\$502.7
Projected Increase over Current	\$120.5
	(31.5%)
Projected Increase over Sept. 11 levels	\$175.6
	(53.7%)

NUCLEAR RECOLLECTIONS

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before us. It was the ultimate beat-the-clock pop quiz.

We had butterflies before and during every simulation. As we yelled back and forth our reading of the unfolding scenario and advice on how we should react to the latest sounds and sights in our control post, we sometimes succumbed to bloomin-buzzin confusion. This usually happened when forced to open up several checklists at once to deal simultaneously with, say, an equipment fire in our control post and a buzzer alarm indicating a break-in at one of the 50 distant missile silos linked to us by underground cable. We would madly try to figure out which calamity took precedence, and run through the checklists before the master computer laid another mind-bending trip on us.

Our confidence surged knowing we were having a “good ride” in the simulator, or collapsed when we felt hopelessly confused or knew we made a major mistake. A crew’s status and reputation are on the line. Committing a single critical error results in a loss of face within the tight-knit missile crew force. It also may mean a lot of remedial training. To be de-certified as a crewmember means that one is no longer eligible to pull alert duty at the real-world underground launch centers. Flunking the test puts an extra burden on others. Friends will work extra shifts until you are re-certified.

It’s nerve-wracking because it’s easy to make a critical mistake. If we decoded a message incorrectly and dialed a single wrong digit into the

computer that targeted our missiles, we might attack and destroy cities instead of rural missile silos in Russia. We could have easily killed millions of civilians by mistake.

We were usually still processing checklists when a warble tone signifying an incoming missile attack would be heard on our loudspeaker. We would hurriedly, sometimes frantically, strap into our chairs. In the real world, we would expect a violent shaking of our capsule mounted on giant shock absorbers. But in the mock run we were blasé and continued to race through the checklists.

We knew there was a system to the madness. The drill led us inexorably up the ladder of escalation, from a minor fire or incident to a full-blown order to unleash all 50 missiles. We had been conditioned, like Pavlov’s dogs, to expect certain war orders to flow in a certain sequence, culminating in the launch of all 50 missiles. It was classic conditioned reflexes with absolute psychological certainty that it would end in a hypothetical all-out nuclear war.

There was no feeling of dread or guilt as we decoded the launch order and marched through the two-minute launch drill. We checked the top secret codes in the message using sealed-envelope codes kept in our lunchbox-sized safe. In the simulator, they almost always matched. We retrieved the two launch keys from the same safe and inserted them into the special switches next to our consoles. The launch order reveals the war plan and a couple of keystrokes would send our missiles the proper target coordinates. The computers onboard the missiles have files of wartime coordinates and automatically switch targets in a fraction of a second. We

read an 8-digit code from the launch order and dialed it into a panel near my chair. This code unlocked the missiles and enables them to receive the next and last computer instruction from me and my crewmate – the “fire” signal that ignites the motors and propels the missiles half way around the planet in 30 minutes.

No more than two minutes elapsed between the time of the launch order’s arrival and our final key-turn. This is not an exercise of rational thought or leadership. It is nuclear war by rote, by checklists and robotic human action, albeit robots feeling butterflies and stress to do the job well. But no feelings whatsoever existed for the consequences at the other end of the missiles’ trajectories. Fifty missiles could easily kill many tens of millions of Russians – or Chinese or any other nationality in our cross-hairs. And we knew the aimpoints included multiple strikes on Moscow and Beijing.

But this antiseptic mock drill officially ended when the missiles left their silos. The exercise concentrates the mind on little green and red lights on the consoles, the last in the sequence reporting “missile away” in green. It was a question of getting the local job done right, getting debriefed by our evaluators behind the mirror, and going home. Everything else was above our pay grade.

No little lights of conscience flickered in our minds. Launch officers in their early twenties, like myself, rarely struggled with the moral question of following orders that potentially could kill so many innocent civilians. It was all rationalized in the name of ‘deterrence.’

This has not changed over the many decades of nuclear vigil main-

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NUCLEAR RECOLLECTIONS

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tained in launch centers. I have returned on occasion, most recently last year, to the great plains of the country to discuss launch duties with freshly minted crewmembers. I am always struck by their attitudes and rationalizations for preparing to fight a nuclear war. They could have been me decades ago. The Cold War has reportedly ended since I served, but nothing much has changed in

the sterile nuclear netherland. New crewmembers go to war using computers in a "Windows"-like manner instead of fumbling with grease pencils, but still many thousands of targets remain in their nuclear crosshairs. Emotionally, it's exactly the same. The strongest emotion was, and still is, the feeling of satisfaction and crew camaraderie for having pushed the right buttons at the right time in a simulated nuclear war.

Perhaps more profound questions would weigh on the hearts and minds of the young men and women

manning the consoles if the fateful order someday comes. But in any case, we have only ourselves to blame for putting them in such a morally untenable position. The thought that my son, or daughter even, might someday be expected to stand ready to fire nuclear missiles fills me with moral revulsion at our failed leadership in the world. It would not be his or her fault that we as a nation, having suspended our morality during the Cold War, lacked the vision and sensibility to stand down now that it's over. ■

2004 BUDGET REQUESTS

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defense combat patrols over the United States. These activities account for roughly \$10 billion annually, or less than 3 percent of the proposed FY 04 budget. And only the air combat patrols, which cost roughly \$2 billion, are new functions requiring new resources.

One of the Defense Department's highest stated priorities is "transformation"—the development of technologies and programs intended to make the military more agile, lethal, and better able to conduct joint operations involving more than one of the military services. Pentagon Comptroller Dov Zakheim has indicated that \$24 billion in FY 04 will be dedicated to transformational technologies. In all, the FY 04 budget request contains \$135 billion for research and procurement, the lion's share of which goes for the development and purchase of new weapons.

Yet transformational programs account for only 18 percent of this total. Of that amount, nearly \$10 billion dol-

lars will go for missile defense programs, leaving roughly 10 percent to fund transformation. Further, additional funds will go for other programs such as the Navy's "Virginia" class submarine and the Army's "Comanche" helicopter that have been deemed "transformational," but which actually represent traditional Pentagon priorities. And while the Bush administration campaigned on a program of funding new research and development and transformation by terminating certain Cold War weapon systems, no major weapons programs are cancelled in the FY 04 budget.

The simple fact is, when it comes to the defense budget, we do not actually get what we think we are buying. Since the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks the an-

nual defense budget has increased by roughly \$55 billion, and will reach over one-half trillion dollars by the end of the decade. Yet despite these increases, the expected goals of higher military spending—prevent-

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Fiscal Year 2004 Funding Requests for Major Weapons

	\$ in Millions
Ballistic Missile Defense	9,800.9
F/A-18E/F Fighter	3,210.2
F-22 Fighter	5,170.2
Joint Strike Fighter	4,365.8
C-17 Transport Aircraft	3,686.3
B-2 Bomber	260.2
V-22 Osprey Aircraft	1,654.0
RAH-66 Comanche Helicopter	1,079.3
Aircraft Carrier Replacement Program (CVNX)	1,525.8
DDG-51 Destroyer	3,404.0
SSN-774 "Virginia" Attack Submarine	2,640.5
Trident II D-5 Missile	780.0
Tactical Tomahawk Cruise Missile	349.0

2004 BUDGET REQUESTS

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ing terrorism, safeguarding Americans against terrorist attacks, and creating a military best-suited to meet the challenges of the 21st Century – will not be met. Instead, tens of billions of dollars will be wasted, as other critical needs go unmet.

U.S. Military Spending vs. The World

According to CDI's latest analysis, the proposed \$399 billion Pentagon spending package exceeds that of the next 20 nations combined. It is not surprising that as the world's lone super power the United States spends more on its military than any other nation. What is surprising, however, is just how much larger the U.S. defense budget is compared to any other nation, or even groups of nations.

Consider the following:

- At \$399 billion, the U.S. military budget request for FY 04 is more

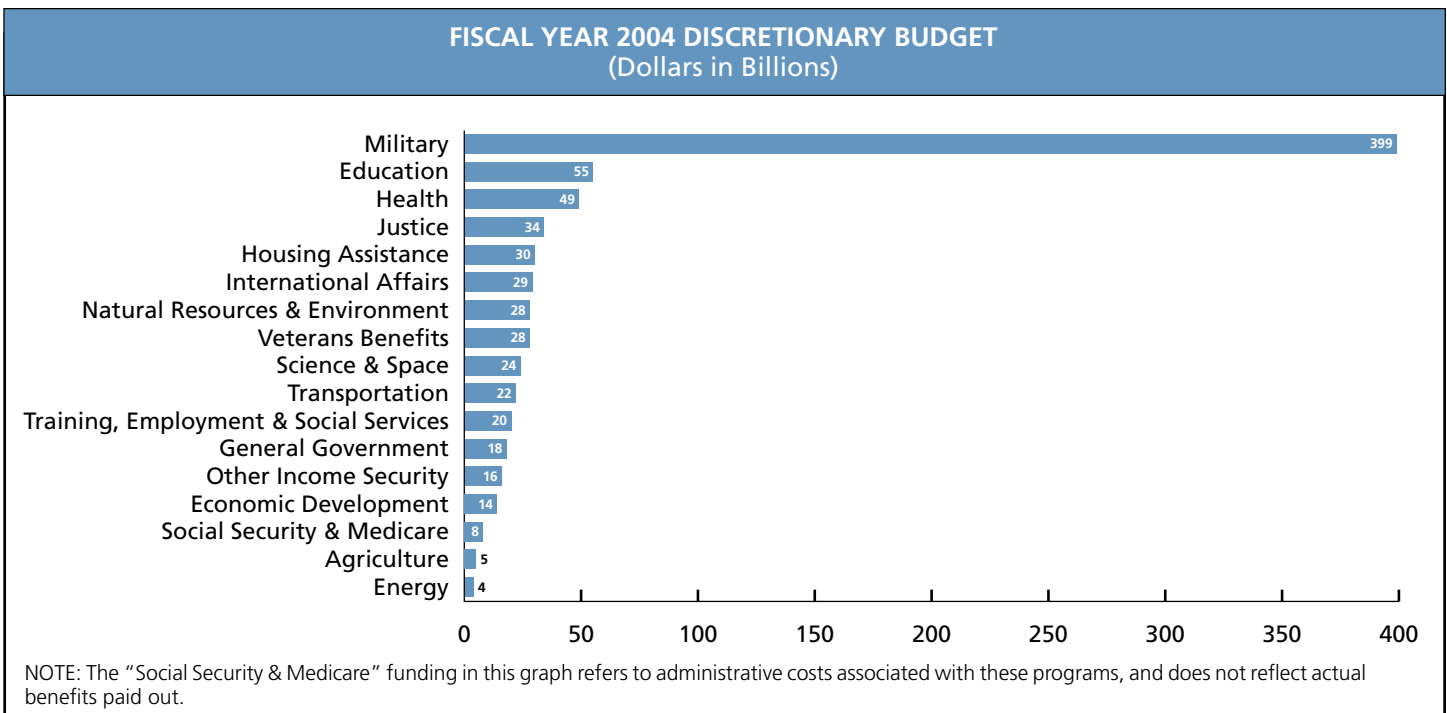
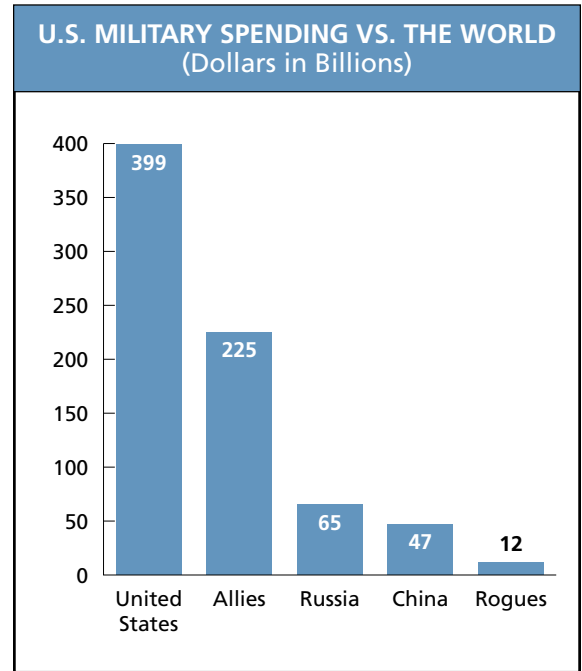
than six times larger than that of Russia, the second largest spender.

- It is more than 20 times as large as the combined spending of the seven countries traditionally identified by the Pentagon as our most likely adversaries (Cuba, Iran, Iraq, Libya, North Korea, Sudan and Syria).
- The United States and its close allies spend more than the rest of the world combined, accounting for more than two-thirds of all military spending. Together they spend over 52 times more than the seven "Rogue states." ("Allies" includes NATO, Australia, Japan and South Korea.)
- The seven potential "Rogues," Russia and China together spend \$124 billion, less than one-third (31 percent) of the U.S. military budget.

Discretionary Spending

The FY 04 budget request includes \$782 billion for *discretionary* spending (the money the president and Congress must decide and act to spend each year), \$399 billion of

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DEADLOCK Wins Prestigious CINE Golden Eagle Award

Azimuth Media's documentary "DEADLOCK: Russia's Forgotten War" received a Golden Eagle Award at 44th Annual CINE Awards event held Feb. 27, 2003 in Washington, D.C.

CINE is one of the nation's oldest and most prestigious film and video organizations, at the 44th Annual CINE Golden Eagle Film and Video Awards Event.

"DEADLOCK: Russia's Forgotten War" presents a rare look at the brutal, decade-long struggle in Russia's breakaway republic of Chechnya. Over a two-year period *New York Times* national security correspondent Michael Gordon (formerly the *Times* Moscow bureau chief) and Russian filmmakers worked together to create a compelling documentary that offers viewers an unprecedented view of how this protracted war is affecting both Russians and Chechens.

DEADLOCK's producer, Stephen Sapienza (co-Director, Azimuth Media) attended the Awards ceremony on behalf of Michael Gordon and the DEADLOCK production team. Sheila Nevins (HBO), Ken Burns, and the Smothers Brothers were honorees at this year's awards ceremony, which took place

at the Grosvenor Auditorium of the National Geographic Society. CINE Golden Eagles were awarded to the finest film and video productions from 2002, selected through a unique multi-stage jury system. The CINE Golden Eagle Awards are recognized both nationally and internationally as symbols of the highest production standards.

In 2002, more than 800 jurors judged well over 1,000 CINE entries. Past recipients of CINE Golden Eagle Awards include David Grubin, Barbara Kopple, Charles Guggenheim, Ken Burns, Albert Maysles, Debra Chasnoff and many others distinguished for their work with the moving image. Last year's awards ceremony honored such networks as CNN, HBO, ABC, NBC, PBS, Discovery Communications, The History Channel, A&E, Showtime, and National Geographic Television.

CNN included DEADLOCK as one of 17 of its submissions for consideration for the annual "Emmy" awards given by the Academy of Television Arts and Sciences.

For more information contact Stephen Sapienza: steve@azimuthmedia.org or 202.797.5268

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which will go to the Pentagon.

The other category of federal spending is *mandatory* spending, money that is spent in compliance with existing laws that govern the particular program or function. Mandatory spending includes entitlements; money or benefits provided directly to individuals such as Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, Food Stamps, and Federal Retirement. It also includes interest payments on the national debt.

The "National Defense" category of the federal budget for FY 04 accounts for more than half (51.0 percent) of all discretionary spending [See Chart on page 6]. ■

LAND MINES

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port, there was no evidence of enemy casualties or damage to enemy equipment as result of land mines laid during the Gulf War.

The Bush administration has been reviewing the issue but hasn't yet announced its own land-mine policies, including whether to continue the Clinton administration decision to move toward joining the Mine Ban Treaty by 2006.

Recent reports of US land mines transferred to Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Diego Garcia, and elsewhere in the region suggest that the US is indeed planning to use the weapons in Iraq.

Before deciding to do so, however, military leaders and the Bush

administration must examine the painful lessons learned from the military and humanitarian consequences of land mine use in Desert Storm, not to mention the diplomatic implications of using the weapons today when most of the world has banned their use.

If the administration were to thoughtfully consider whether all of the military, humanitarian, and international political costs are really worth it, it would decide to prohibit land-mine use in Iraq and move toward banning this outmoded weapon altogether. ■

Eugene Carroll is a retired US admiral and Rachel Stohl is a senior analyst at the Center for Defense Information.

Some Things You Haven't Yet Heard about the 2004 Defense Budget, And Probably Never Will

By Winslow T. Wheeler, Visiting Fellow

Every year about this time, the new defense budget comes out. Each year, the budget materials from the Defense Department and the newspaper articles say pretty much the same thing, just with new numbers. There are some very predictable elements:

- Very few of the newspaper articles will agree on the dollar amount of the new budget, or even of the old budget.
- Newspaper articles that agree on the dollar amounts will disagree on the percentage of growth in the new budget, but they will agree that number is important and something that should be at the top of their news stories.
- Conservatives will complain the budget is too small; liberals will complain it is too big, and the Congressional Budget Office or the General Accounting Office will produce a study asserting that the multi-year defense plan does not project enough money to pay for the programs planned. Conservatives will say this proves their argument; liberals will say this proves the Defense Department is mismanaged.
- Members of Congress from both parties will say they support a strong national defense, but (take your pick)
 - The president's emphasis on increases in defense spending shortchanges needed domestic spending.
 - or—

- The puny percentage of gross domestic product spent for defense shows how modest this year's defense budget really is.

It has become a tired and predictable debate. Most of the points either side will make to prove their argument will demonstrate just how vapid the debate has become.

Do the Numbers Have a Meaning?

This year, different newspaper articles reported the amount of the old, fiscal year 2003 defense budget to be \$355 billion, \$365 billion, and \$382 billion. They are all, of course, technically correct and badly inaccurate at the same time.

For FY 03, Congress appropriated \$355 billion in the Department of Defense appropriations bill. It also appropriated another \$10 billion in the Military Construction appropriations bill (ergo, \$365 billion) and another \$17 billion for the defense activities of the Department of Energy, Coast Guard, Selective Service, and other defense miscellany (ergo, \$382 billion).

But \$382 billion is hardly the right total number for FY 03. Congress decided not to pay DoD for the cost of all military operations in Afghanistan, the Persian Gulf, and elsewhere. DoD asked for \$19 billion in FY 03 for all that; it got only \$7 billion. DoD wants about another \$20 billion in FY 03 for these operations; the Office of Management and Budget wants to whack that down to

about \$13 billion or 14 billion, but hasn't worked it out yet, so we don't know what the final 2003 request will be.

We also don't know what the total cost of the war in Iraq will be, although Congress recently appropriated \$65 billion to cover the cost of military operations through the end of FY 03.

The truth is, no one knows how much more the 2003 Budget will be. In fact, we don't even know if the first digit in the hundreds of billions column will be a "3" or a "4."

And, by the way, if you're counting "defense related" costs, don't forget veterans healthcare and disability costs; for starters there, add another \$20 billion.

So, how big did you say the "old" 2003 defense budget was?

Get Real about Growth

A favorite metric the DoD Comptroller, congressional staff, and the press like to throw around is the amount of "real growth" in the defense budget. By "real growth" they mean a percentage change from one year to the next using "constant dollars," which are expressed in terms of the value of dollars in one fiscal year. For the percentage change from FY 03 to FY 04, I have seen 4.4 percent (*The Washington Post*), 4.2 percent (*Wall Street Journal*), 3.8 percent (Bloomberg news service), and 6.5 percent (*Defense News*). There are certainly more out there, but what-

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THINGS YOU HAVEN'T YET HEARD

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ever they cite, I wouldn't recommend paying too much attention.

First of all, we don't know the ultimate size of the 2003 defense budget (see above), and we certainly don't know the size of the 2004 budget, for which there will surely be supplementals and adjustments by Congress. Nor do we know what the actual inflation rates will be for 2004, or for that matter 2003; so we can't calculate an inflation adjustment, either.

Finally, I don't know what "real growth" really means in a defense budget. If we're not replacing things like ships and aircraft at the rate we are retiring them, which is DoD's plan, will a defense budget that increases by four, five or six percent in dollars, after inflation, but which shrinks the size of the force show "real growth" or "real shrinkage?"

And, while the dollars are growing and the forces are shrinking, they haven't even begun to get serious about measuring what's happening to capability. Some say it's growing; some say it's declining. History and objective analysis – not the glossy fluff from DoD and corporate technology boosters – show some real problems where people thought they found "silver bullets."

Good luck on that one, tiger.

World's Worst Measures of Spending

While it's highly unlikely that anyone in Congress will try to reduce defense spending, some will show graphs of how dramatically defense spending has been increas-

ing since Bill Clinton's FY 99 defense budget, when dollar increases resumed. A variation on such graphs will show defense spending increasing, and "non-defense" decreasing. The accompanying rhetoric will likely talk about the sacrifices being imposed on Americans as a result of "cuts" in non-defense spending.

There are three elements to this game. First, the "non-defense" spending will likely be just "non-defense" "discretionary spending," a budget geek term for annual appropriations. Not included in the graph will be the far larger "entitlement" spending, otherwise known as Medicare, Medicare, welfare, and a host of other very "non-defense" forms of federal government spending. Second, the graph will likely not go very far back in time: to do so would require showing huge increases not just in "entitlements," but "non-defense discretionary" as well. Third, in talking about cuts in the future, the graphs will likely show not absolute numbers but percentages or rates of growth. The reason is simple, most programs will actually be increasing, growing with inflation, but to make the data show a convenient downward line, ergo cuts, the metric needs to be fixed a little.

The advocates of growth in the defense budget will show just one graph: the percentage of gross domestic product (GDP) for defense over time. They will show defense spending at 10.8 percent in 1955, or 8.1 percent in 1970, or 6.1 percent in 1985. Now the percentage of GDP is just a puny 3.3 percent. The more aggressive versions of this graph-gimmickery will show defense spending at 5.6 percent in 1941 – a

particularly useful year given the presumed inadequacy of the defense budget when Pearl Harbor was attacked.

This argument is specious in the extreme. First, it assumes there is a logical connection between the size of the national economy and the size of the defense budget: that defense is entitled to some particular "share" of the overall economy. Second, GDP measure is a lunatic one: in years when the economy is growing and the defense budget is also growing, but at a lower rate, this measure shows "decline." This can also mean that if the economy is stagnant or shrinking, and if defense spending were to shrink, but less, this measure would show "growth." These advocates could get the defense share of GDP up to five, or even 10, percent of GDP just by getting the economy to shrink enough. We're unhappily too close to that situation in the economy now, but to the advocates of this measure, this would be good news.

Conclusion

For years, the defense budget debate in this country has been on a treadmill. Both sides of the political spectrum have been citing budget data and using measures that appear to prove their point but, in fact, have very little real meaning. It would be a nice change to hear a secretary of defense talk about how huge his budget has become, how little he knows about its ultimate size just a few months from now, and which budget gimmicks he has instructed his comptroller to never use again. I'm not holding my breath. ■



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