

Waiting for disarmament:

by C. Robert Zelnick

If we bought defense the same way we buy sewers, spending more when we need to and less when we don't, now might seem a good time to cut the Pentagon's budget. The year just past saw the end of U. S. fighting in Vietnam and the signing of the Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty (SALT), so reducing two of the Pentagon's recent heavy-expense items. But now the generals are on Capitol Hill asking for more money than ever—\$79 billion for fiscal year 1974. This is a \$4.2-billion increase over last year's budget, and equals the total amount collected in personal income taxes in 1972.

The alarming thing about the budget is that it will almost certainly be approved. After the bits of prefabricated lard have been removed, the defense budget will emerge from Congress with its basic reasoning and priorities as unchanged as they have been for years. Planning our national defense system is too important a matter to leave to the Department of Defense (DOD), but Congress has

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given little indication that it's capable of providing the missing leadership.

There are many reasons for congressional diffidence in handling the Pentagon's requests. One is probably the liberals' reluctance to wrestle with the brass on purely tactical questions: if you tell your constituents that you believe in disarmament, how can you be seen bickering with the Air Force over whether the B-1 is a more efficient means of inflicting mass destruction than the B-52? There is also a temptation for liberal critics to speak only in symbolic terms—"we could feed a thousand children (clean a hundred streams, cut taxes) for the price of this tank." This sense of perspective is fine, except that it often precludes the more substantive questioning that could beat the military on its own terms; all too rarely do questions like "Doesn't this weapon do the same thing as the one you already have?" or "Do we really need this new missile?" appear in the hearings.

Not all of this is the congressmen's fault. The Pentagon's opponents face much the same difficulty as the critics

Weapons we can live with— and without

of religion or the flat-world theory did in earlier centuries: since conclusive evidence and information is so scanty, it's hard to prove your point. After a month's study, a congressman may feel he has a clear understanding of the pros and cons involved when a pipeline is built or a poverty program is cut off. But the lurking fear among defense critics is that the generals *may* know what they're talking about better than the congressmen, that as the bombs start to fall there will be little placards tacked inside the public fallout shelters saying, "Congressman X voted against the ABM."

The Pentagon does what it can to add to this mystique, dressing its proposals up in unintelligible acronyms (ARBES, SCAD, etc.) and hoarding the data necessary to evaluate the terms.

Outside investigators soon discover how limited their resources are. They must rely on a handful of former military officers who have "seen the light," a few once-and-future Defense officials who now practice law in Washington or are associated with one

of the foundation "think tanks," and perhaps five or six knowledgeable congressmen and their staff aides. For evaluating almost any other area of national policy—aid to education, civil rights, foreign aid—authorities are legion and resource material virtually inexhaustible. But in defense debates, the Pentagon's edge is usually insuperable. The main exception—the defeat of President Nixon's ABM plans several years ago—proves the importance of information, since it was the one time when outside experts were available and independent reports had been prepared.

Our educational resources reflect the same imbalance. A student at any decent university may take dozens of courses in sociology or international relations, but it is unlikely that he will know a CVAN from a SAM-D by the time he graduates. The resulting sense of ignorance means that outsiders rarely feel *sure* when confronting the Pentagon.

This article is an attempt to find the areas in the defense budget about which we *can* be sure. We save for

later investigation the question of how large our international commitments should be—for example, whether we should stay in NATO. None of that is clear cut. But there are some points of certainty—specifically, that part of the defense budget is essential, and that other parts are clearly waste.

We Need the Polaris/Poseidon Submarine System

Pending the day of complete disarmament, the U. S. needs to maintain a strategic deterrent force capable of

convincing any enemy that it is not worthwhile to attack first (see box below.) For the foreseeable future, the Polaris submarine fleet will serve this purpose. When the Polaris was developed during the 1960s, it was considered the least vulnerable of all our deterrents, since missile-bearing submarines are far harder for an enemy to find and destroy than are bombers or land-based missiles. Experts still feel it will take an unforeseeable technological breakthrough in anti-submarine weapons to make the

Parity, bargaining chips, and other shady deals

When it wants to get more money for our strategic systems—the “triad” of submarines, bombers, and land-based missiles that is supposed to protect us against attack by the enemy—the military resembles a cagey old lawyer who argues facts when the law is against him and law when the facts are against him. When the U. S. and Soviet forces are in rough parity, the Pentagon talks about deterrence. When we have a deterrent capability, it asks for parity. And when both parity and deterrence exist, the Pentagon stresses the need for a “bargaining chip” for use in future negotiations with the enemy.

The only militarily-sound notion is that of deterrence—the need to convince a potential enemy that even if he attacked by surprise, we would still be able to inflict heavy damage in return. Over the years, government officials have stressed that a *deterrent* force—whether or not it represents parity with Russia—is adequate.

In February, 1968, Defense Secretary Robert McNamara told Congress that “in the case of the Soviet Union, I would judge that a capability to destroy, say, one fifth to one fourth of her population and

one half of her industrial capacity would serve as an effective deterrent.” Doing this, McNamara estimated, would require 200 to 400 deliverable missiles.

Only last year President Nixon acknowledged that “the capabilities of both the U. S. and the USSR have reached a point where our programs need not be driven by fear of minor quantitative imbalances.”

Nonetheless, arguments about “minor quantitative imbalances” and appeals for “bargaining chips” have inflated our strategic forces to a size far greater than that needed for effective deterrence. Already, our “triad” of strategic forces has an awesome overkill capacity: if the missiles from one of our Polaris submarines detonated on target, they could destroy one quarter of Russia’s industrial capacity. There are 41 of these submarines, plus more than 500 bombers and hundreds of ICBMs. The Pentagon wants still more. While it is important to retain our deterrent capability, the concept of a “triad” is outdated and senseless. Further expansion of the system is a waste of money and a threat to the peace, since it only encourages Russia to step up its strategic programs.

Polaris a less-than-reliable deterrent. So far, the system has performed perfectly, earning a zero-defects record.

We do, of course, need to keep the fleet modern and well-equipped. To this end, 31 of the 41 Polaris subs are being refitted with Poseidon missiles, which give the subs an effective striking range of 4,500 miles. We also need to continue intense research on anti-submarine weapons (ASW), so that we will have an idea of how close the Russian ASW forces are to developing a threat to the Polaris.

What we *don't* need is more submarines, or a different type of sub, once we have a reliable Polaris/Poseidon fleet. Nonetheless, Defense Secretary Melvin Laird went before Congress last year asking for more money to develop the new Trident submarine system, whose main advantage is its longer striking range. The rationale was not that there is any weakness in the Polaris/Poseidon system, but rather that we should keep two jumps ahead of the Soviets, who are now developing an inferior version of the Polaris called the Y-1.

When congressmen questioned the need for the Trident, Laird invoked the "bargaining-chip rationale": "It would be diplomatically and politically unacceptable for the U. S. to allow the Soviets numerical superiority in both land-based and sea-based strategic missiles." In fact, the U. S. now has an edge which the Russians must find "unacceptable": we have about 6,000 nuclear warheads in our strategic arsenal, plus another 7,000 nuclear weapons with NATO forces in Europe, compared with a total of 2,500 Soviet nuclear warheads. Still, the majority of Congress went along with Laird on the Trident, and spending for the system has risen from \$100 million in 1972 to \$936 million in 1973.

This year the Pentagon wants still more—\$536.7 million for accelerated work on two long-range Trident missiles, plus \$1.17 billion for a similar

speed-up on submarines to carry them. None of this money can be justified on grounds linked to the national defense. The up-grading of the Polaris fleet through conversion to Poseidon missiles—for which another \$252.6 million has been requested this year—is not yet complete. By 1978, when the Pentagon wants its first Trident in operation, the oldest Polaris will be only 18 years old, with an estimated 12 years of useful life ahead. At no time has there been a hint that the Polaris/Poseidon program is vulnerable or in danger of losing its potency as a deterrent force. And when the technical breakthrough comes that makes the Polaris vulnerable, the Trident—which would also be imperiled by anti-submarine weapons—would hardly be the correct response.

We Don't Need More Bombers

Given the adequacy of the Polaris system, the U. S. rationale for a "triad" of deterrent forces—submarines, bombers, and land-based missiles—is curious, akin to building three firehouses on the same city block. While it is not clear whether the bomber fleet should be entirely dismantled—its main justification is as a hedge against threats to the Polaris—it certainly is clear that we don't need any *more* planes.

The current U. S. strategic bomber force is made up of more than 500 B-52 bombers, 225 of which are being modernized and reequipped. The Pentagon wants to replace them with a new squadron of 244 B-1s. The question is whether there is anything the new planes can do that the old ones can't do as well. The Boeing Aircraft Company says that it can keep the B-52s going until 1990 by equipping them with new C-5 engines, at a cost of \$1.7 billion. The same planes could also be fitted with SCAD decoys and SRAM missiles, whose extremely long range would mean the plane would not have to make deep penetrations of enemy air space.

But the Air Force wants the B-1s. Specifically, it wants \$473.5 million this year for B-1 research and development. The official cost estimate is \$30 million per plane, but a Brookings Institution study predicts the price per plane could be \$60 million, for a total program cost of \$14.6 billion.

Is the B-1 worth it? A paper prepared earlier this year by the Center for Defense Information concluded that there was not enough difference between the B-1 and the updated B-52s to justify the new program. The evidence supports the conclusion that the B-1 money should be denied in this year's budget.

We Don't Need More Minuteman Missiles or ABMs

The third part of the "triad"—land-based missiles, most important of which are the 450 Minuteman 11 (single-warhead) missiles—is inherently the most vulnerable part of the system and seems to serve little purpose other than adding an extra cushion of over-capacity. There are good reasons for thinking that we could do well without any of these missiles at all. What is certain about this part of the system is that we do not need *more* of the missiles—specifically, the 550 new Minuteman 111 (multi-headed, or MIRV) missiles for which this year's request is \$768.2 million. None of this

money should be spent, since it only adds redundant capacity to the part of the system most likely to be destroyed in case of attack.

The recent SALT agreements, which essentially banned anti-ballistic missiles (ABMs), provide another argument against MIRVs. We need the MIRVs, the Pentagon used to say, because they are the only way we can penetrate the Soviet network of ABMs. Now that the ABMs are banned, that justification is invalid.

The ABM—a missile designed to protect the Minuteman against attack and the cause celebre of a few years back—has been limited by the SALT agreements to two sites in each country: for the U. S., Grand Forks, N. D., and Washington, D. C. Last year Congress gave DOD the money it wanted for Grand Forks' "Safeguard" ABM project but refused to appropriate money for Washington. This year the Pentagon is back, requesting another \$401.5 million for Grand Forks, plus \$100 million for ARBES, an ABM re-entry vehicle. There is also a curious little request for \$170.1 million in research and development funds for "Site Defense." Admissions from Pentagon officials have revealed that this is just another name for the ABM site in Washington.

Apart from their strategic shortcomings, our land-based missiles should be causing us a few sleepless nights for reasons familiar from the *Dr. Strangelove* and *Fail-Safe* era a decade ago. The virtue of bombers and submarines is that the men operating them don't have the obsessive sense of sitting on a bomb all day. There are always things for them to do—steer the sub, move the periscope up and down, fly the plane, practice making takeoffs and landings, and in general perform as if they had a normal eight-hour-a-day job. In the Minuteman silos, the crew sits, looking at the missile and waiting for the buzzers to go off. The danger of mischief born from stir-craziness is clear. This is one more reason to keep us from building more missiles.

Answers to April puzzle:



We Don't Need So Many Aircraft Carriers

The basic argument against aircraft carriers is the same as that against an expanded cavalry: both prepare us well for the kinds of wars we once fought, but they won't be much good in the future. The ships are the more expensive anachronism: each costs about \$1 billion to build and requires another \$2-billion worth of companion vessels (destroyers, escort ships, and anti-submarine aircraft). They are also so vulnerable to attack that they would be nearly useless in any serious conflict with the Soviet Union or, for that matter, with any country possessing a decent air force.

Further, the mere existence of the carriers tempts the Navy to use them. This often takes the form of "showing the flag" at different ports around the world, thereby twisting foreign policy in directions quite different from what the State Department or even the President has in mind. In 1969 Senator Clifford Case obtained from the Navy a list of 42 instances in which a carrier had been ordered to an area for a "show of force" or other "foreign-policy purpose" short of war. Case then presented the list to the State Department, which told him that all the initiatives were the Navy's own doing.

Some analysts claim that the Navy should keep a few carriers, perhaps a fleet of nine, so that we will retain our "flexibility" around the world. This is a dubious proposition, since those few things a carrier can do uniquely are often dangerous and, as the saying goes, carriers are floating wars waiting for a place to happen. But even if we aim for a nine-carrier fleet (down from our current 16), we would not need any new carrier construction until the end of the decade. So Congress should have no qualms about rejecting the \$657-million request in this year's budget for the new CVAN-70 carrier.

Facing the fact that carriers will be useless in a war with Russia, Congress

would also be able to scrap a series of other requests for carrier weaponry: the F-14A "Tomcat," the Phoenix air-to-air missile, the S-3-A "Viking" anti-submarine aircraft, and the preposterous DD-963 destroyers. The Navy should stick to the Polaris.

We Don't Need to Pay So Much for Manpower

In recent years, defense manpower costs have risen to the twilight zone between absurdity and scandal. This year it will cost \$43.9 billion—56 per cent of the defense budget—to keep 2.23 million men in uniform. Five years ago, when there were 3.5 million active military personnel, manpower costs were only 42 per cent of the budget.

The increase comes from three sources: the shift to a volunteer army and the consequent rise in salaries; Congress' continuing failure to limit the benefits it votes for the military; and the bizarre, balloon-like rank structure of the Services, with its steadily increasing proportion of generals and other well-paid officers (see box on page 34).

Military benefits have become competitive with those in the outside world, as intended when the draft was ended. A recruit now receives \$332 per month—plus food, shelter, medical care, and other benefits; only five years ago, the salary was \$144 per month. In addition to increases that come with promotions, the soldier receives automatic pay hikes for each year spent in the Service. And—thanks to a rider pushed through in 1967 by the late Rep. L. Mendel Rivers—the military man gets a raise whenever civil service employees get one. After 20 years' service, the soldier can retire and collect a pension equal to 75 per cent of his highest pay. This pension is also protected against inflation, rising four per cent each time the cost of living goes up three per cent.

When all this is put together, it reaches some quite astonishing totals. George Wilson of *The Washington Post* has calculated that if current

trends continue, a private entering the Service today and retiring as a first sergeant at age 38 can expect to receive \$325,782 during his 20 years of active duty, and another \$1,373,788 between the time he retires and the age of 75. The prediction may be excessive, since it assumes constant inflation at the high rates we've recently seen, but it gives us an idea of the problem.

Retirement benefits are even higher if the soldier successfully claims "disability" and therefore qualifies for tax-free disability pay. Last December a House Armed Services subcommittee chaired by Rep. Samuel Stratton found that between 1964 and 1972, 40 per cent of the general officers retiring from the Army and Marine Corps, and 30 per cent of the Navy's flag officers, successfully claimed disabilities. In the Air Force the figure was an astonishing 53 per cent—although 77 per cent of these

men had been certified for flight pay within six months of retirement. Flight pay is itself a scandal. According to a recent report released by the General Accounting Office, the Pentagon pays \$76 million each year in flight pay to 30,000 people in non-flying jobs.

And if this were not enough, the Administration is now proposing a "recomputation" scheme that promises to be one of the biggest cost-overruns in military history. Under the plan, retired servicemen's pensions would be based on the new, higher pay scales for the military, rather than what they actually earned while in uniform. Stratton's subcommittee has estimated that recomputation plans would have cumulative costs of between \$17 billion and \$170 billion by the year 2000; even without recomputation, military pensions are expected to reach an annual cost of \$21.6 billion by the end of the century.

Promoting everyone

Vietnam may have been a time of anguish for most Americans, but it was a time of promise, opportunity, and promotion for military careerists. There were more four-star generals and admirals leading the 2.5-million-man military establishment in 1972 than there were in 1945, when 12 million Americans were in uniform. Last year a House Armed Services subcommittee chaired by Rep. Otis Pike found that while the present military has 315,000 fewer men than after demobilization in 1946, there are now 26,000 more captains, 21,000 more majors, 15,000 more lieutenant colonels, and 4,000 more colonels. There are also 43,000 fewer second lieutenants and 77,000 fewer first lieutenants.

The same pattern applies to career non-commissioned officers. In June, 1971, there were fewer E-1s (the lowest rank) than E-2s,

and fewer E-2s than E-3s, and fewer E-3s than E-4s. In 1946, in each case, the opposite was true. The Navy now has eight E-5s for every E-1.

When it came to actually fighting, the careerists' record was not so good. Pike's subcommittee reported: "As of July 31, 1971, of the total casualties of 45,420, 4,730 were officers and 40,690 were enlisted men. Of enlisted deaths in Vietnam, in the Army 76.4 per cent were E-4s and below. In the Marine Corps 87.7 per cent of the enlisted deaths held grades of E-4 or below. In other words, of those killed in Vietnam, over two thirds had served in the Armed Forces for less than two years. The conclusion that can logically be reached is that career personnel receive the promotions, while the less-than-two-year servicemen were the victims who died while engaging the enemy."

We Don't Need the Cushion of Support

For every one of our soldiers serving in a combat position, two others are in the rear, cooking meals, processing forms, or performing some other support function. This ratio in the Soviet army is about 1 to 1—the same as ours at the end of World War II. Much of the increase in our support ratio has come recently; soon after the height of the Vietnam war in 1968, the number of support personnel rose quickly.

Altogether, support costs now make up about one third of the defense budget. A Brookings Institution report estimated last year that if we cut the support ratio back to its 1968 level, we could save \$2.5 billion.

In part, the higher support ratios reflect a more technically advanced army which puts fewer men on the front lines. But they reflect something else, too. The new recruiting posters—which show a sunburnt youth lolling on a Hawaiian beach or an off-duty soldier prowling European cafes—are not as deceptive as they seem. The military now does a travel-bureau business that congressional junketeers might well envy. Last year the average serviceman was “permanently” relocated once every 10 months. This year some 2.2 million “permanent” moves are planned—about one for every man in uniform. Not only do these transfers cost \$2 billion themselves, but they also force the Pentagon to hire an extra 90,000 soldiers to fill in for those in transit at any one moment.

The abundance of unnecessary military bases also swells support costs. In 1972 some 556 major defense installations were in operation, in the U. S. and abroad, at a total cost of \$8 billion. A great many are of no strategic military importance—so many, in fact, that former Deputy Defense Secretary David Packard has estimated that we could save \$1 billion if we closed bases “without regard to non-military considerations.” These extra considerations, of course, include each congressman’s desire to

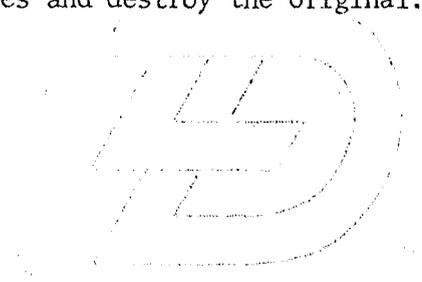
maintain a base in his own district.

Another form of military “support”—the National Guard and Reserve units, which during the Vietnam war provided succor to the men who were lucky enough to get in—is growing steadily more expensive. This year the Pentagon wants \$4.4 billion for these units, up from \$2.6 billion only four years ago. While the National Guard played an important role during the national mail strike several years back (not to mention its campus activities during the late sixties), Rep. Otis Pike’s view of the situation is probably fair: “Somewhere in this country there may be Reserve and Guard units dedicated, highly motivated, and ready to go... but I’ve never seen one.”

Since support costs are harder to clothe in technical jargon than are missile programs or tanks, the Pentagon has found another way to protect them. At budget-drafting time, when each military department lists the areas where cuts can be made if necessary, the Army and the Navy usually offer to sacrifice their combat divisions, but not their support units. The combat units, of course, are precisely the items that the Secretary of Defense and his friends in the Capitol will refuse to cut, and so the entire package is safe.

Stopping the Minuteman and the carriers will not take all the fat out of the Pentagon budget, but it may be the only way for us to start considering what our defense needs really are. Until we peel off these outer wrappings, it is hard to get an idea of whether the other systems are doing any good or not. The fight against those pockets of waste will be more successful if liberals realize that there are some parts of the defense budget which we *do* need, at least until the day when we get a genuine disarmament agreement. Once we admit that the Polaris—and ASW research—are necessary, we may be closer to convincing Congress that some other systems are a waste. ■

MEMO of the Month

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1	TO Tina Stonorov, Exec Sec Alaska Conservation Society	INITIALS		CIRCULATE
		DATE		COORDINATION
2				FILE
				INFORMATION
3				NOTE AND RETURN
				PER CONVERSATION
4				SEE ME
				SIGNATURE
REMARKS				
<p>Due to an administrative error, the original of the attached letter was forwarded to you. A new original has been accomplished and forwarded to AAC/JA (Alaskan Air Command, Judge Advocate office). Please place this carbon copy in your files and destroy the original.</p>				
				
FROM: <i>John W. Campbell</i> JOHN W. CAMPBELL Deputy Base Civil Engineer		DATE 15 Feb 73		
		PHONE 377-5213		

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