



## *Redefining Security: A Budget for a New Generation*

By Greg Speeter, National Priorities Project

When the Berlin Wall fell and the Soviet Union crumbled a decade ago, many had hoped the U.S. would be able to dramatically cut its military budget and invest in a peace dividend that could address domestic needs. But no sooner had the cold war ended than the Pentagon found new enemies with which to justify continued cold war-level spending. The new dangers were potential regional "rogue nations": Iran, Iraq, Syria, North Korea, Libya, Cuba, and later Sudan. Pentagon planners presented a highly unlikely scenario in which two of these countries would attack their neighbors at the same time.

No matter that the combined military budgets of all of these countries are a fraction of the \$310 billion in current U.S. military spending. The Bush administration's strategic defense review may deemphasize this two-war scenario. Doing so is not likely to save the U.S. money, however. The

administration's new initiatives, most importantly an expansive version of National Missile Defense and a "new generation" of "smart," accurate, lightweight, and maneuverable weapons—the so-called "revolution in military affairs"—are almost certain to cost more.

Although President Bush says he wants to "leave no child behind" and claims education as his top priority, his real spending priority is the Pentagon. His initial blueprint, released at the beginning of March, sticks to the Clinton administration plan to increase Defense Department and Department of Energy nuclear

weapons spending by \$14.2 billion. That's a lot more than the \$2.4 billion increase that he's asked for education. In fact, the \$14.2 billion Pentagon increase alone equals total federal spending on higher education.

These military increases have been balanced by reductions of billions of dollars in job training, environmental, and other programs—for a total of \$20 billion in cuts to the domestic discretionary budget—and ignore initiatives such as school construction and universal health care coverage for children. The Clinton administration's fund for civilian research and development, the Advanced Technology Program, is to be cut under Bush, while military research and development gets more.

And there are clear signs that this will not be the end of the administration's request for military spending this year. A strategic review is due from the Pentagon later this year, outlining funding needs for such very-big-ticket items as National Missile Defense and "next generation" weapons systems. But before that, Bush hopes to pass his tax plan, which will eat up most of the budget surplus. Thus social spending advocates could soon find themselves in the same boat they were 20 years ago, asking for money that does not exist from an administration that does not care.

This will only exacerbate the plight of millions throughout the country. Today, one of six children live in poverty; one-third of schools are in need of total repair or replacement; five million low-income families pay more than half of their income in rent; 8.5 million people drink from polluted water sources; 44 million Americans lack any kind of health insurance; 31 million suffer from hunger or live on the edge of hunger.

Among those who suffer the most are children. This is obvious when we compare U.S. children to those in other industrialized countries. Out of 24 industrialized nations, America ranks 14th in the proportion of children in poverty, 22nd in prevention of infant mortality, and 17th in infant birth weight—and the U.S. is the only industrialized country that does not provide universal health insurance. Over 10 million U.S. children have no health insurance, and America is the only country in the industrialized world not guaranteeing an income safety net for its children.

The consequences of this lack of commitment pose threats to the security of U.S. kids. Poor children will not develop as fast as other children; they suffer more often from lead paint poisoning, preventable diseases, and chronic medical conditions such as diabetes and asthma; they are twice as likely to repeat a grade or drop out of school; and they are more likely to require special education, end up on welfare, or get into trouble.

These conditions also increase the hidden costs to the U.S. economy. Schools, businesses, consumers, hospitals, insurers, social service agencies, and taxpayers must all pay for extra services. Business leaders complain they can't find qualified workers for quality manufacturing and high-tech jobs, so they either look outside of the country for workers or end up cutting back in production. Job development firms note that it is not uncommon to weed out four of every five applicants for training in well-paying jobs, because trainees lack sixth-grade reading and math skills. When we must recruit outside of the country to keep our most competitive industries going, we are threatening our security.

### Key Points

- Central to the U.S. definition of national security has been an outdated plan to fight and win two regional wars simultaneously with no help from our allies.
- Although the Bush administration may officially abandon this doctrine, it is committed to new programs that will entail substantial increases in spending.
- These increases will keep the U.S. from addressing true security challenges like the enormous health problems of its children.

# Problems with Current U.S. Policy

Although the Pentagon wants to dramatically increase its budget, during the past decade the external threats to U.S. security—especially the threats that Washington can address with such weapons as bombs, jet fighters, and aircraft carriers—have drastically decreased. Since 1991, the Soviet military budget has declined by 90% to \$45 billion, and its military is in a shambles. The combined military budgets of all the countries whose “threat” is used to justify increased Pentagon spending—Iraq, Libya, North Korea, Cuba, Sudan, and Syria—total \$14.4 billion, 4.6% of the current U.S. military budget of \$310 billion. China, considered a potential military threat by some, has a military budget of \$39 billion, and its weaponry is decades behind U.S. technologies. So Bush’s proposed \$324 billion Pentagon budget is more than three times that of Iran, Iraq, Libya, North Korea, Cuba, Sudan, Syria, China, and Russia combined.

The reality is that with the end of the cold war, the U.S. faces an entirely different set of threats: the use or threatened use of weapons of mass destruction by terrorists; nuclear proliferation, especially between India and Pakistan; instability created by failed states. Actually, today most conflicts are not between states but are rather social, ethnic, and political conflicts within states, such as Somalia, Haiti, Cambodia, and Bosnia. Most of these states are severely impoverished; face soil erosion, water scarcity, and other environmental disasters; and are unable to develop the social cohesion, political structures, and economic resources needed to maintain stability.

None of these threats calls for a new generation of highly sophisticated cold war weapons. In fact, Dr. Lawrence Korb, former Assistant Secretary of Defense for Manpower, Reserve Affairs, and Logistics under the Reagan administration and a leading critic of the two-war scenario, maintains that in purchasing these weapons, the U.S. ends up in an arms race with itself, because U.S. weapons are already so much better than anything else the world has, and the gap is getting wider all the time.

For instance, in early 2001 the Pentagon was in the process of purchasing three different kinds of fighter jets, even though our existing 4,727 fighters are already by far the best in the world and cost far less money than the newer models. For comparison’s sake, the huge, multiyear, \$321 billion price tag for these new jet fighters could instead repair and modernize every deteriorated school in the U.S., construct enough schools to meet rising enrollments, provide those schools with modern

telecommunications technology, and fund professional development for teachers.

The Pentagon is asking for close to \$300 billion in other cold war weapons in the near future as well, including 30 new Virginia-class attack submarines (even though existing U.S. subs are far superior to any other submarine and the U.S. faces no real naval threat); numerous Nimitz-class aircraft carriers, 57 more destroyers, and several accident-prone V-22 Comanche helicopters. And weapons costs could skyrocket even more if President Bush decides to skip the existing generation of weapons, as he has proposed, and buys an even more sophisticated, more expensive new generation of “smart,” accurate, lightweight, and maneuverable weapons in the future.

In addition, the Pentagon continues to spend \$29 billion a year on nuclear weapons. The U.S. currently has 8,000 nuclear weapons with the firepower of 80,000 Hiroshima bombs. A strategic arsenal of 1,000 warheads is more than enough to deter any nation contemplating using weapons of mass destruction. The nuclear weapons budget is more than twice what it would cost to provide health care to every uninsured child in the United States.

Finally, National Missile Defense (NMD) could cost over a hundred billion dollars and provide the U.S. with less, not more, security. This mini-version of Ronald Reagan’s Star Wars has already cost taxpayers \$95 billion on Ballistic Missile Defense and \$44 billion on NMD alone, with no success. NMD is currently planned as protection against a few dozen warheads from North Korea, Iran, or Iraq. However, of these three countries, only North Korea has a

long-range missile testing program, and it froze that program in 1999 while pursuing talks with the United States. New Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld is expected to spend far more than the \$60-120 billion projected under Clinton on his version of NMD, even though it wouldn’t hinder someone who decided to sneak a bomb across the border in a suitcase. In addition, arms control leaders fear that in response to the U.S. deploying NMD, other countries, especially China and Russia, will seek to strengthen their own nuclear capabilities.

## Key Problems

- Bush administration defense planning overstates military threats and ignores real security issues.
- It accelerates the development of new higher-tech weaponry, despite the overwhelming superiority of existing U.S. technology. The U.S. is in an arms race with itself.
- National Missile Defense will be extremely costly, may not work, and will likely create new national security threats.

*Foreign Policy in Focus* is a joint project of the Interhemispheric Resource Center (IRC) and the Institute for Policy Studies (IPS). The project depends on sales and subscription income, individual donors, and grants from foundations and churches. *In Focus* internships are available, and we invite article queries and comments. ISSN 1524-1939

### Editors

Tom Barry (IRC)  
Martha Honey (IPS)  
**Military Affairs Editor**  
Miriam Pemberton

### Communications Directors

Tim McGivern (IRC)  
Erik Leaver (IPS)  
**Project Administrator**  
Nancy Stockdale (IRC)

### Orders and subscription information:

**Mail:** PO Box 4506  
Albuquerque, New Mexico 87196-4506  
**Voice:** (505) 842-8288  
**Fax:** (505) 246-1601  
**Email:** infocus@irc-online.org

### Editorial inquiries and information:

**IRC Editor** **IPS Editor**  
**Voice:** (505) 388-0208 **Voice:** (202) 234-9382/3 ext. 232  
**Fax:** (505) 388-0619 **Fax:** (202) 387-7915  
**Email:** tom@irc-online.org **Email:** ipsps@igc.org

**Website:** <http://www.foreignpolicy-infocus.org/>

# Toward a New Foreign Policy

A policy is needed that recognizes America's real security threats and sizes a military to address those threats. The dangers of weapons of mass destruction require Washington to lead in promoting and enforcing arms control treaties, honoring those treaties, and reducing the obscene U.S. levels of nuclear weapons. The threats posed by failed states require the U.S. to take leadership in helping the international community stabilize these

states, carry out peacekeeping missions, and, when necessary, launch small-to-medium-scale interventions. The United States cannot do all this alone. Washington must cooperate with other nations and international institutions, so that burdens and risks are shared and every crisis does not become primarily an American responsibility. Finally, if the U.S. helps at-risk nations address their economic and environmental crises, these gestures will undermine the motivation for terrorism.

This cooperative, developmental approach to security could

save the Pentagon tens of billions of dollars a year—money that could be better spent addressing many critical social and economic security threats at home. In his Realistic Defense Budget for the New Millennium, Lawrence Korb heads us in this direction. He proposes a budget that would “maintain sufficient military forces and technology to deter any conventional and nuclear attack against the U.S., its allies and U.S. interests,” and “...allow the U.S. to simultaneously wage a major war thousands of miles away, keep peace in a place like Bosnia, and maintain a presence in Europe, the Gulf and Asia.” Korb's budget, though, would cost \$62 billion a year less than the Pentagon's.

In cutting the Pentagon budget, Korb proposes four changes. First, he would shift from a two-war to a 1½-war scenario, thus reducing U.S. armed forces from 2.4 million to 2 million people. Second, he would curb the pace of investment in the next generation of weapons by buying more of the current weapons while still main-

taining a robust research program. Third, he would reduce nuclear weapons to 1,000 warheads, and fourth, he'd close unnecessary military bases, especially in Europe.

As the chart illustrates, committing the \$62 billion a year in savings toward targeted programs for America's children could insure the next generation of U.S. citizens decent health care, an equal start in education, modern schools, and adequate food and shelter. This would spell real security for millions of U.S. children currently in need.

Polls show that when U.S. citizens understand just how much more money is spent on cold war weapons than on their children, by a ratio of two to one they want to cut the Pentagon budget and invest in their children. But the public is doubtful that just cutting weapons will guarantee a commitment to address domestic concerns. Legislation is needed to ensure that when Pentagon programs are cut, the money saved will fund effective programs that will address U.S. children's needs.

In the late 1970s, Congressman Ron Dellums and the Congressional Black Caucus sponsored a transfer amendment that called for cutting funds for specific weapons and putting that money instead into specific social programs. If House rules were changed to allow cut and transfer amendments, legislators could apply the same principles today, by developing a Children's National Security Budget that would eliminate specific cold war weapons funding and transfer the money into successful children's programs.

National security is more than just another generation of jets, submarines, and bombs. It encompasses people's needs and quality of life. Most of all, it concerns the next generation of U.S. children. Today the United States ranks number one (by far) militarily, spending more than the next 11 military powers combined, yet it ranks 22nd in preventing infant mortality. U.S. citizens can redirect priorities to better meet the needs of the nation, but only if they convince Washington to redefine national security.

*Greg Speeter <greg@natprior.org> is founder and executive director of the National Priorities Project, which provides community groups and policymakers with information on how federal spending and tax policies impact local communities.*

## Key Recommendations

- A cooperative security policy would be less expensive and provide the U.S. with more genuine security than the Bush administration's “get tough” policy.
- A cooperative security policy would free up money to significantly address domestic security needs, especially to improve the health and well-being of U.S. children.
- Legislation would be necessary to guarantee that cuts in Pentagon spending end up effectively addressing U.S. children's needs.

### **For every dollar the U.S. federal government spends on the Pentagon, it spends**

- 9 cents for child health insurance
- 7 cents for elementary and secondary education
- 1.7 cents for Head Start
- 10 cents for child food and nutrition
- 2.2 cents for environmental protection
- 5 cents for family-assisted housing

# A Children's National Security Budget

<b>Suggested Action</b>	<b>Annual Savings *</b>	<b>Suggested Action</b>	<b>Annual Costs **</b>
Bring back troops need- lessly deployed around the world	\$33 billion	Provide health insurance for every uninsured child	\$13 billion
Cut back in research and development of next generation of weapons	\$21 billion	Provide subsidized housing for every home- less family with children	\$9 billion
Reduce nuclear weapons to 1,000	\$8 billion	Enroll in Head Start the 1 million 2-5 year olds eligible but not served	\$9 billion
		Rebuild 1/6 of the 48,000 schools in need of repair	\$20 billion
		Hire 100,000 new teachers	\$4 billion
		Provide food stamps to those eligible but not served	\$7 billion
<b>Total Savings</b>	<b>\$62 billion</b>	<b>Total Costs</b>	<b>\$62 billion</b>

\* Annual savings reflect Dr. Lawrence Korb's assessment of reductions that could take place in conventional force structure and conventional and nuclear weapons while maintaining the nation's national security. Cuts are based on reduced threats due to the end of the cold war. For a specific breakdown of changes in weaponry and forces, see Dr. Lawrence Korb, *The Korb Report: A Realistic Defense Budget for the New Millennium* (New York: Business Leaders for Sensible Priorities, 2000).

\*\* Health insurance: Bureau of Census and American Association of Pediatrics; Head Start: Head Start Bureau; Subsidized housing: National Coalition to End Homelessness; Cost to repair schools: based on information from Rebuild America's Schools Coalition, Washington, DC; Cost to hire teachers: National Education Association; Food Stamps: Food Research Action Council and Committee on Ways and Means, U.S. House of Representatives *1999 Green Book*.

## Sources for More Information

### Organizations

#### Business Leaders for Sensible Priorities

1350 Broadway, Ste. 2210  
New York, NY 10018-7802  
Voice: (212) 563-9245 x 17  
Fax: (212) 563-9271  
Email: [TheFolks@Businessleaders.org](mailto:TheFolks@Businessleaders.org)  
Website: <http://www.businessleaders.org/>

#### Center for Defense Information

1779 Massachusetts Ave. NW  
Washington, DC 20036  
Voice: (202) 332-0600  
Fax (202) 462-4559  
Email: [chellman@cdi.org](mailto:chellman@cdi.org)  
Website: <http://www.cdi.org/>  
Contact: Chris Hellman

#### National Priorities Project

17 New South St.  
Northampton, MA 01060  
Voice: (413) 584-9556  
Fax: (413) 586-9647  
Email: [info@natprior.org](mailto:info@natprior.org)  
Website: <http://www.nationalpriorities.org/>  
Contact: Greg Speeter, Executive Director

#### Peace Action

1819 H St. NW, Ste. 420  
Washington, DC 20006  
Voice (202) 862-9740  
Fax (202) 862-9762  
Email: [fgiatti@peace-action.org](mailto:fgiatti@peace-action.org)  
Website: <http://www.peace-action.org/>

#### Women's Action for New Directions

691 Massachusetts Avenue  
Arlington, MA 02476  
Voice: (781) 643-6740  
Fax: (781) 643-6744  
Email: [wand@wand.org](mailto:wand@wand.org)  
Website: <http://www.wand.org/>  
Contact: Susan Shaer, Executive Director

### Publications

Children's Defense Fund, *The State of America's Children Yearbook 2000* (Washington: Children's Defense Fund, 2000).

Dr. Lawrence Korb, *The Korb Report: A Realistic Defense Budget for the New Millennium* (New York: Business Leaders for Sensible Priorities, 2000).

National Priorities Project, *The State of the States: United States 2000, The Third Annual Assessment of the State We're In* (Northampton, MA: National Priorities Project, 2000). Available at <http://www.natprior.org/sos2000/sos2000.html>. Information is also available for each state.

### Websites

**The Children's Defense Fund**  
<http://www.childrensdefense.org/>