

8. **Pentagon Pork**

Congress should

- eliminate any military construction add-on projects that are not essential; doing so in the FY97 defense budget would have saved at least \$600 million;
- reduce the number of general and flag-rank officers by 25 percent;
- remove all nondefense spending (e.g., providing security for sporting events, such as the Olympic Games, and research on breast cancer) from the Pentagon budget; either eliminate such programs or transfer the spending to the proper budget classification;
- end subsidies to arms producers, which currently total more than \$7.6 billion per year; and
- refrain from spending more money on the purchase of weapons not requested by the administration, such as additional B-2 bombers.

After the 1994 election, the Republican-controlled 104th Congress promised to eliminate unnecessary and wasteful government spending, especially blatant pork-barrel spending. Although that is a familiar refrain during campaign season, there was some hope that the Republicans—presumably more willing than Democrats to reduce government spending—would actually deliver the promised cuts. But when it came to Department of Defense spending, the pork not only remained untrimmed, it actually grew larger.

There is no single accepted definition of what constitutes pork-barrel spending in the defense budget. Sometimes the defense budget is used as a massive federal jobs program that particularly favors the states or districts of members of Congress who sit on the relevant committees. The pork

can include such items as unnecessary weapons programs and military bases that are not needed for national security but remain open to provide economic benefits to the surrounding communities. Corporate welfare, in the form of subsidies to defense contractors, is another example of pork-barrel spending. In addition, the defense budget includes programs that are not even marginally related to national security, which should either be eliminated or moved to the relevant budget classification.

Above and beyond the Call of the Pentagon

The 104th Congress added \$6.9 billion in additional appropriations to the Pentagon's fiscal year 1996 budget and \$11 billion more than the \$254 billion the Clinton administration requested to the FY97 military budget. According to an assessment by the Pentagon comptroller, only about half the extra dollars Congress has added for weapons purchases accelerate programs already budgeted in long-range service plans. Of the remainder, about \$3.3 billion, or 46.6 percent, qualifies as pork for programs not budgeted beyond FY97.

Much of the extra money was added to weapons systems the Pentagon did not request. Despite the fact that the administration does not want more funding for the B-2 bomber, for example, the FY97 authorization act added \$212 million for it. Congress also added \$539 million for the Aegis destroyer and \$799 million for the New Attack Submarine.

The FY97 authorization act also added \$82 million to the administration's request for B-1B bomber upgrades. That is a particularly wasteful expenditure. The Pentagon considers the B-1B's current capability sufficient to interdict enemy targets. Moreover, the General Accounting Office and the Air Force estimate that the modified B-1B would strike only a very small percentage of the Air Force's designated targets, and Unified Command officers have said they would use far fewer B-1Bs than even the Pentagon says are necessary.

Bringing the Bacon Home

Like their Democratic colleagues, most Republicans are reluctant to cut pork-barrel spending that benefits their constituents. In 1996 the services produced, at the request of the House National Security Procurement Subcommittee, chaired by Rep. Duncan Hunter (R-Calif.), a telephone book-sized list of military programs and the congressional districts that benefit from them. Such documents enable members of Congress to deter-

mine exactly how many jobs are created or preserved by proposed increases in military spending. Spending on the Javelin hand-held, anti-tank missile built by Texas Instruments in Lewisville, Texas, for example, would help preserve 556 jobs in the district of Rep. Dick Armev (R-Tex.), the House Majority Leader. Even the most ardent budget cutters find projects that so clearly benefit their districts almost irresistible.

Pushing pork into the Pentagon budget is not a practice reserved solely for Congress. Presidential candidates can be equally enthusiastic proponents of pork-barrel spending, especially in states rich in electoral votes. In 1992 Clinton promised to fund the V-22 tilt-rotor aircraft—which the Pentagon itself recommended killing—and carried Pennsylvania, the state in which it is produced and which has 23 electoral votes. Clinton also promised funding for the Seawolf submarine, which the Bush administration had tried to kill. Construction of the Seawolf is important to jobs in Connecticut and Rhode Island, two states that Clinton needed to carry and did. Nineteen ninety-six was no different. Clinton traveled to California to promise full funding for the C-17 cargo aircraft, a major jobs program in Southern California, while Bob Dole barnstormed California promising to build an additional 20 B-2 stealth bombers.

Wasteful military spending is hardly a new topic, but its perennial appearance in the DoD budget is embarrassing for the Republicans to explain—especially when they defend pork-barrel programs even as they argue that national defense is underfunded. One of the few legislators willing to blow the whistle on such hypocrisy is Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.), who, along with Rep. David Minge (D-Minn.), chairs a congressional porkbusters coalition. McCain notes that Congress has added nearly \$1 billion per year in unrequested military construction projects since FY90. The FY97 military construction appropriations bill exceeded the administration's request by \$900 million in the House version and by \$700 million in the Senate. Representative Minge points out that the House version of the bill included \$300 million for 42 projects not on the Pentagon's long-range plan. Sen. John Glenn (D-Ohio) states, "Most of these things . . . do not even deserve to be talked about . . . as being necessary. Most of them are add-ons that are favors to particular Members, and we know it, and anybody who works on this legislation knows it."

At a minimum, Congress needs to take seriously its own criteria for considering military construction projects. Only projects that the armed services consider mission-essential—that address a serious quality-of-life issue or a significant operational deficiency—should be considered for

funding. And even those projects should receive appropriations only after the project is programmed and a site identified. Other military construction add-ons are most likely pure pork.

Thus far, however, there has been precious little real debate on the use of the Pentagon budget as an all-purpose pork barrel. When the House of Representatives brought the defense authorization bill to the floor for a vote, not a single amendment was permitted that would have cut either overall spending or funding for a specific weapons program. (Instead, the debate centered around such "vital" issues as the sale of pornography in military compounds.)

Nondefense Spending

One major source of pork-barrel spending in the military budget is the array of items that have nothing to do with defense. The FY97 DoD appropriations conference agreement includes numerous examples of non-defense spending.

Nondefense Spending in DoD Budget

- \$1 million for the Harnett County School Board in Lillington, North Carolina
- \$3.4 million for medical research performed by "private-sector or nonfederal physicians who have used and will use the antibacterial treatment method based on the excretion of dead and decaying spherical bacteria"
- \$1 million for an off-island leave program for Johnston Atoll employees
- \$8 million for mitigation of environmental impacts on Indian lands
- \$2 million for the National Automotive Center
- \$100 million for breast cancer research
- \$45 million for prostate cancer research

Many of the nonmilitary items in the Pentagon budget do not merit federal funding at all. Even items that constitute the legitimate use of taxpayer

funds, however, should not be included in the military budget unless they are defense related.

Prime Porkers

The uses and abuses of military pork range from the merely ridiculous to the utterly outrageous. Some of the more prominent recent items are discussed next.

Civilian Marksmanship Program

The Army continues to spend from \$2 million to \$4 million per year on the 100-year-old civilian marksmanship program, which now subsidizes National Rifle Association shooting competitions. Instead of terminating the program, as the Army recommended, Congress plans to help establish the Corporation for the Promotion of Rifle Practice by giving away \$80 million worth of Army rifles, ammo, cars, computers, and a one-time cash infusion. Congress should terminate Army sponsorship of the program.

Operational Support Airlift

Operational Support Airlift, the Pentagon's VIP air fleet, is far larger than any conceivable wartime need requires. That leads to frequent abuse of the approximately 500-craft fleet, which costs \$378 million per year to maintain. The most famous example is Air Force Gen. Joseph Ashy's 1994 flight, with an aide and a pet cat, on a military transport from Italy to Colorado, at a cost of \$120,000. The trip would have cost no more than \$5,300 on a commercial carrier. Also popular are helicopter rides from Andrews Air Force Base to the Pentagon (a 20- to 30-minute cab ride) at a cost of \$400 to \$1,600 per flight. Both the General Accounting Office and the 1995 Roles and Missions Commission have documented that the size of the fleet is excessive even for wartime needs. The OSA should be reduced by at least 25 percent.

Grade Creep in the Services

There appears to be a trend in the services toward adding general and flag-rank officers, despite a reduction in military personnel overall. In July 1996, for example, the Marine Corps succeeded in getting 12 new general officer positions authorized—giving them a total of 80 generals for 174,000 Marines—despite the opposition of Sen. Charles Grassley (R-Iowa), who noted that the Marine Corps used to manage 199,000 troops with only

70 generals. (Indeed, the 1996 increase gives the Marine Corps one more general than it had at the end of World War n, when there were 495,000 Marines.) More generals mean more desk jobs, more support staff, more bureaucracy, more perks, and, of course, the spending of more taxpayer money.

According to a Senate Armed Services Committee report, the Marines argued that they needed to add 12 more flag officers in order to "have greater representation at the general officer level on the Department of Navy/Secretariat staff and in the joint arena." In other words, the new generals are not intended for combat leadership but to do battle for programs and money at the Pentagon and other joint service headquarters.

Now the race is on. An unidentified Pentagon official has said that the current 865 generals and admirals are not enough to do the Pentagon's work. While the Army and Air Force have not weighed in yet, the Navy's personnel chief told Congress his service needs 25 to 30 more admirals to avoid gaps in flag positions. Without more admirals, however, the Navy would have to put captains in admirals' slots—which would save money because captains are paid less than admirals. It would also ensure that prospective flag officers could perform as admirals before being promoted.

Instead of permitting such self-serving institutional grade creep, Congress should cut the number of current top brass by 25 percent, as called for in the FY97 Defense Authorization Act. That would help rectify the problem of top-heavy services, which has emerged since overall active-duty forces have been reduced by more than one-third since 1991.

National Defense Sealift Fund

Another prime example of pork is the National Defense Sealift Fund, a little-known account that is emerging as a major source of business for Gulf Coast and southern California shipyards. The account finances construction and conversion of vessels on which the **military** can preposition weapons and materiel around the world for rapid deployment. Beginning in 1994, Congress, on its own initiative, began adding funds for a **prepositioning** force of three ships not requested by the Pentagon but strongly backed by the Marines and a number of shipyards. The *Washington Post* reported in June 1996 that the House Appropriations Committee added another \$250 million to the Pentagon budget for work on the ships for the **Marines**. The committee also doubled the request for Army **sealift**, approving \$1.2 billion to pay for four ships in FY97, instead of the two

the administration had requested. In the FY98 budget the funds for this account should be returned to 1996 levels.

Pork to the Private Sector

Although, strictly speaking, federal subsidies to arms contractors who sell their weapons overseas are not entirely Pentagon pork—as some of the subsidies come from the budgets of departments such as State and Commerce—the DoD is the main justification for and the prime protector of the subsidies. The United States is the number-one subsidizer of arms exports in the world, employing nearly 6,500 full-time personnel to promote and implement overseas arms sales.

A recent study by the World Policy Institute detailed the cost of providing such welfare to weapons dealers. The study found that subsidies for arms exports totaled more than \$7.6 billion in 1995—an increase of nearly 10 percent over 1994—making them the second largest subsidy for business in the entire federal budget. That figure includes loans, grants, giveaways, and promotional activities.

Welfare for arms dealers includes such items as the establishment of a Center for Defense Trade at the State Department; the Commerce Department's Office of Strategic Industries, which helps U.S. military contractors market their wares around the world; the financing of exhibitions for U.S. contractors at overseas air shows; Foreign Military Financing of \$3.1 billion per year; Excess Defense Articles giveaways; waivers for research-and-development recoupment fees; the newly established Defense Financing Facility, which gives loan guarantees to foreign customers who purchase U.S. weapons; and Economic Support Funds of \$2.1 billion per year.

The cost of those programs equaled more than one-half of the value of all U.S. arms exports in 1995. Moreover, subsidies are scheduled to increase; thus the majority of U.S. weapons sales for the rest of this century will be paid for by American taxpayers, not foreign customers.

Even worse, many of the subsidies support sales of weapons to countries that cannot pay for them, meaning that American taxpayers pick up the whole tab. Since 1991, for example, the U.S. government has written off nearly \$10 billion in arms-related loans to such nations as Egypt, Iraq, Niger, and Senegal. Such arms subsidies are one of the most egregious examples of pork-barrel defense spending. Instead of increasing, such subsidies should be eliminated immediately. That would save taxpayers billions of dollars per year. Moreover, it would most likely slow regional

arms races and reduce the likelihood that U.S. troops will in the future face enemies that possess American **weapons** courtesy of U.S. taxpayers.

Suggested Readings

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"Congressional Summer Games: Members of Congress Go for the **Gold-Plated** Pork in the Pentagon Budget." Council for a Livable World Education Fund Online, August 1996. At <http://www.clw.org/pub/clw/ef/follies/bloat.vot.html>

Diamond, John. "Report Reveals Where GOP 'Pork' May Go." *Army Times*, June 17, 1996.

Evans, David. "Business as Usual." *Proceedings*, October 1995.

The FY 1996 Military Construction Budget: Business As Usual? Washington: Business Executives for National Security, July 28, 1995.

"The Military Budget." In *Cato Handbook for Congress: 104th Congress*. Washington: Cato institute, 1995.

Morgan, Dan. "Defense Budget Additions Buoy Sun Belt Shipyards." *Washington Post*, June 30, 1996.

Pincus, Walter, and Dan Morgan. "Defense Budget 'Add-Ons' (or Pork and Pet Projects) Manage to Survive." *Washington Post*, July 19, 1996.

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