
Defense Report

AUSA



Additional Defense Spending is Needed, But Let's Be Sure We Buy the Right Things

The news that President Carter has decided to increase spending enough to provide some truly tangible improvements in our capabilities is most welcome. It is particularly heartening to learn that he intends a substantial amount of the additional money to go into improving our mobility. The best armed forces in the world are not of much value unless they can be moved quickly to the places they are needed.

We are sure that when the President's defense budget for the upcoming year is finally exposed in detail there will be money in it for all kinds of weaponry but we hope the decision on what will be produced will be based on true need, not solely on a desire to have the newest and most sophisticated systems. The budget **must** contain, for example, funds to procure enough ammunition and enough ammunition production capability to sustain our combat forces adequately during the first weeks and months of fighting. There is not enough ammunition in storage now and there are not enough responsive production facilities.

There should be enough money in the budget to assure that the guns, tanks, ships and aircraft already on hand are adequately maintained and that a steady flow of spare parts can be made available on short notice. Let's be sure that the ceiling on civilian employees of the armed forces is high enough to staff all the jobs that should be done by civilians while military personnel prepare to fight. Last year the Army reported 25,000 military people as "borrowed military manpower," doing housekeeping chores that should have been done by civilians because the Army's civilian manpower ceiling has been reduced too far.

In our rush to spend billions on highly sophisticated aircraft, let us not forget to provide adequate numbers of air defense systems that can accompany the soldiers onto the battlefield and shield him from enemy aircraft. Let us not forget that our armored forces are equipped with personnel carriers that entered the Army's inventory about the time many of its soldiers were born. Let's remember that our Army is badly outgunned by the greater numbers and longer range of the artillery in Warsaw Pact forces.

And we must never lose sight of the people who are the armed forces. They deserve medical care as responsive and effective as that available to their civilian friends and relatives, but not all of them are getting it. They deserve to be paid on a basis that makes military service truly comparable to a civilian career.

Let's make sure all these basic needs are covered before we commit larger amounts of defense money to nice-to-have equipment. We hope the President and the Congress will have their collective priorities in order.