
Defense Report

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Congress Votes a Military Pay Raise, but Doesn't Want to appropriate for It—Ridiculous!

In 1981, Congress approved a military pay raise that amounted to an average of more than 14 percent for our career service members. This large increase was approved because it brought military pay rates to a level of comparability with civilian compensation for the first time since 1972. It was an action that had to be taken if the volunteer concept of filling our service ranks was to remain viable.

But in the meantime, an ill-considered action—or lack of action—by the Defense Subcommittee of the House Appropriations Committee has threatened to undo all the good which the pay raise has achieved.

In recent years, because it has been difficult, if not impossible, for the President to forecast in January what pay raise the Congress would approve in October, it has become customary for Congress to appropriate the money for the pay raise in response to a "pay supplemental" budget request submitted by the Department of Defense. The military services, however, must pay at the new rates from the start of the fiscal year.

The Defense Subcommittee has threatened to let the fiscal 1982 pay supplemental die without action. Not only would such action "cop out" on Congress's implied commitment and Constitutional responsibility to provide the funds to pay the pay raise they approved, but it would force the services to reprogram monies appropriated for other purposes in order to pay their soldiers, sailors, airmen and marines.

In the Army alone, the \$1.7 billion cost of the "pay supplemental" is approximately seven percent of the total fiscal 1982 RDT&E and procurement accounts, much of which has already been obligated. To reprogram that amount at this time from those accounts would destroy President Reagan's efforts to modernize the force after more than 20 years of "making do" with obsolescent equipment.

As the 4th of July congressional recess approached, the subcommittee still had not acted. If it does not reject this piece of bad management, it will be the Army and the taxpayers who will ultimately pay the bill.