
Defense Report

AUSA



Rearming America—The Threat of Budget Deficits

One of the mandates given the Reagan Administration in the election of 1980 and reaffirmed in 1984 was to revitalize the nation's defenses which had been in decline since the 1970s. Over the past five years, this trend has been reversed and the U.S. has made significant progress in strengthening its military capabilities. We have thus laid the foundation for the most effective American military we have ever had in peacetime.

To offset further erosion of the balance of power in favor of the Soviet Union, the President has requested \$311.6 billion for defense spending for fiscal year 1987—the minimum required to sustain the rebuilding of our defenses. This amount is in keeping with a bargain made last summer when the President and Congress agreed to freeze defense spending for FY 1986 at the 1985 levels. At the same time they agreed to a three percent increase in 1987 and 1988.

But Congress was not long in renegeing on its promise. First, it cut defense spending \$5 billion below the 1986 compromise levels. Then in March, under Gramm-Rudman-Hollings, another \$11 billion was cut from the 1986 defense budget. In short, the 1986 budget actually shrank by six percent.

In the 1987 budget, the administration is merely seeking that which was promised by Congress last August. Yet, some in Congress would cut the budget even more.

There appears to be a very dangerous mood developing in this country that our highest priority should be to cut the deficits—that we can put off considerations of national defense until after we have solved our fiscal problems. Such thinking puts in jeopardy the gains we have made in strengthening and rearming our military forces.

This is not the time to undo all we have accomplished. Now is the time to strengthen America's hand by resisting politically expedient calls to cut military spending.

For all Americans, national defense must be our highest priority. Our military strength preserves and defends our values and sustains the peace. Cutting the defense budget at a time of further Soviet modernization and expansion of its military forces imperils our national security and sells the American people short.