
Defense Report

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Gramm-Rudman Deficit Cuts—Like Performing Surgery with a Chain Saw

At the end of the first year of the Reagan Administration, our country seemed to be looking forward to fulfillment of great expectations. We had a new President who promised to get the country back on the economic track and to move us forward. He scored an immediate victory by maneuvering a series of tax reforms through Congress. He also initiated what was to become the largest planned renewal of our military strength in America's peacetime history.

Now, after the first year of President Reagan's second term in office, the confidence of the nation is being shaken by a preoccupation with deficit reduction and a real threat to our national security embodied in legislation known as the Gramm-Rudman amendment. This new law stands to reverse the growth of U.S. military preparedness and to erase the gains made over the preceding four years. The acquiescence of the President in support of this legislation is almost impossible to fathom.

Gramm-Rudman laudably aims to eliminate America's budget deficit by 1991. But it would do so by excising a disproportionately large share of funding from the national security budget. It would thus deal a devastating blow to the United States' ability to negotiate from strength with the Soviets.

It is distressing to note that the potential undoing of the military buildup comes at the same time that our new-found strength had contributed so greatly to the return of the Soviets to the arms control negotiations in Geneva. The position of strength to which we aspired gave credibility to our deterrent posture and prompted the newest Soviet leader to agree to another attempt at arms limitation.

For this nation to remain in control of its national destiny, it must be strong, and it must possess the military credibility to deter any would-be aggressor from adventurism. Certainly this is not the time to forsake our international responsibilities by cutting muscle and sinew from our armed forces.

Our government must recognize now the potential havoc which this ill-considered legislation threatens and attack the deficit in some other manner that will not sacrifice the security of these United States.