



NATIONAL SECURITY AND THE 104TH CONGRESS

The 104th Congress faces a phenomenal number of challenges for the next two years. Just prioritizing the issues to be addressed will present a challenge in itself. The leadership in the House of Representatives is committed to a legislative plan of action outlined in their "Contract with America," a list of reforms that, in their view, must be accomplished within the first 100 days of the new Congress in order to redirect federal policy-making and make government manageable. In the meantime, the other incumbents and freshmen members of Congress are assessing how they will work with the new leadership and influence outcomes.

Although the great majority of Americans support the armed forces, defense issues appeared only peripherally during mid-term election campaigns across the country. Candidates and most of the electorate seemed to focus to a greater degree on domestic issues such as the economy, taxes, health care and the effect of big government in our lives and on our pocketbooks. However, now that the campaign rhetoric is quieted and the legislative and executive branches begin to address the issues, the tough defense-related concerns must return to the forefront of the national agenda.

New members of Congress must quickly achieve a high level of military literacy. Make no mistake, the world is more unstable and unpredictable than ever, and U.S. military readiness is as crucial as ever.

Against that background, we would recommend a few points for consideration by our representatives on the Hill:

The world. *Jane's Defence Weekly* recently counted 31 simultaneous areas of tension, 27 military conflicts and 12 flash points around the world. More than 15 nations have

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ballistic missiles, and many of these are seeking to acquire, or already have, weapons of mass destruction. Many Third World nations are buying the latest in mis-

siles, warheads, artillery, armor, satellite communications, sensors and computers, and are developing or attempting to acquire chemical, biological and nuclear weapons.

The budget. By Fiscal Year 1999, the defense budget is expected to be 2.8 percent of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). This would be the lowest level since just before the 1941 Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. Even in the "hollow force" years of the late 1970s, defense spending was 4.7 percent of the GDP. The General Accounting Office reported that as of July of this year, defense was underfunded by \$150 billion in the 1995-1999 Future Years Defense spending plan. Army procurement dollars have plummeted by almost 80 percent since the mid-1980s — and by 67 percent for all the services. Army resources, as now authorized and projected, are simply not adequate to allow the Army to meet its diversified missions. Tradeoffs to maintain readiness within budget constraints have caused the Army to cancel a number of weapon systems and to delay many others since Fiscal Year 1993.

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Peacekeeping vs. modernization. Although supplemental funds are eventually appropriated, billions of dollars are taken from readiness funds each year to pay for peacekeeping since there is a time lag between receiving reimbursement and the immediate expense of paying for operations. The services have to take funds from their training and maintenance accounts to pay for operations like the humanitarian relief effort in Rwanda and deployments like those to fend off Saddam Hussein's most recent threat to Kuwait. The Army has been forced to use money from its modernization accounts to fund a multitude of current operations. More and more often, discussions center around "upgrading" existing equipment and weapon systems rather than development and procurement of new systems.

Defense dollars for nondefense programs. There are currently no "firewalls" erected to protect the defense budget from being the account of convenience for the federal government. At a time when future modernization is in jeopardy and money to pay for vital quality-of-life programs for our soldiers and their families cannot meet the need, more and more nondefense projects are being financed through the defense budget. The projected real decline in defense spending of some 40 percent between 1985 and 1999 will be even greater when nondefense projects are factored in. (Note: This subject was covered in greater depth in the **Defense Report** "The Account of Convenience for the Federal Government," August 1994/DR94-9.)

Increasing requirements and quality of life. The demands on America's military continue to increase in response to crises around the world. In August of this year, U.S. forces were deployed to more than 100 countries around the world. Since the Berlin Wall came down five years ago, the Army's operational deployments have increased 300 percent. And since the end of the Cold War, more than 800 soldiers have been awarded the Purple Heart for wounds received in combat. While demands on Ameri-

can military forces increase, quality of life programs continue to erode. As an example, current housing allowances often do not cover the cost of off-base housing, especially for junior enlisted personnel. Seventy-five percent of our enlisted forces have basic pay less than \$30,000 per year, and among Army personnel, 45 percent have basic pay less than \$20,000 a year. As mid-level grade servicemen and women decide that a military career is no longer worth the level of compensation and personal sacrifice to themselves and their families, they will begin to leave. Readiness and operational effectiveness will be adversely affected as these experienced and seasoned individuals leave the service.

Certainly the threat to our national security is different since the demise of the Soviet Bear, and reason dictates that changes must be made in our national security goals and defense systems. Reasonable citizens have displayed a clear understanding of the economic straits this nation is in right now, and that there is just so much money to be divided among competing demands and that simply "throwing money" at problems seldom achieves the desired results.

However, the 104th Congress must hear clearly these messages:

- Basic U.S. defense priorities must be reviewed and solid policy developed. Before committing U.S. troops to any foreign operation, the question that must be asked and answered objectively: Is this operation in the national interest of the United States?
- The future military force of the world's only superpower must be **designed** prudently. The U.S. armed forces of the 21st century must be a total force carefully thought out, coordinated planned and resourced.

It is the primary duty of government to provide for the national defense. National security is not a option.

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