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House passes its version of Defense Authorization bill

The House of Representatives passed its version of the Fiscal Year 1999 Defense Authorization bill on May 21 by a vote of 357-60. The \$271 billion bill includes features providing for the normal operation of the Defense Department.

House version.

(b=billion; m=million; PB=president's budget request)

- 3.6 percent pay increase
- Extension of several active and reserve component bonuses
- Requires a minimum three-person military detail for veterans' funerals
- Requires gender-segregated basic training
- Recommends two new awards - for military killed in non-combat conditions and for civilians killed while acting in an official capacity
- A change to household goods movements touted as an improvement for military families but for which AUSA has grave concerns
- Reform of military pharmacy system to provide a uniform benefit to all
- A DoD plan to ensure retirees have access to quality healthcare
- Provision to allow dependent-only registration in retiree dental plan
- \$660m for family housing (\$49m more than president's budget (PB))
- \$635m for new barracks (\$72m more than the PB)
- \$31m for new child development centers (\$7.9m more than the PB)
- \$46m for new fitness centers (\$30m more than the PB)
- Prohibits any combination of the PX and commissary without Hill OK
- Expands annual commissary visits for RC personnel from 12 to 24
- ARNG on active duty for federal disaster relief can use PX and commissary

- Suspends any additional library closings on military installations
- \$35m for impact aid (money can be spent only on impact aid)
- \$6.8b for depot maintenance (\$235m more than the PB)
- \$125m over the PB to improve training centers
- \$4.3b (\$175m more than the PB) for real property maintenance
- Encourages reform in the readiness reporting system
- \$60.2m for prepositioned equipment at the NTC
- \$20m for the Joint Readiness Training Center, Fort Polk
- \$70m for Army National Guard construction
- \$85m for Army Reserve construction
- Maintained mandatory floors on end strength (allow 1 percent variance)

Active Army end strength FY 99 - 484,800

Army National Guard end strength - 357,000

Army Reserve end strength - 209,000

- Repeals the prohibition on the use of landmines

Senate version.

This much is known about the Senate version of the Defense Authorization bill.

- The Senate stayed very close to the President's Budget request for funding of weapons systems, because there is precious little room for variance due to the constraints of balanced budget agreement
- A 3.1 percent pay increase in military pay (one half percent less than the House version)
- Rejects another round of base closure initiatives
- Delays requiring gender-segregated training until after the congressional commission on this subject reports
- Tests three variants of the military health benefits for Medicare-eligible beneficiaries
- (These are in addition to the already authorized test of Medicare Subvention, which DoD is attempting to get started)

House panel wants FEHBP test. The House National Security Committee included in its version of the Defense Authorization Bill an amendment providing for a three-year test, extending eligibility to enroll in the Federal Employees Health Benefit Program (FEHBP) to Medicare-eligible military beneficiaries. The amendment submitted by Representatives Jim Moran, D-Va., J.C. Watt, R-Okla., William Thornberry, R-Texas, and others, is the text of the Moran bill that has been pending in the Congress with well over 200 cosponsors.

Rep. Bill Thomas, R-Calif., chairman of the Ways and Means Committee, opposed the amendment. When the vote was taken, Thomas was the only member of Congress to vote against the provision.

The details of the test program will be worked out after the House and Senate agree on common language in their bills. It represents a clear victory for AUSA and the other member organizations of the Military Coalition which, for years, have worked to turn this concept into reality.

President outlines anti-terrorism plans. Speaking at the Naval Academy May 22, President Clinton announced measures to guard against terrorist attacks. He called for protecting computer systems against cyberattacks and stockpiling vaccines to protect the American population against biological weapons.

Among the steps the president announced were: stepped up campaign against terrorism; an effort to detect vulnerabilities in computer networks and how to better defend them against attacks; stockpiling vaccines and training local officials in how to react to biological attacks; and conducting research in new medicines and diagnostic tools.

“Our security is challenged increasingly by nontraditional threats from adversaries both old and new,” he said. Clinton warned that the danger of such attacks comes not only from hostile nations but also terrorists and criminals “who cannot defeat us in traditional theaters of battle but search instead for new ways to attack.”

At the same time, the president announced Richard A. Clarke will be the National Coordinator for Security, Infrastructure Protection and Counterterrorism. Clark will head efforts to coordinate federal agency response to these new threats and enlist cooperation in the private sector.

Sullivan warns about proliferation dangers in wake of India/Pakistan nuclear tests. Gen. Gordon R. Sullivan, USA, ret., president of the Association of the United States Army, said May 28:

“We at the Association of the United States Army view the nuclear tests by India and Pakistan as a wakeup call to the nation. The dangers of nuclear proliferation in south Asia and the increased range of missiles now on the subcontinent, China and the Persian Gulf are omens of the challenges the new century will likely produce.

“The United States must be seen as strong and resolute in this evolving dilemma. The stakes for the world are too great to not have this nation actively involved to check the proliferation of all weapons of mass destruction and the systems capable of delivering them... To be strong and resolute, the United States must reinforce its diplomatic efforts with armed forces that are second to none in the world and capable of meeting the most dangerous challenges.”

Clinton selects Caldera for Army secretary. President Clinton has selected Louis Caldera, a former California lawmaker, to become secretary of the Army. If confirmed by the Senate, Caldera would succeed Togo D. West Jr., now the secretary of veterans' affairs.

Caldera, a 1978 graduate of the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, is managing director and chief operating officer of the Corporation for National Service. He served in the California state legislature as an assemblyman from 1992 to 1997.

He served in the Army for five years before earning a law degree and a master's degree in business administration from Harvard University.

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Fernandez to head DARPA. Defense Secretary Cohen announced the appointment of Fernando L. Fernandez as director of the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency. The agency is the principal organization in the department for research, development and demonstration of concepts, devices and systems that provide highly advanced military capabilities.

He comes to the post from AETC Inc., a small, applied research organization he founded in 1994. The company specializes in the use of advanced processing technologies to improve detection, localization and identification of hidden objects underwater and underground.

DACOWITS to look at training and career progression of women. The chair of the Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services said the panel will “be looking very seriously at training and how that affects career progression. We will be taking up the call of General (Henry H.) Shelton to look at mentoring and looking at the positive work environment for both men and women.”

“We’ve been around since 1951. Our process is to be the eyes and ears of the secretary of defense,” Ms. Elizabeth T. Bilby, DACOWITS chair, said in an interview with AUSA at the end of the committee’s spring meeting in suburban Washington.

Questions surrounding gender-integrated training surfaced following reports of sexual misconduct at several Army installations. Congress, Defense Secretary William Cohen and the Army created special study groups and task forces to get to the root of the problem.

Cohen’s panel recommended that women and men live in separate barracks and some aspects of basic training at the unit level be gender-separate.

The House National Security Committee has attached an amendment to the Defense Authorization Act requiring the services to begin gender-separate training in the next few years.

Both DACOWITS and the commission will visit gender-integrated training facilities and gender-separate facilities. They also will likely make visits to Advanced Individual Training facilities to measure rigor, discipline and leadership at those installations.

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Bayer to chair Army Science Board. Michael J. Bayer, a business consultant living in suburban Washington and a former member of the Defense Reform Task Force, has been selected to chair the Army Science Board.

Bayer, who serves on the advisory board of directors of AUSA, assumes leadership of the board. Members are selected on the basis of their pre-eminence in science, technology, engineering, testing, acquisition and management, to advise senior Army leadership.

Remains removed from Tomb of the Unknowns. Scientists at the Armed Forces Institute of Pathology are beginning work on identifying remains disinterred from the Tomb of the Unknowns in early May.

Defense Secretary William Cohen announced that the reason for the disinterment was to fully account for all servicemembers. Mitchell Holland, chief of the Armed Forces DNA Identification Laboratory, said at a May 7 press conference the goal is to provide “the fullest possible accounting of our servicemen who still wait to be returned to their loved ones.”

Holland said since 1975 the armed forces has been able to identify 493 remains from the Vietnam War. “Our hope is that our work at the Tomb of the Unknowns will give more answers to more families.”

PsyOps will soon be using advanced media systems. PsyOps soldiers will soon have for their use, an advanced media system that can be housed in two HMMWV and a trailer that will be capable of broadcasting television and radio programs to support special operations around the world.

Dave Larson, senior electronics engineer at the Naval Air Warfare Center, Patuxent River at St. Inigoes, Md., said of advances such as the Special Operations Media System-B, that is there is a growing need for American forces to have the means to communicate with a local population and bring them the facts that partisan-controlled media won’t.

An example of that occurred in Serbian-controlled broadcast outlets in Bosnia. There, NATO forces had to forcibly take over some stations that broadcast hate programming.

Printing capability improves. Coupled with the broadcast system is the Deployable Print Production Center that is expected to be delivered in July to the 4th Psychological Operations Group at Fort Bragg, N. C.

The center can be carried in a C-130 and rapidly assembled into a field printing plant with desktop publishing, scanned images and video capture, as well as multi-color duplication and trimming of the finished product.

Because it is mobile, the center will greatly shorten the time needed to deliver, say, a poster warning about land mine dangers to the target audience.

Dave Larson, senior electronics engineer at the Naval Air Warfare Center, Patuxent River at St. Inigoes, Md., said the two systems are "some of the ways of enforcing your position, letting the people get the facts."

For special operating forces in the future, Larson sees continuing miniaturization of video equipment as a way of "letting that (special operating force soldier) operate even more independently; who they are, where they are, we will be able to see that. We're also getting to the point where the soldier will be able to pull the information he needs — maps, population info, updates en route on conditions," he said. "The only way we can wage war in the future is to have the information before the other guy does,"

Communications systems is boon in Bosnia.

One tool that commanders in Bosnia have had in their kit since December 1995 is the JWICS Mobile Integrated Communications System. It provides the commander with a mobile system to support the exchange of tactical and strategic intelligence data and video. It is housed on a HMMWV with trailer.

It is a program that is sponsored by Department of the Army Military Intelligence (DAMI) and engineered, integrated and tested by NAWCAD for the Joint Intelligence Community. Greg Tate, project engineer at the Naval Air Warfare Center, Patuxent River, Md., said the first two systems were developed as Engineering Manufacturing Development (EDM) models and were sent into Bosnia during the first wave.

"We were expecting it to be utilized for 10 or 12 months, but they have been there for 30."

Industry, Army look at putting dollars on right things for future defense needs. "Are we spending our money on the right things and in the right places to get to the Army After Next?" was the question posed to representatives from eight defense industries by the Army's acquisition chief at a recent conference in Northern Virginia.

Lt. Gen. Paul J. Kern, director of the Army Acquisition Corps, Office of the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Research, Development and Acquisition, told defense industry members that their research and development efforts will assist the Army in establishing a technology baseline for the Technology Seminar Game July 27-31 at Carlisle Barracks, Pa.

"(We) encourage industry to put its R&D (research and development) money into programs that will get us to the Army After Next," Kern said.

As the Army moves toward the information age, its goal is to digitize a division by the year 2000, a corps by 2004 and the service by 2010 — the Army After Next.

According to Army officials, by taking advantage of rapidly emerging technologies, the Army can achieve a true revolution in military affairs and gain the information dominance, situational awareness and physical agility necessary to win on 21st century battlefields.

The one-day science and technology symposium, hosted by the Industry Affairs Directorate, Association of the United States Army, and the Science Applications International Corp. (SAIC), brought together industry experts and representatives from the Army's Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) and Materiel Command (AMC) to examine concepts that will support specific systems for the 21st century Army.

"TRADOC has defined what it will be like on the battlefield of the 21st century. How do you find the right technology to match those concepts for the Army of the future?" Kern asked.

Kern emphasized that the challenges facing the Army and industry are great, but the challenges must be met soon because current systems will run out by 2010, "therefore, new systems must be in production to be ready (to take their place)," he said.