

RUSH!

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THE DEFENSE BUDGET FOR DEFENSE: WHY NUNN-LUGAR MONEY SHOULD GO TO THE B-2

Common sense dictates that the money the government provides to the defense account should be used to improve America's military capabilities. As with many other things in Washington, however, common sense does not apply. The defense account is riddled with programs that are either tangential or completely unrelated to improving America's military capabilities. One is the Nunn-Lugar program to fund the dismantling of weapons on the territory of the former Soviet Union.

Later this week, the Senate is likely to begin considering the Defense Authorization Bill for Fiscal Year 1996 (S. 1026). Included in the bill is an additional \$365 million for the Nunn-Lugar program in fiscal 1996. However, the same bill provides no money to preserve the option of buying additional B-2 *Spirit* bombers. More of these bombers will be needed to address both conventional and strategic threats. Why should the Senate spend money on questionable foreign programs while depriving the military of even the option of buying more of the most capable bombers ever produced?

Nunn-Lugar is a foreign aid program. The Nunn-Lugar program has been useful in signaling the new regimes in Russia and other former Soviet states that the United States does not view them as enemies. Further, it has demonstrated that the U.S. is prepared to make material assistance available in order to ease tensions.

Nevertheless, there are several outstanding questions about the program's effectiveness. The report to accompany the House version of the Department of Defense Authorization Bill states that the Administration cannot confirm the proper use of assistance already provided to Russian and other officials. In fact, the General Accounting Office (GAO) alleges that Nunn-Lugar money has been used by individuals and institutions working to create new weapons of mass destruction. For example, the U.S. has committed \$46 million to the International Science and Technology Center in Moscow. The center is designed to employ scientists and engineers, formerly working on weapons projects, in peaceful pursuits. GAO determined that some of these scientists and engineers are continuing their weapons-related activities, working for the center only part of the time. If this proves true, the money will have been used to subsidize the salaries of those working to develop new weapons of mass destruction.

Regardless of the merits of the Nunn-Lugar program, the question arises as to why it should be funded out of the defense account. Nunn-Lugar is not a defense program; it is a foreign aid program. The proper manager of foreign aid programs is the Department of State, not the Department of Defense. Further, the proper pool of funds from which Nunn-Lugar should be financed is the foreign aid account, not the defense account.

The B-2, a major leap forward in capabilities. The Senate defense bill's funding of the Nunn-Lugar program becomes even more questionable when the same bill denies funds to maintain the option of buying more B-2 bombers. The B-2 is needed to fulfill both strategic nuclear and conventional roles. Its conventional capabilities are particularly important. This sophisticated aircraft will allow the U.S. to penetrate the airspace of a fu-

ture regional aggressor, similar to Iraq in the Persian Gulf War, and destroy the command and control centers such a country's leaders need to direct their military forces.

More B-2s also will be essential to maintain a balanced and capable bomber force. In its 1993 Bottom-Up Review and 1994 Nuclear Posture Review, the Clinton Administration claimed that it needed up to 184 bombers to perform necessary missions. But this estimate is based on the assumption that during conventional conflicts bombers can be swung from one combat theater, say in East Asia, to another, such as the Persian Gulf. Many experts question the wisdom of this "swing strategy." In reality, there is no guarantee that the requirements for bomber operations in the first theater will lessen as they become pressing in the second. Another mistaken assumption by the Administration is that the B-52 bomber force will meet America's long-term bomber requirements. The B-52s will be approaching 60 years of age by that time and will be far too old to provide an effective combat capability, even in conventional conflicts.

Finally, the B-2 will be needed to deter Russia's nuclear forces. The backbone of Russia's future strategic arsenal will be the SS-25 *Sickle* intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM), which is deployed on mobile launchers. While not yet capable of doing so, an upgraded B-2 could be the only strategic offensive weapon system able to hold the SS-25 at risk.

The B-2 bomber is a major leap forward. It can penetrate the most advanced air defenses and deliver precision-guided munitions against important military targets. It provides global reach and reduces dramatically the number of men placed in harm's way compared with other aircraft for similar missions. Given these capabilities, a decision to forgo even the option of buying more B-2 bombers is dangerously short-sighted.

Modifying the Defense Authorization Bill

Given the situation it now faces, the Senate needs to modify the Defense Authorization Bill to preserve America's military capabilities. It could do so by:

- ✓ **Deleting Nunn-Lugar funds from the bill.** The Nunn-Lugar program is a foreign aid program and does not belong in the defense account, particularly because it robs money from critical defense programs.
- ✓ **Using the money saved from the Nunn-Lugar program to maintain the option of buying more B-2 bombers.** Eliminating Nunn-Lugar funding from the bill will make \$365 million available to support the B-2 procurement option. The B-2 program requires \$553 million. The remaining \$188 million can come from other provisions in the bill that have little or nothing to do with defense. These include the land mine clearing assistance program (\$20 million), support for the Atlanta Olympic Games (\$15 million), weather reconnaissance (\$20 million), the Defense Business Management University (\$89 million), and counter-drug activities of the Department of Defense (\$44 million).
- ✓ **Reserving the option of restoring some or all of the funding for Nunn-Lugar during consideration of foreign assistance legislation.** A strong argument can be made for a well-run assistance program to dismantle weapons of mass destruction on the territory of the former Soviet Union. If the Senate considers a foreign assistance authorization bill later this year, this will provide an ideal vehicle for extending authorization of the Nunn-Lugar program through the foreign assistance account. But this funding should be provided only after it has been proven that abuses have not been committed and that the program is functioning as intended.

Conclusion

The defense budget should not be used to fund programs that have little or nothing to do with improving military capabilities, especially when vital defense programs like the B-2 bomber program go underfunded. The Nunn-Lugar program to assist Russia and other states of the former Soviet Union with the destruction of weapons is such a non-defense program. There may be a good argument for continuing the Nunn-Lugar program, but it should be made during consideration of foreign aid legislation. In the meantime, the dollars from the defense budget the Nunn-Lugar program would have consumed should be used to preserve the option of procuring more B-2 bombers.

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