



Executive Memorandum

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DON'T SHORTCHANGE DEFENSE: THE URGENT NEED FOR SUPPLEMENTAL DEFENSE SPENDING

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President George W. Bush has made improving military readiness and defending Americans from missile attack priorities of his Administration. Regardless of the outcome of the defense reviews now underway, the President should seek additional funding to address these urgent requirements this year. He should submit a supplemental defense budget that includes \$6 billion more for near-term readiness and \$3.35 billion more for ballistic missile defense.

Near-Term Readiness. Readiness is the ability of a military unit, such as an Army division, to accomplish its assigned mission. Any country that neglects to maintain a high state of readiness invites aggression from potential adversaries who assume that it is not prepared to defend its interests. A high state of readiness deters potentially hostile nations from acting aggressively in regions of vital national interest, thereby preserving peace.

Today, potential adversaries threaten U.S. national interests in every region of the world. Yet in recent years, the readiness of the U.S. armed forces has declined. Logistics, spare parts, training programs, and morale, all of which contribute to readiness, deteriorated as forces and budgets decreased and non-combat operations increased. According to the Congressional Budget Office (CBO), the Department of Defense funds about 80 percent of the cost of non-combat missions like peacekeeping in Kosovo with money from its

operations and maintenance accounts—funds that should be used instead to purchase the supplies upon which readiness depends.

With the exception of the Marines, the armed forces also face a severe manpower shortage. The Army is falling short on the number of personnel it can assign to critical military specialties. The Third Brigade of the Second Infantry Division, for example, is short on mechanics for its Bradley fighting vehicle turrets and Abrams tanks and operators for its motor transports. The shortages range from 75 percent for the Bradley turret mechanics and 50 percent for the Abrams tanks to 36 percent for motor transport operators. The Air Force expects a shortage of 1,500 pilots by the end of 2002.

Each of the service branches has experienced problems in recruiting and retaining personnel. According to a U.S. General Accounting Office (GAO) review released in August 1999, more than half of the officers and enlisted personnel surveyed

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“were dissatisfied and intended to leave the military after their current obligation or term of enlistment was up.” A primary reason: the “lack of equipment and materials.”

Moreover, many of the troops that remain in the services are inadequately trained. In March 2001, *The New York Times* reported that the Third Infantry Division was rated “not ready for combat” due to a lack of training. A June 2000 GAO assessment found that only three of the Army’s 15 reserve brigades were trained to attack an enemy position or defend against attacks and that only 42 percent of its 24 reserve mechanized battalions met training standards for firing at both stationary and moving targets. The Army’s Training and Doctrine Command—which trains all soldiers, devises tactics, and designs units—recently announced a funding shortfall of \$360 million.

Ballistic Missile Defense. The greatest challenge facing the U.S. military, however, is how to defend Americans from ballistic missile attack. Russia and China are targeting nuclear weapons on the United States and continuing to develop more advanced ballistic missiles. According to such U.S. intelligence assessments as the 1999 National Intelligence Estimate on Foreign Missile Developments, North Korea is now capable of targeting the United States, and Iran and Iraq will soon have that ability. These nations and others already have shorter range missiles that can target America’s allies, friends, and troops abroad.

The United States government took an important first step toward countering this threat in 1999 by enacting the National Missile Defense Act (P.L. 106–38). This law legally binds the government to mount a ballistic missile defense system “as soon as is technologically possible.” The issues are how and when to do that. According to a 1999 Heritage Foundation study, *Defending America: A Plan to Meet the Urgent Missile Threat*, all that is needed is sufficient funding and political support.

The most evolved missile defense systems, such as Navy Theater Wide (NTW), could be deployed within three years, and the more advanced systems, such as space-based interceptors, could be ready

within a decade. Some of the most promising missile defense technologies remain underfunded in President Bush’s budget, however. The President should support a robust and redundant testing regime and submit to Congress a \$9.35 billion defense budget supplemental for the current fiscal year that includes:

- **\$6 billion for near-term readiness**, to be distributed among the service branches, to replenish spare parts and fuel and to fund a full regimen of combat training. The commanders directly in charge of troop readiness should decide where the funding is most needed.
- **\$3.35 billion for ballistic missile defense.** This should include an additional \$300 million for the Navy Theater Wide program; \$500 million for the accelerated purchase of PAC–3 missiles; and \$50 million for the accelerated development of a space-based laser. Development of space-based interceptors should be reestablished with \$1 billion in funding, and an additional \$500 million should be used to develop the low-altitude space-based infrared system (SBIRS–low). An additional \$1 billion should be dedicated to ballistic missile defense testing.

Conclusion. The most pressing needs facing the U.S. armed forces today are assuring near-term readiness and being able to defend America from missiles carrying nuclear, biological, and chemical warheads. President Bush, who promised during his campaign to strengthen the U.S. armed forces and deploy missile defenses as soon as technologically possible, should not delay in submitting a defense budget supplemental to Congress to fund these urgent requirements.

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