

# Billions for war and repression: Bush budget for a garrison state

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The 2003 budget released by the White House Monday proposes enormous increases in spending on the military, on spying both at home and abroad, and on domestic repressive measures. This is to be combined with further gargantuan tax cuts for the wealthy, and a virtual freeze on all domestic social spending. It is the outline for an American garrison state, armed to the teeth, the population regimented, at war continuously in one or another far-flung region of the world.

Bush proposed the biggest increase in military spending, in both absolute amount and in percentage terms, since the first years of the Reagan administration. Pentagon spending would rise by 14 percent in 2003, to \$379 billion. Another \$16.8 billion in the Department of Energy budget finances the production of nuclear warheads, bringing to the total military budget to nearly \$396 billion.

This total is truly staggering, yet it has gone with little criticism, or even comment, in the American media. Under conditions of mounting social needs at home, and with no substantial military antagonist abroad, the US government nonetheless proposes to spend better than *\$1 billion a day* on the military machine.

Of the \$48 billion increase, \$38 billion would be for operations, pay raises for military personnel, procurement of new weapons and research. The military pay raise of 4.1 percent would come on top of a 6.9 percent increase in the current budget, the second year in a row that the federal government has granted larger raises to military personnel than to civilian federal workers.

An additional \$10 billion in spending authority would become a “war reserve” to be disposed of at the president’s discretion. This would be an unprecedented delegation of legislative authority to the White House, which would then have the power to fund a military operation on the scale of the war in Afghanistan for six months without seeking any new congressional appropriation.

The spending request is a huge increase, not only over the previous year’s appropriation, but over what the Pentagon itself expected only a few weeks ago. As late as January 7, the *New York Times* reported, citing “senior military and

Congressional officials,” that the increase in the Pentagon budget would be \$20 billion, about 6 percent after adjusting for inflation. Instead, the increase was nearly double that, plus the \$10 billion in discretionary funds—suggesting that the administration only recently came to some far-reaching decisions on military policy.

Procurement of new weapons and supplies would jump \$7.6 billion, to \$68.7 billion, while research and development will total \$54 billion, including nearly \$8 billion for anti-missile defense systems. Some specific items include:

- \* the Crusader mobile howitzer (\$475 million);
- \* the Comanche reconnaissance helicopter (\$910 million);
- \* 23 new F-22 Raptor stealth fighters (\$5.2 billion);
- \* a surveillance satellite system, Space-Based Infrared Systems-High (\$815 million);
- \* speeded-up development and production of pilotless aircraft, the Predator and Global Hawk (\$1 billion);
- \* refurbishing four Trident submarines to fire Tomahawk cruise missiles instead of nuclear warheads (\$1 billion);
- \* increased production of laser and satellite-guided bombs (\$1.1 billion).

The huge rise in spending for 2003 also raises the baseline for future years. According to the estimates in the budget document, the Pentagon will receive steady increases over the next five years, reaching \$451 billion in 2007. Procurement alone—the spending on weapons purchases—will soar from \$61 billion this year to \$99 billion by 2007. The overall rate of increase will be 30 percent over the five-year period. And if a full-scale missile defense program is approved, the sums required would be even greater—as much as \$238 billion over the next two decades for this program alone, according to a study released by the Congressional Budget Office.

Perhaps the biggest spending rise comes in paramilitary and espionage activities, both those run by the Pentagon—a 20 percent rise in spending on Special Forces, up \$600 million to \$3.8 billion—and those conducted by the CIA directly. While the CIA budget is classified, an Associated

Press report estimated that the agency's budget would rise by between \$1.5 billion and \$2 billion, to a total of over \$5 billion, an increase of as much as 50 percent.

Last week the *Washington Post* reported that on September 18 Bush signed a previously undisclosed National Security Decision Directive authorizing the CIA to take virtually unlimited action in as many as 80 countries. CIA Director George Tenet "was given a blank check" said John Pike, an analyst at GlobalSecurity.Org. The *Los Angeles Times* quoted one US official declaring, "The agency is on a hiring binge."

The only other area in the federal budget which will see a significant increase is domestic security, where spending will double to nearly \$38 billion. Nearly every department of the federal government will receive new funding linked, however tenuously, to the "war on terrorism"—from \$146 million for the Department of Agriculture to protect the food supply from bio-terrorism, to \$884 million for the Department of Interior to beef up security at national parks and monuments, to \$129 million for NASA to build terrorist-proof rockets and launchers.

The biggest single share of domestic security spending is \$10.6 billion for the Immigration and Naturalization Service, the Border Patrol, and other border-related activities. Nearly \$6 billion goes to combat bio-terrorism and \$4.8 billion for aviation security. The biggest proportionate increase is a 900 percent rise in aid to local emergency services—police, firefighters and emergency medical technicians—to a total of \$3.5 billion.

A particularly ominous "homeland security" measure is the creation of a new military command which places all the armed forces in the continental US under a single officer, for the first time in US history. The new Northern Command will be operational by October 1, according to Marine General Peter Pace, vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Even during World War II, when the US mainland faced the threat of direct attack, the federal government did not establish such a centralized command because of concerns that it could become the basis for military dictatorship.

The Bush administration, the congressional Republicans and Democrats, and the American media all agree in attributing this vast military-police buildup to the necessities of the "war on terrorism." This, of course, ignores the obvious fact that even before September 11 the White House was demanding a huge rise in military outlays—and that the final military budget of the Clinton administration called for the biggest increase in war spending since the Reagan years.

Senator Kent Conrad, the North Dakota Democrat who chairs the Budget Committee, spoke for this bipartisan consensus: "The president will get largely what he asks for

in this area. We're at war, and when the president asks for additional resources for national defense, he generally gets it."

There have been few attempts to explain why the threat of a relative handful of terrorists should evoke a military buildup comparable to that of the Reagan administration at the height of the Cold War, when thousands of US missiles were pointed at the Soviet Union.

One of the few commentators who touched on this issue, *New York Times* columnist Paul Krugman, wrote: "We non-defense experts are a bit puzzled about why an attack by maniacs armed with box cutters justifies spending \$15 billion on 70-ton artillery pieces, or developing three different advanced fighters (before Sept. 11 even administration officials suggested that this was too many). No politician hoping for re-election will dare to say it, but the administration's new motto seems to be 'Leave no defense contractor behind.'"

There is no doubt that the financial interests of weapons contractors are of the greatest concern to the big business politicians of both parties. But such an explanation is superficial. The Pentagon buildup is, of course, not aimed against the threat of al Qaeda, but it does have a real military purpose.

American imperialism is engaged in a military spending spree even beyond the dimensions of the Cold War because it is contemplating aggressive action against a far broader range of potential antagonists than during the years of confrontation with the Soviet bloc, when the anticipated theaters of warfare were confined to a few: central Europe, Turkey, Korea.

Today, the US military establishment is preparing to wage war in every corner of the globe, from Central Asia to Latin America, from Africa to China. In his State of the Union speech last week, Bush singled out North Korea, Iran and Iraq as immediate targets. Later he told an audience of Air Force men, at a campaign-style rally to promote his war budget, "We need to be able to send our troops on the battlefields and places that many of us never thought there'd be a battlefield."



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