
U.S. Defense Spending

Caspar Weinberger proposes a postindustrial military budget

by David Goldman

In what Dr. Edward Teller hailed as the most important breakthrough for military technology since the hydrogen bomb, scientists at the Lawrence Livermore Laboratory showed last month that a particle-beam defense system is technologically feasible.

On March 4, Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger presented a military budget that guarantees that the weapons system Livermore demonstrated will never be developed. Even if Weinberger had oriented the defense budget to preparations for actual thermonuclear war-fighting, the cuts in high-energy research and development and scientific education which David Stockman unveiled in February would have made them completely ineffectual.

Livermore's breakthrough underscores the point that the Weinberger program seems designed to evade: a nation's ability to defend itself is a function of its ability to produce basic science research, realize that research in the form of applications technology, and produce that technology in sufficient scale through its industrial base. The national weapons lab proved that the detonation of a small nuclear device could "pump" a directed beam of X-rays through a heavy medium, with a shock wave sufficient to wipe out a large number of incoming enemy missiles. "The X-ray laser system has the potential of tipping the battle in favor of the defense for the first time in the history of nuclear warfare," *Aviation Week and Space Technology* Feb. 23 quoted a Pentagon official saying. The system is compact enough to launch from the existing model space shuttle.

However, the proposed budget cuts in the inertial confinement fusion program, the NASA budget, and scientific research make the new system's chances for development negligible. Roughly the same problems must be solved to deploy particle-beam weapons that must be solved to realize inertial confinement fusion energy. These are basic science, not applications, questions.

Considering that the Soviet Union currently employs a million-man pool in research and development, and has three engineers engaged in military research and development for every one in the United States, the deficiency is terrifying. It is not merely the case that the

Soviet Union has committed immense resources to both the particle-beam and fusion energy programs. It also is building in the electrical generating capability to realize these programs. A nuclear warhead is a large amount of stored-up electricity. After the abortion during the 1970s of America's nuclear energy program, General Atomic's Harold Agnew estimates, the U.S. lacks even the capability to produce sufficient new warheads to drive the type of particle-beam program that Livermore envisions.

It is no exaggeration to say that the director of the Office of Management and Budget, the former Michigan campus draft-dodger, is worth more than a dozen divisions to the Soviet High Command. As Richard Freeman documents below, the Weinberger budget is a patch-job on existing programs, a "retrofitted" Carter defense budget. It shuts the United States out of the entire next generation of weapons technology.

At the policy level, Secretary Weinberger has demonstrated that the Defense Department and OMB take the deindustrialization of the United States as a first premise for all other policy, regardless of the national security consequences. The twisted economics of the defense budget became evident at a meeting of defense contractors sponsored by the Electronics Industry Association in October 1980. Projecting defense consumption of computers and related software to show an 830 percent rise during the next 10 years, the contractors foresaw the biggest share of the expansion of the electronics market in the defense budget.

For technological reasons, the electronics portion of defense procurement will rise from about one-quarter now to about one-half by 1990. The question is the use to which the electronics will be put. According to the Electronics Industry Association, the principal uses will be computer hardware and software, i.e. *Star Wars*-style computer graphics and other forms of high-tech kookery, mixed in with legitimate uses. In collaboration with Defense Department planners, the Electronics Industry Association predicted that while the total defense budget would grow by 260 percent (in current dollars) between 1981 and 1990, the largest share of the rise would take the form of doubling the Pentagon's stock of computers and provision of software services, from

33 percent to 60 percent of total defense electronics! (See Figure 1.) In those 10 years, total Department of Defense expenditures are expected to rise from \$142 billion to \$401 billion, but electronics purchases will rise from \$20 billion to \$76 billion, almost fourfold.* In current dollars, this is a doubling rather than quadrupling.

These data reflect on the unworkability of the "sunrise versus sunset" division of industries proposed as Carter administration policy in the *Agenda Eighties* report of the last administration, and still pursued without fanfare by the OMB. Strictly speaking, the navy is not refurbishing old mothballed ships; it is canning semiconductors. Under the Stockman-Volcker economic scenario not much else is possible. With only three shipyards producing three-quarters of American shipping tonnage, the United States is in no position to conduct a major shipbuilding program. But it can re-outfit old vessels, absorbing "sunrise" electronics hardware in the form of missile guidance systems, communications, computers, and so forth.

EIR has argued that the premise of the Stockman budget is the Carter administration's *Global 2000 Report*, which contends that the world population must fall by 2 billion persons from the level it would otherwise have reached by the end of the century. Disturbing in the context of the defense budget is the explicit recognition of this economic-strategic objective on the part of defense planners. Welcoming participants in last October's Electronics Industry Association forum,

Rockwell International Vice-President Wendell Johnson opened the proceedings by saying:

"I want to mention in this context the *Global 2000 Report to the President*, the subtitle of which is 'Entering the 21st Century.' The report makes major points concerning the pressures of population versus resources. Without belaboring all the points that are made, it's significant to point out that given a population of the world in 1975 of 4 billion people, at the present growth rate it is going to be 6.5 billion by the year 2000. . . . By the end of the 21st century, it is expected to reach 30 billion which the United States Academy of Sciences estimates as the maximum capacity of the Earth to sustain human life."

It is rare for military planners to use population scare-talk, particularly since events in Central Europe 40 years ago, to justify military programs. Unfortunately, the reference is appropriate. The same track of scientific development leads to both deployable particle-beam ABM systems and to controlled thermonuclear fusion. The latter energy source is the only basis for integrating an expanding world population into modern industrial life. By rejecting it, Reagan administration officials have sanctioned population reduction by the most brutal methods. But they have also written off America's future as a military power. We can't have it both ways.

**Proceedings of the DOD Electronics Market: Forecast for the 80's*; the Electronics Industry Association, Washington, D.C.

Figure 1
DOD computer and electronic purchases

	(billions)	
	1980	1990
Defense electronic purchases		
Current dollars	\$20.1	\$75.7
1981 dollars	22.1	39.8
Defense computer purchases		
Current dollars	6.7	45.8
1981 dollars	7.4	24.1
Composition of defense computer purchases		
Hardware (current dollars)	2.1	8.6
Software (current dollars)	4.6	37.2
Hardware (percentage)	31%	19%
Software (percentage)	69	81
Noncomputer defense purchases of electronics		
Current dollars	\$13.4	\$29.9
1981 dollars	14.7	15.7
Number of Defense Department computers .	6,435	27,699

Source: Electronic Industries Association

