

Two House Panels Boost

By Dana Priest
Washington Post Staff Writer

House defense panels voted yesterday to spend hundreds of millions of dollars more than the Defense Department said it wanted on systems to guard the United States against missile attacks, and on super-sleuthy nuclear submarines and long-range bombers.

With overwhelming support from Democratic members, the two panels with jurisdiction over the big-ticket weapon systems also voted to gut substantial parts of President Clinton's cherished technology partnership with private industry and to wipe out more than \$500 million in nondefense "special interest" items added at lawmakers' request last year.

"We did not try to micromanage" the Defense Department, said Rep. Curt Weldon (R-Pa.), chairman of the research and development subcommittee of the National Security Committee. "And we made an aggressive effort to get the garbage out."

The House voted last week on its fiscal 1996 budget resolution and included in it an increase

of \$9.5 billion over Clinton's \$258 billion Defense Department request. The National Security Committee is charged with deciding how to spend the additional money.

The full National Security panel will meet today to decide on an entire package of defense spending, and staff members who had informally counted votes said they expected the subcommittees' recommendations to be upheld.

Even if the House passes the defense committee's bill, there will be major fights with the Senate over how much more to add to the defense budget and how to spend it. The Senate Budget Committee decided last week to adopt the same level of defense funding as Clinton requested.

Yesterday the Senate voted 60 to 40 to reject an amendment to the Senate budget resolution that would have increased defense spending to the House level. It was sponsored by Senate Armed Services Committee Chairman Strom Thurmond (R-S.C.) and had the support of ranking minority member Sen. Sam Nunn (D-Ga.).

Of the \$9.5 billion House Republicans want

5/24/95

Defense Weapons Spending

to add to the Pentagon's budget, defense committee leaders want to spend more than \$6 billion on new weapons and equipment and \$3 billion on pay raises and better housing to improve the quality of life for military personnel, committee members said yesterday.

The research and development subcommittee yesterday approved spending \$450 million more than the Clinton administration had asked for to deploy "at the earliest practical date" a defense system that could destroy missiles launched against the United States. These types of programs are under development at the Pentagon but officials have said the current world threat does not warrant deploying any of them.

The procurement subcommittee of the National Security Committee also voted to spend \$533 million to keep open the possibility of building more B-2 bombers, which the Defense Department says it does not need or want. The money would go to highly specialized suppliers that build special B-2 parts and that would go out of business if the program ends at the 20 bombers ordered.

The subcommittee wiped out the Navy's top priority this year: a third nuclear submarine, the so-called Seawolf.

The Pentagon has spent \$900 million on developing and building parts for the third \$2.4 billion Seawolf. It has argued that the third submarine is needed to keep open a second nuclear shipyard, in this case the Connecticut-based Electric Boat Division of General Dynamics.

Electric Boat has also been designated to design and build the first of a line of even more advanced submarines. Recently Newport News Shipbuilding in Virginia, the only other nuclear-capable shipyard in the country, has challenged the contract.

While the procurement subcommittee voted to abandon the third submarine, all of the \$1.5 billion not yet spent on it was moved into programs to upgrade the second Seawolf and the first new attack submarine with extra capabilities to conduct electronic sleuthing and to deploy special operations troops. It also voted to give Newport News Shipbuilding \$160 million, most of it to begin enhancements on the new attack submarine.