

# The 'Devouring Monster'

Answer by Barry  
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Of all the farewell addresses of retiring American Presidents, only two are much remembered, and even they are little heeded. George Washington urged his countrymen to beware of "entangling alliances," and Dwight Eisenhower prophetically warned against the consuming power of the "military-industrial complex."

The World War II commander was alarmed over the development of a complex that, if not restrained, could gather the momentum of an unstoppable juggernaut—beyond the ability of the public and the Congress to cope with it any longer.

Numerous economists and political thinkers who shared Eisenhower's concern have felt that the point of no return would be reached when, and if, the peacetime defense budget equaled or surpassed actual wartime expenditures, a state that some felt could never happen. Only now it has.

The defense package presently nearing final passage not only exceeds the biggest budgets of the Vietnamese and Korean wars but even those at the height of World War II, when more than 10 million Americans were in the armed forces (2,152,000 are today). Indeed, the military obligations for the next fiscal year (\$104.7 billion) are greater than the cost of the entire government (including defense) during any of the World War II years.

The most alarming aspect of this unprecedented situation is that a great majority of Americans are against it, yet feel helpless to do anything about it. And in Congress, many who feel

that military spending should be cut back also are throwing up their hands in despair.

So the juggernaut rolls on, war or no war, each year picking up more momentum as the country increasingly depends upon this wasteful, but massive, spending, not so much to wage war as to sustain the economy and maintain employment.

All the experts agree that comparable spending for productive domestic programs would result in a sounder and more prosperous economy, but no administration seems to have the will to switch.

All of our Presidents since Eisenhower have been patsies for the Pentagon, which now counts on both Big Business and Big Labor to support many of its demands, especially at a time when it is claimed that any cut in the defense budget would worsen the recession.

Once hooked on this, the addiction becomes permanent, for every year the cure will seem more risky, although there is no reason why it has to be. In fact, the cure (substituting non-defense spending) would be the reverse of risky if it were applied intelligently and constructively. A few years ago, when we started bringing the troops home from Vietnam, there were high hopes of using military savings to fund long-delayed domestic improvements. These hopes have been dashed as defense expenditures, instead of receding, have gone up almost 50 per cent over what they were at the peak of the

Vietnamese war. Moreover, the Pentagon projections call for another 50 per cent increase (to about \$150 billion) in the next five years.

The Pentagon, in short, is literally eating America out of house and home. An ever-larger sum goes for ships, tanks and planes, while new housing lags far behind the nation's needs. As Ben Franklin warned in 1784, "An army is a devouring monster."

Only a strong, determined President can provide relief. Harry Truman, the President who Mr. Ford says he admires the most, showed how to do it. He simply set a flat ceiling on expenditures and ordered the military chiefs to make the most of it. The result was the only reduced defense budget in all of the post-World War II years.

Despite Mr. Ford's professed concern over inflationary expenditures, however, he is still giving the Pentagon carte blanche to spend as it sees fit. Adm. Gene La Rocque (Ret.), now director of the Center for Defense Information, says, "Civilians are in danger of losing control of the Pentagon."

In this connection, it is not reassuring to note that prominent Pentagon figures are assuming the management of Ford's election campaign. Army Secretary Howard Calloway is to be campaign chairman; David Packard, former Deputy Secretary of Defense, will be finance chairman; Robert C. Moot, former comptroller of the Pentagon, and Assistant Defense Secretary Robert Ellsworth are also being considered for campaign posts.