

Kennedy Asserts That Substantial Cuts Can Be Made in

'Rock Bottom' Military Budget

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WASHINGTON, Feb. 24—

Senator Edward M. Kennedy said today that the military budget described by the Administration as "rock-bottom" could be substantially cut without any danger to the nation.

In a wide-ranging speech to a Democratic policy group, the Senator pointed to a number of "aspects of our strategic defense policies which require re-examination."

The Massachusetts Democrat also said that most of the cuts in defense spending over the last year were due only to a reduction in the scale of the war in Vietnam. In making this argument, Senator Kennedy joined a number of Congressional critics of the Pentagon's budget who believe that the country has been misled by Administration statements that money is being shifted from defense to domestic needs.

The critics argue that the military budget reflects a cut in just one area: Vietnam. They say that the missiles, aircraft, ships, tanks and other items that made them unhappy last year are being funded at the same levels—if not higher ones—than last year.

'New Realism' Urged

"What we need in our treatment of national defense and the defense budget," Mr. Kennedy told the committee on national priorities of the Democratic Policy Council, "is a new realism. What I hope would be forthcoming from the administration is a candid discussion of our national defense posture."

The Democratic Policy Council is a body set up by the Democratic National Committee to examine and make statements on the major issues of the day.

Discussing the nation's economic priorities, Mr. Kennedy said each B-52 flight from Guam to South Vietnam costs \$50,000.

"The budget request for the Bureau of Water Hygiene, which is responsible for setting standards for all the nation's drinking water, was cut by \$400,000 from last year," he said. "Has anyone, anywhere in the Government, made a decision that eight flights are more important than the quality of the nation's water?"

Mr. Kennedy said he expected that "careful analysis will show members of Congress a number of places where major savings in the defense budget can be made." He suggested as candidates for Congressional

examination:

¶The Safeguard antiballistic missile system.

¶The proposed manned bomber fleet.

¶The 7,000 tactical nuclear warheads stored at various locations in Europe.

¶Production of the proposed Main battle tank.

¶The 320,000 troops the United States has stationed in Europe.

¶The extent of support for foreign military forces.

¶The Navy's fleet of 15 attack carriers.

Cuts Called Feasible

Mr. Kennedy said that the Pentagon's budget request "is not rock bottom."

"Further cuts can and will be made perfectly consistently with an enhanced national security," he said.

Secretary of Defense Melvin R. Laird has described the new Pentagon budget as "rock bottom" and "bare-boned." He has also posted a warning to those on Capitol Hill who might be inclined to tamper with it: "It does not give room for Congressional cutting."

Critics in Congress are hardly taking Mr. Laird at his word. They have been plodding through the budget in the last few weeks, at least one of them with slide rule in hand, selecting this item, then that for scrutiny. They have been joined in their studies by a

small but growing number of researchers at universities and private institutions and a few former Pentagon officials.

The Pentagon appears to be getting uneasy about the number of eyes looking over its shoulder. Barry J. Shillito, an assistant secretary of defense, recently warned in Cocoa Beach, Fla., that increasing concern by Congress and the public about the "military-industrial complex" may hamper the Pentagon's efforts to reduce spend-

ing. He said the "number and variety" of those inquiring into the military budget could stifle "efficient management."

Proxmire Critical

When the Pentagon announced its budget for the fiscal year 1971, it pointed out that — at \$71.8-billion — the budget was \$5.2-billion below the amount for fiscal 1970.

The critics immediately said they had been cheated. Senator William Proxmire gave a

speech on the Senate floor titled "Who Stole the Peace Dividend?" In the speech, the Wisconsin Democrat maintained that known cuts in military spending for things like the Vietnam war, military personnel and overseas bases should have given the Pentagon an extra \$25-billion.

Yet, he said, the budget went down only \$5.2-billion. "Somewhere along the line," he said, "even after generous allowances are made for inflation

and pay raises, double counting and uncontrollable items, we lost about \$10-billion. Some one stole the peace dividend."

Other Congressional critics point out that Mr. Laird said last fall that by the end of this June, the United States would be spending at an annual rate of \$17-billion in Vietnam.

Since the United States spent \$23.2-billion in Vietnam in the fiscal year 1970, this saving alone would be \$6.3-billion.

What this means, their argu-

ment runs, is that the Pentagon has not cut back in anything but Vietnam, and that it is going full steam ahead with research and the procurement of new weapons.

Pentagon requests for research funds show a drop from \$7.4-billion this year to \$7.3-billion for fiscal 1971. The critics point out, however, that the decrease includes a \$200-million cut in the "military astronautics" category and that some of the other categories—

including "ships"—have increased.

Pentagon procurement requests have dropped from \$20.3-billion to \$18.6-billion. Again, however, the critics point out that a large part of the cut—\$1.2-billion—comes in the "ordnance, vehicles and related equipment" category. They argue that this category—which includes munitions—is closely tied to the decreasing American involvement in Vietnam.