

NYT
1-25-72

\$83-Billion Request for Defense Accelerates New Upward Trend

By WILLIAM BEECHER
Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Jan. 24—President Nixon asked today for authority to spend \$83.4-billion for the Defense Department, an increase of \$6.3-billion over the request for the current budget year. The new request markedly accelerates a rising trend in the military budget that began last year, after two years of decline.

The principal factors driving the budget upward, analysts in the Pentagon said, are the following:

☐ A major stepup in a program to develop a new family of missile submarines in response to a mounting Soviet build-up.

☐ A program to buy modern ships and planes and tanks whose purchase was largely deferred during the height of the Vietnam war.

☐ A total of \$4.1-billion in pay increases aimed at attainment of an all-volunteer armed force by mid-summer 1973, as pledged by Mr. Nixon in his first Presidential campaign.

Actual spending during the fiscal year starting July 1 would total \$76.5-billion, up \$700-million from the estimate for the current fiscal year. The balance of the authorization, nearly \$7-billion, would be spent during future years as weapons ordered under this budget would come off production lines.

'Absolute Minimum'

In a press briefing, Defense Secretary Melvin R. Laird voted that Congress cut about \$3-billion from this year's defense authorization request. But he insisted that the new request, plus \$254.8-million being sought today in a supplemental appropriation, "asks for the absolute minimum amount necessary to safeguard our national security."

Pentagon sources said the new budget might have been even larger were it not for the continued decrease in Vietnam war costs. In the current fiscal year, ending on June 30, the Administration pegs the war costs at about \$6.5-billion, an estimate that includes only costs directly traceable to the war—such as bombs dropped—that would not otherwise be incurred.

Officially the Pentagon refused to cite the expected cost in the subsequent 12-month period, but one well-placed source said it would probably fall to about \$3.2-billion, roughly half the current level.

Another factor working to offset the budget increase, Defense Department officials said, was a decision not only to cut another 139,000 military men and 30,000 civilians from the defense payroll in the new budget, but also to make most of these reductions in the first half of this year, before the next budget year starts.

Figuring an average cost of \$10,000 per man per full year, this could save nearly \$1.7-billion.

Robert C. Moot, the defense controller, cited the manpower reduction as one of this year's hard budget decisions. "We are decreasing manpower and using the decreased funds made available to improve our weapons development and acquisition," he said.

One result, he said, is that the so-called peacetime force will have about 326,000 fewer military personnel than in the pre-Vietnam budget of the fiscal year 1964.

Strategic weapons of all kinds account for an increase of \$1.2-billion in the new budget and most of the \$254.8-million supplementary request.

Much of the rise is concentrated in a \$942-million request to develop a 4,000-mile range, submarine-launched missile and a larger, quieter missile submarine to carry from 20 to 30 missiles. Present Polaris submarines carry 16 missiles with a range of about 3,000 miles.

Mr. Moot said a decision had been made to accelerate substantially the program, although no decision has yet been made to construct a fleet of the new submarines, called the underwater long-range missile system or ULMS.

Other sources said the aim was to advance the operational date of the first ULMS to 1977 or 1978, several years earlier than previously planned.

The objectives, these sources said, are to get the Russians to reconsider their refusal to include a mutual halt in missile submarine construction in an arms limitation agreement; to reassure allies that the United States is taking steps to prevent an imbalance of strategic forces as the Russians continue to build up, especially their missile submarine fleet; and to undermine the arguments of those at home that the Administration is allowing a new 'missile gap' to develop.

In line with this move, the Administration also seeks permission, rejected last year, to start construction at the third and fourth Safeguard antimissile sites, as well as increased funds to step up development of the B-1 strategic bomber; to increase the pace of converting single-warhead Minuteman and Polaris missiles to those with multiple warheads; and to buy larger, more advanced planes from which the President and his lieutenants could control American retaliatory forces in the event of nuclear war.

For Carrier and Submarine Hunters

To provide more modern equipment for the non-nuclear forces, the budget calls for retiring one of the Navy's old aircraft carriers, the Wasp, but seeks funds for components of a nuclear-powered carrier, six nuclear-powered anti-submarine U-boats, eight destroyers and 42 SA-3 submarine hunting aircraft.

The Air Force, similarly, is slated to get its first funds to buy 30 F-15 jet fighters; the Army, money for 166 more M-60 tanks and an unspecified number of new Dragon antitank missiles; and the Marine Corps, funds for its first procurement of the improved Hawk anti-aircraft missile.

Research and development, particularly on strategic command and control and weapons systems, is budgeted to rise by \$1-billion.

Reserve and National Guard forces are scheduled, under the request, for an increase of \$600-million, much of it devoted to more modern planes, tanks and trucks.

As an example of how military pay increases are being aimed at increasing the attractiveness of careers in the armed forces, Mr. Moot noted that an Army recruit who received a monthly base pay salary of \$83.20 in 1964 would get four times that amount, or \$332.10 a month, under the new budget proposal.

