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Defense Spending Demands Spur Needs List

Calls for bigger appropriations coming from SALT hearings generate requirements across tactical, strategic spectrum

By David R. Griffiths

Washington—Demands for more defense spending emerging from the Strategic Arms Limitation (SALT 2) hearings have generated military shopping lists that illuminate a wide range of perceived needs from tactical air defense to accelerated development of strategic weaponry.

Defense Dept. officials are expressing confidence that Carter Administration promises to meet the North Atlantic Treaty Organization commitment for a 3% real annual growth in military spending will give them a chance either to push weapons development or increase acquisition.

Senate sentiment on linking boosted spending with SALT 2 ratification is divided, with one faction, represented by Sens. Sam Nunn (D.-Ga.), John Tower (R.-Tex.) and Henry Jackson (D.-Wash.), calling for a 5% real increase that they said would yield a 12-15% hike in such real investment as weapons, ships, equipment and research and development, if program efficiency improves.

'Gravely Concerned'

Another group of 12 senators told President Carter in a letter they are "gravely concerned over these attempts to tie arms procurement to arms control." They added that they support the Administration's announced commitment to avoid escalating defense costs merely to gain Senate ratification of the accord.

Defense Dept. optimism was reflected by one official who said: "If there is a windfall from SALT, SALT will have served the useful purpose of focusing attention on growing strategic asymmetry. The Senate will get educated and rebuke its Budget Committee before this is over."

In terms of strategic weapons, defensive measures often were uppermost in the minds of officials, as they were in discussions of tactical needs. Ballistic missile defense, or the lack of it, has raised some immediate concerns.

"The U. S. has been putting 100% of its eggs in the retaliatory basket," John M. Collins, senior specialist in national defense for the Library of Congress, said. "It's the only major power in recorded history to repudiate defense."

He added that bringing ballistic missile defense progress up to the level of Soviet research and development will require more than money. "It's critical to get two things," Collins said. "We need more command attention and the kind of dedicated, concentrated brainpower that went into the Manhattan Project and the trip to the moon."

Other officials closer to the decision-making apparatus said ballistic missile defense may have to take a back seat to other needs if more money becomes available.

"We're already spending a quarter billion dollars a year on ballistic missile defense research and development," one Pentagon official said. "Pushing it to design a system that will fit MX [mobile missile] may call for a slight increase in money."

An Army ballistic missile defense official was optimistic about U. S. comparisons with Soviet advances, but he did note that some more money will be needed to go from the current technological program to prototype demonstration.

"We are running studies on what it would take to adapt low-altitude defense technology to defense of an MX system," he said. "Consideration is being given to going further down the road toward such a system, but there's been no formal guidance to proceed with it."

Money being spent now is divided between advanced technology for long-term ballistic missile defense, such as charged particle beam weapons, signal processing and optical sensors, and a systems technology program for plugging in the component work transferred from advanced technology.

"Congress instructed us to limit the program to pretty much component-level work," the official said. "We're not into prototyping systems yet."

The MX itself attracted some attention from those who want to see its initial operational capability date pushed up at least a year from 1986 and its full operational capability moved from 1989 to

1988. An Air Force official estimated that a one-year acceleration, which would require more initial funding, may mean a \$1.3-billion savings in overhead, most of which is inflated dollars.

Other strategic programs that officials said needed funding soon include:

- A Boeing B-52 replacement, the main function of which could be cruise-missile carriage, with some penetration capability.

- Trident 2 missile.

- High-altitude supersonic bomber with radar absorption.

- Improvements to the Minuteman missile airborne launch control system, which is "pretty high on the list and pretty cheap," according to one Defense official. The system also would be used for the MX.

- Upgrading of the sonar system on the Poseidon submarine.

Strategic Gap

As to the air-launched cruise missile, the system that is expected to help fill an early-1980s strategic gap, a Pentagon official said: "I don't think it can be pushed any quicker than it is. There's a hell of a lot of concurrency on it. Once we do get the IOC [initial operational capability] we could step up production rates."

"That might mean pushing the cruise-missile carrier to go with it," he said. "But there are reservations about whether we need a carrier aircraft. Some people believe the B-52 will be a satisfactory cruise-missile carrier long after it ceases being a penetrator."

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The "most pressing need," according to a high-ranking Air Force official, is modernization of the manned penetrator force. One of the more immediate alternatives would be to fund a Strategic Air Command proposal for General Dynamics FB-111 and F-111 modifications. The total cost is estimated at \$6 billion and could include some Fiscal 1980 supplemental money and about \$1 billion in Fiscal 1981, according to one official.

He said it would involve converting 66 FB-111As and fewer than 100 F-111Ds into FB-111Bs and FB-111Cs. The reconfigured aircraft would have about the range and payload of the B-52G, due largely to raising fuel capacity and reengining with the General Electric F101 in the canceled Rockwell International B-1 bomber. A less likely immediate alternative, the official added, would be ordering the B-1 back into production.

Another proposal would call for new engines on the Boeing KC-135 tanker fleet. One official said the Pratt & Whitney J57 powerplant now on those aircraft is the "most fuel-inefficient engine flying today. It's also the noisiest and the dirtiest. If it were on a commercial airliner, it wouldn't be allowed to land anywhere in the U. S."

In the area of continental defense, any discussion of more funding usually centers on the need to modernize the interceptor force, made up now mostly of McDonnell Douglas F-101s, General Dynamics F-106s and McDonnell Douglas F-4 aircraft. Among replacements being considered is a combination of the McDonnell Douglas F-15 and the Grumman F-14.

From a Navy point of view, one congressional aide familiar with that service's needs said the most urgent is for more tactical aircraft procurement. "The Navy has to buy more than they're requesting just to maintain their force," he said. "To maintain 12 carrier wings and three Marine wings, one study said they need 180 aircraft a year just to keep the current force structure. But they [Defense Dept.] are not asking for that much."

Collins pursued that point in noting that the U. S. military has relied traditionally on quality rather than quantity due to strategic nuclear superiority and a technological edge. "Now that [technological] gap's closing and the other guys are ahead in some areas, particularly ground forces."

"As an Air Force pilot says," Collins explained, "I'm flying the best air-superiority fighter in the world and I have a kill ratio of 6-to-1. That means the seventh guy gets me. We've got the best, but we don't have enough of them. And, we have such a small reserve to play with that if we commit it in the wrong place, we're dead."

He also addressed what he called inequities in balance:

"If we're talking about priorities for more money, my highest is for ballistic missile defense, which is a priority for our allies, too, and tactical air defense in NATO.

"I'm not as excited as others are about the Backfire threat to Conus [continental U. S.]. It does have intercontinental capability but is primarily designed to replace the Badger and to be used as a naval system. They don't need it against Conus."

Close-in tactical air defense improvements also received the support of several officials. Beyond its lack of quantity, the Navy's biggest problem, Collins said, is cruise missile defense.

"If we want the Navy to keep control of the seas and reinforce and resupply Europe and maintain our commitments to Japan and Korea and keep the petroleum lines clear, then survival of the Navy is the highest priority."

One answer to the cruise missile threat could be the General Dynamics Phalanx, an automatic, all-weather, shipboard gun defense. For defense of NATO ground troops and installations, the Army will conduct a competitive shootout next summer for DIVAD [division air defense]. General Dynamics, which is basing its entry on Phalanx technology, will compete with Ford Aerospace.

Finally, a factor that could enter into how extra funds are spent is the politically sensitive concept of NATO cooperation. Among the candidates for the proposed Air Force enhanced tactical fighter program is the Panavia Tornado (AW&ST Mar. 19, p. 13). The concept is for day/night all-weather attack for European warfare.

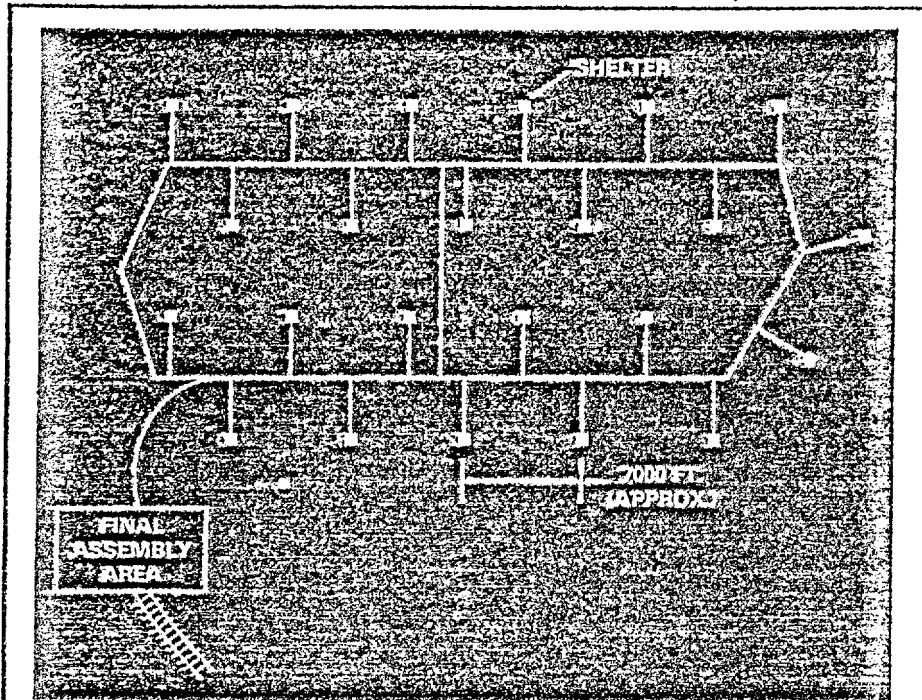
Grumman Aerospace Corp., which has agreed to aid the European consortium in preparing the Tornado for USAF needs, complained recently that U. S. restrictions are stymieing efforts to exchange data between the two companies. Grumman hopes to overcome that temporary roadblock by pointing out that the Tornado, which already has all-weather capability, is in an advantageous competitive spot.

Vitalij Garber, director of international programs in the Office of the Secretary of Defense for Research and Engineering, said he does not want the fighter selection process to be tied to SALT ratification. He added that the NATO issues of rationalization, standardization and interoperability (RSI) should be divorced from requirements and source selection.

"I want to insure that the evaluation is objective and fair and not torpedoed by bureaucratic impediments," Garber told AW&ST. "I'm not a champion of Tornado. I'm a champion of the removal of impediments."

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Presidential Approval of Racetrack Expected

Washington—Final presidential approval of the racetrack concept for the basing of the MX mobile missile (AW&T July 23, p. 14) is expected by the end of this month or early in September.

The system, a hybrid of previous concepts that also is being called a horizontal multiple protective shelter, gained general approval at an Aug. 7 meeting of the Presidential Review Council.

A Defense Dept. official said council members asked for clarification of details on such aspects as verification and survivability. If the Air Force's answers are satisfactory, a recommendation will be sent to President Carter, who is expected to transmit his decision to Congress.

The Air Force claims this system, in which transporter-erector-launchers would move the new missile among horizontal shelters at the ends of spokes emanating from the track, is the least costly alternative that can meet the needs of verification and the quick movement and concealment needed for survivability.

So far, public acceptance of the MX in Southwestern states has met Defense Dept. expectations. Each of the less than 5,000 shelters would be surrounded by a fence enclosing about 2.5 acres. Defense officials predict that public access, including use of the racetrack roads themselves, will enhance recreational use of acreage that previously was difficult to reach.