

## US Spending Priorities are Distorted

*President Bush and the US Congress claim that military force should be the choice of “last resort”. Yet, when the time comes to decide the US budget, they have consistently allocated tiny amounts of money for peaceful solutions to crises, development of US diplomatic infrastructure, contributions to international organisations, and humanitarian development assistance.*

The consequences since the Cold War have been devastating. Over the last 15 years, the US has lacked a capacity to respond to impending genocide, humanitarian crises, criminal networks, weapons proliferation, disease, and failing states. When the US is finally forced by events to respond, its response is often too late, expensive, and ineffective.

During the 1990s both Congress and the Clinton administration rushed to cash in on the “peace dividend” by slashing foreign affairs budgets. From 1992 to 1998, the foreign affairs budget was cut every year, resulting in a 38 per cent decrease in funding in that period.

For a limited period after the attacks of 11 September, 2001, the US spent additional funds on US diplomatic infrastructure. But for the last three years, Congress has cut the administration’s budget request for non-military foreign affairs by about \$2 billion annually.

In fiscal 2005, the US spent \$574.2 billion to fund military campaigns, development, and diplomacy. However, approximately 95 per cent of that total was devoted to the military, with only 5 per cent spent on diplomacy and development. These choices reinforce an international image of the US as a country that prefers military domination over cooperation.

In consequence, in some parts of the world US military commanders – not professional diplomats – are the faces representing the US to other governments. The Pentagon’s budget funds 1.4 million active-duty armed services members and 650,000 civilian workers. The State Department, in contrast, has 20,000 employees and a budget of less than 1/40<sup>th</sup> of the size of the Pentagon budget.

The US administration professes to promote democracy around the world. But if Congress continues to vote more money for the tools of war, while short-changing funding for diplomacy and development, the result will be more war, rather than more democracy. Congress should buy more tools needed to build peace.

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