Kaufmann says defense budget could be trimmed

By Bob Dennis

Professor William Kaufman of the Political Science Department is currently working on a comprehensive analysis of the Defense Department budget.

Having served as an active advisor to the Pentagon for the last eight years, Professor Kaufman presents arguments in his book that support his contention that, without major changes in our commitments, we should be able to afford a post-war defense budget of around 60 billion dollars while still maintaining a "modern, powerful, defense establishment."

Professor Kaufman has been concerned about the rapid rise of defense expenditures since 1965. The DoD budget was around 50 billion dollars before the Vietnam expansion, and has since risen to over 80 billion dollars. The incremental cost of Vietnam is now about 26 billion a year.

Kaufman asserts that there is a "real question" as to the size of the defense budget after the Vietnam war. If we were to revert to the "baseline budget" (prior to the Vietnam buildup), he feels that we might be able to scale down the budget to 54 billion in current prices. There are three major factors which would militate against such a decrease. The first is the possibility of further inflation (there has been a 15% inflation in the cost of DoD goods and services since 1965). Second is the possibility of a huge military pay raise which would cost an additional 6 billion above present levels. Finally, there is the military see as "deferred demand" projects such as new weapons, modernization, and family housing which could total an additional 14 billion dollars a year.

Kaufman notes that if we accept the several assumptions that the Pentagon currently holds, any hopes of a "peace dividend" would vanish. Yet, he believes that the defense budget must not be considered "asaurced" and asserts that if we change some of these assumptions, we can obtain big changes in the structure and size of the budget.

In his book, Kaufman has considered a wide range of possible budgets, ranging from 40 billion to 90 billion. One of his major efforts involved considering questions of "efficiency" in the military. He added that Secretary McNamara was doing a good job in this area until the expansion of the Vietnam war.

Manpower efficiency

One of the major areas of efficiency which he has examined is the question of manpower. Of the current total budget of 83 billion, over 24 billion went for military personnel. Kaufman believes that, under a volunteer army where the costs of personnel would be more apparent and dramatic, the army would be under greater pressure to be efficient. Since nearly all men can earn more than military pay in civilian life, he feels that we are effectively taxing young people for serving their country.

Kaufman also feels that the military could perform its functions with less manpower. He believes the army is an overly manpower-intensive activity, and could reduce the current enlistment by 400,000—even with the continuation of the Vietnam war.

Another matter of efficiency which is often exaggerated, and that the military-industrial complex is a "soccer" game.

Professor Kaufmann has therefore persuaded about the need for an independent group that can present an analysis of the defense budget after the Vietnam war. The group, which is, found in airplanes, defense, and services, or direct from:

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