

**ALAN PHELPS**

# Bush's military cuts not enough

Recession is big news at any university. It's no wonder, because thousands of people here are spending all kinds of money to prepare for jobs that may or may not exist when they graduate.

Illustrious Leader George Bush offered a few short-term fixes for our economic debacle in his State of the Union campaign speech last week. Many economists believe the recession will let up by midyear anyway, although Bush's ideas could speed it along a bit or at least make him look good.

But short-term measures don't address the long-term problems in this country. The crumbling infrastructure, the shortcomings of the education system, the disparity between America's rich and poor — these are the root causes of economic problems now and will be even more so in the future.

What this economic crossroads demands is a basic shift in the priorities of the United States.

President Bush said in his address that, including the latest proposed round of reductions, the military had been cut about 30 percent during his administration. He called the cuts significant and said no more would be made.

It sure seems as if the former Soviet Bloc was more than 30 percent of our enemies. It was certainly the only force on the planet that could directly harm America. And yet, with its total demise, Bush plans to hang on to 70 percent of the military machine built to combat it.

His reasoning is flawed somewhere. Our vast, global forces cost vast amounts of money. The hundreds of billions of dollars America pumps into its economy through military spending could be much more efficiently spent in a host of different ways.

Simple economics points out the problems inherent with military spending. Guns and bombs are not capital. They will not make any money for the economy. The person who makes a bomber has a job, but the product he or she produces is a waste of resources. It is built in the hope that it will never be used, and if it is, the bomber compounds the problem by actually destroying capital.

The person who produces passenger planes not only has a job, but a passenger plane can be used to make money for those who operate it as well as to transport business people or travelers.

These are easy-to-understand concepts, yet a lot of people don't seem to understand them or even care about them.

The B-2 Stealth bomber is a case in point. Bush wants 20 of these gadgets — a number he considers the



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absolute minimum. How people who say they support military reduction still support the B-2, such as Nebraska's Republican-Democrat Sen. James Exon, is a complete mystery.

The Stealth bomber will never be used. It will not strike fear into the hearts of any imaginary superpower, Third World dictator or Middle East terrorist-president. The B-2 was designed to penetrate Soviet air defenses after most of our ground- and sea-launched warheads already have decimated their communist civilization.

However, the Soviet Union no longer exists. Even Dan Quayle recognizes this fact. And we don't need the B-2 (or the B-1B, for that matter) for "little" wars in the Persian Gulf — our 30-year-old B-52s were the bombers of choice there.

It is a travesty in today's world to throw money into weapons like the B-2 with even less justification than so-called "necessary" weapons have.

Pointing to lessons learned after World War I about the relaxing of our military posture makes no sense in light of today's situation. The Treaty of Versailles that ended the Great War set up World War II in black and white. The victorious allies gouged Germany for all it was worth and set up a tragedy waiting to happen. The United States was wrong to dismantle its military machine and settle into the hibernation of isolationism in such an environment.

Today, the allies have triumphed again. The Cold War was won, as Bush has pointed out again and again (and again). But we aren't pushing the former Soviet Union into the

ground. The West is wisely moving to make those who used to be enemies into friends. The casually dressed Russian President Boris Yeltsin even has indicated his country would like to join NATO eventually and join in a global missile defense system.

Yeltsin has put forward a proposal that would cut U.S. and Russian strategic nuclear warheads from about 11,000 to 2,500 per country. In his State of the Union address, Bush said that if Russia eliminates land-based, multiple-warhead weapons, the U.S. arsenal would drop to about 4,700 warheads.

Bush's offer is a good start. Yeltsin's is better. However, one wonders at whom either side would ever shoot 2,500 warheads. That is obviously a lot of firepower.

It didn't take 2,500 warheads to subdue Panama or Iraq, and we have little to fear from any of the major nuclear powers. Even the Chinese know an offensive strike would be suicide because the entire world would be allied against them. If Iraqi despot Saddam Hussein were to get a hold of a nuke or two, our 2,500 warheads wouldn't do us a bit of good.

All we need is maybe 100 warheads on sea-based or cruise missiles, just in case. Both America and Russia could scrap the rest with absolutely no security threat.

The fact is America has no realistic need for far-flung forces. The money we spend on all of the missiles, carrier battle groups, European divisions or strategic bomber wings could be better spent on an infrastructure to encourage business or education to train workers for the future instead of dumping them into slums.

Bush's 30-percent figure should not be how much we cut from the military, but how much we spare.

There was a time when a call for such a large-scale dismantling of our forces would have been premature. A year ago, no one knew in which direction the Soviet Union would head. Soviet politics were in a dangerous state of flux.

Now we are looking at a different ball game. Moscow is more likely to wage war against Ukraine than America. We don't need huge forces scattered in every theater of the globe to wipe out future Saddam Husseins — that should be a problem for an expanded United Nations force.

The opportunity before us to cut the military is the pivotal issue of our day. Massive American military spending over the last 50 years ruined the Soviet Union. Massive American military spending over the next 50 years will ruin America.

The reductions now in progress are a good beginning. But that is all they are.

Phelps is a sophomore news-editorial major, the Daily Nebraskan editorial page editor and a columnist.

## Columnist's disease reports misleading

After looking up figures in the Budget of the United States Government, Fiscal Year 1992, I found that Chris Halligan and I may have quite different meanings for the words "Nil," "Nada," and "Zero" ("Major ills snubbed for AIDS," DN, Jan. 22)." The government stated its research budget for diabetes and digestive and kidney diseases was \$571,716,000 in 1990, an estimated \$556,653,000 in 1991 and was estimated to be \$590,027,000 in 1992. Funding for research in the Heart Disease, Lung and Blood Institute was

\$1,023,737,000 in 1990, an estimated \$1,056,949,000 in 1991 and was estimated to be \$1,094,524,000 in 1992. Funding for cancer research in the National Cancer Institute was \$1,392,086,000 in 1990, an estimated \$1,454,020,000 in 1991 and was estimated to be \$1,545,176,000 in 1992.

I was unable to find figures on how much money was spent on AIDS research or HIV research in the short time I spent looking for that information.

Ned Harrison  
third year law student

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## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### AIDS column full of inaccuracy, insensitivity

I am responding to the column by Chris Halligan ("Major ills snubbed for AIDS," DN, Jan. 22). First of all, I find at least an implicit contradiction between the idea that AIDS is "trendy" and the notion that little attention is paid to the disease. The "15 minutes of silence" memorial for AIDS victims on the Sunday after Thanksgiving attracted perhaps 20 people at UNL. Granting the bad timing of that event, one has to admit that other efforts to bring attention to this illness have been little more effective.

Second, the very preventable nature of AIDS makes investments of attention, energy and money crucial to the search for ways to affect the behavior of those who may be infected; i.e., all of us. Because, in spite of the attention given Magic Johnson, (AIDS activist) Elizabeth Taylor, et al, too few of us protect ourselves adequately against the disease.

Third, and perhaps most important of all, Mr. Halligan's article is insulting, not only to HIV-infected persons, but also to those who care about

them.

Fourth, the article is rife with factual errors concerning federal funding for the diseases he identified. Had he simply consulted a copy of the U.S. budget, found in Love Library, he would have discovered that our national government does indeed fund each of the diseases he cited. I am not an experienced reader of the federal budget, so I won't swear by my identification of 1992 expenditures, but a quick check identified spending for diabetes, heart and cancer, respectively, of \$700,000, \$1.2 million and \$2 million.

Last, I believe Mr. Halligan has ignored the very finality of HIV infection. The percentage of HIV-infected persons surviving for more than a few years is infinitesimal. Even further, epidemiologists agree that published statistics are an underestimation of the number of actual infections. Because of the stigma involved and the finality of the disease, many who are infected do not get tested.

Apparently Mr. Halligan was trying to make the point that support for and

attention to AIDS is disproportionate to the number infected. Calling attention to your positions by making extreme or even outrageous statements is an acceptable approach. Mr. Halligan seems not to recognize the difference between aggressiveness and insult. Not only does he hurt those suffering from AIDS, but he also makes inaccurate claims.

In spite of his effort to be fair to Earvin Johnson, Mr. Halligan reveals what seems to be a moralistic judgment of HIV-infected persons. Even though each of us is free to make our own moral judgements, I see no useful purpose in judging behavior leading to any illness. The question is how we can help people avoid the infection or cure those infections that aren't preventable. The condemnation of HIV-infected people does nothing to improve the situation.

Vern Williams  
director  
UNL Counseling Center