

Nader'08 Gonzalez

ISSUE STATEMENT Fiscal Policy – Federal Budget

To illustrate how little has changed in four years, other than conditions becoming worse, the 2008 Nader/Gonzalez campaign is posting these policy positions on various injustices, necessities, and redirections that were prepared initially for the 2004 Nader/Camejo campaign. Such a short historical context should give our supporters and viewers an even greater sense of urgency to stop the corporate interests' and the corporate governments' autocratic control -- and the resulting deterioration -- of our society and country.

A Federal Budget that Puts Human Needs Before Corporate Greed and Militarism

The United States needs a redirected federal budget that adequately funds crucial priorities like infrastructure, transit and other public works, schools, clinics, libraries, forests, parks, sustainable energy and pollution controls. The budget should move away from the deeply documented and criticized (by the US General Accounting Office, retired Admirals and Generals and others) wasteful, redundant "military industrial complex" as President Eisenhower called it, as well as corporate welfare and tax cuts for the wealthy that expand the divide between the luxuries of the rich and the necessities of the poor and middle class.

The Wasteful and Redundant Defense Department Budget Needs to Be Cut

Half of the operating costs of the U.S. federal budget is spent on the military. The federal budget should move away from the wasteful, redundant "military industrial complex." Wasteful spending on expensive military equipment and post World War II deployments that we do not need makes the U.S. less secure in many other neglected ways.

The Task Force on A Unified Security Budget for the United States, drawing on the knowledge of analysts with expertise in different dimensions of the security challenge, made recommendations in March 2004 that would cut defense spending by \$51 billion. The Task Force was organized by the Center for Defense Information, Foreign Policy in Focus, and Security Policy Working Group. In addition, they recommend a unified approach to fighting terrorism and increasing security that includes increases in non-military expenditures, noting that in a 2002 speech President Bush identified development assistance as a security tool, linking the desperate resort to terrorism with the hopelessness of persistent poverty.

The Task Force report is excerpted for your information. Our views go beyond these positions.

Our military is still dominated by an obsolete conventional and nuclear structure, designed to counter the least likely threat: a large-scale conventional challenge. As a result, the United States is burdened with a very expensive but misdirected military prepared for large-scale warfare rather than the challenges and operations that American forces now face with increasing strain. The dangers we face today come less from a potential superpower rival and more from failing states that have the potential to destabilize entire regions and to become magnets for transnational terrorist groups.

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Currently seven times as much is spent on military vs. non-military security spending. The Task Force brings this into greater balance reducing the ratio to 3:1. In order to achieve this better balance the Task Force notes that the nature of today's threats allows the U.S. to:

- Reduce the pace of investment in the next generation of weapons. The U.S. has a technological edge over all nations, including all of its adversaries. Nonetheless, the U.S. continues rushing expensive new generations of fighters, helicopters, ships, submarines, and tanks into production. Most of these weapons were designed to fight the now-collapsed Soviet Union.

New technologies and systems will be developed and tested as prototypes, but they need not be manufactured in quantity unless the threat warrants it. It is simply a waste of money and other resources to keep a huge military force on hair-trigger readiness for the conflicts of the last century.

In addition, a more restrictive policy of exporting advanced aircraft and other weapons to potentially unstable regions would also help us to safely slow down the pace of developing future weapon systems.

- Stop deployment of the national missile defense system until the technology is proven and the threat warrants, while maintaining a robust research program. This would save billions of dollars and insure that America does not close the door on any promising technology. So far, despite spending over \$75 billion, we have not found any that is works, and we cannot plan our security around doing so. Nor can we risk antagonizing Russia and China and possibly driving them into a military alliance, or alienating our European allies, or sparking a new nuclear arms race in Asia.
- Reduce our expensive and largely redundant strategic nuclear arsenal to 1,000 warheads, as a first step to further cuts; take our nuclear forces off hair-trigger alert.
- Close unnecessary military bases. While force structures and manpower have been reduced by 37% since the end of the Cold War, bases overseas have been reduced by only 25% and bases in the U.S. by only 20%. There is probably room for even larger reductions since in 1988, before the end of the Cold War, an official estimate put excess base capacity at 40%. After the end of the Cold War and the reduction of potential threat, presumably the excess capacity is now even greater.
- Overhaul the Pentagon's financial management operations. In 2003, the Defense Department (DoD) failed its General Accounting Office audit for the seventh year in a row. The DoD Inspector General found that it had failed to account for more than a trillion dollars in financial transactions, not to mention planes, tanks, and missile launchers. The Pentagon has about 2,200 overlapping financial systems, which cost \$18 billion a year to run.

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- The Bush administration has laid out a Defense Transformation initiative that is supposed to fix these problems. The positive features of this initiative, the ones that actually create new accountability and controls, should be pursued. The initiative has, however, embedded within it, proposals that will actually weaken accountability by reducing Pentagon reporting requirements to Congress and the public, while also weakening labor and environmental protections. These proposals need to go.
- Realign forces to better prepare them for likely missions, including counterterrorism, peacekeeping, reconstruction, security, and stability operations.

At the same time, the Task Force recommends increases in spending on non-military security including:

- Reinvesting in diplomacy. We will refocus resources on diplomacy as preventive action to resolve conflicts before they become violent.
- Developing international security forces. The U.S. cannot meet every contingency by itself. The vain attempt to do so only stretches our resources and leaves us with inadequate forces. Nor can we simply recast outlaw states in our own image by threatening and using military force. This strategy breeds resentment, fosters countervailing coalitions, and overburdens our resources.
- Reinvigorating the nonproliferation regime. The first line of defense against the spread of WMD is the interlocking set of treaties and institutions that form the global nonproliferation regime. This must include:
 1. Expanding significantly the budget of the Nunn-Lugar program and other initiatives designed to help secure and dismantle the nuclear arsenal of the former Soviet Union, since this may be the most likely place for terrorists to get their hands on WMD.
 2. Solidifying the norms against proliferation through multilateral regimes. The U.S. must strengthen the nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) by ratifying an IAEA Additional Protocol permitting more rigorous inspections, asking for assurances that all states implement full-scope IAEA safeguards agreements, and proposing increases in that agency's funding. And we must ratify the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, which will create a more powerful nonproliferation tool through its intrusive verification regime.
 3. Working for more effective implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention, including an improved inspection system, and resume participation in meetings to develop a biological weapons protocol and strengthen verification and enforcement obligations under the Biological Weapons Convention.

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4. Ratifying the Small Arms Control Pact, the Antipersonnel Landmine Treaty, and the Rome Treaty establishing the International Criminal Court.
5. Strengthening existing export control authorities, focusing especially on regulating truly sensitive exports to hostile and unstable regimes.

The collapse of the cold war, changing trade relationships with China, Russia, and other countries, and the post-9/11 world require a rethinking of U.S. security spending. Continuing to build weapons for old threats results in waste that we cannot afford. The recommendations of the Task Force are a good beginning point for a re-evaluation of U.S. security strategies and spending.

The full report of the Task Force on A Unified Security Budget for the United States, March 2004 is available on the Web at: <http://www.cdi.org/>.