

Fellow at the CATO Institute and former special assistant to President Reagan. The article makes a persuasive case for reducing the Pentagon budget and deflates the over-heated rhetoric of my colleagues about the need for over \$300 billion in military spending. As Mr. Bandow writes, "To suggest that America is weak, let alone as weak as before Pearl Harbor, is nonsense."

Fortunately, there is an alternative. The Congressional Progressive Caucus budget proposal I offered makes sensible, realistic reductions in the Pentagon budget in order to more adequately fund education, health care, housing, veterans, nutrition and social service programs. Budgets are about priorities. Unfortunately, as this opinion piece from a former Reagan Administration official makes clear, our current budget priorities are "nonsense."

[From the Washington Post, Mar. 22, 2000]

SCALING DOWN IN A SAFER WORLD

(By Doug Bandow)

In political debates, America is often portrayed as a beleaguered isle of freedom in a world threatened with a new Dark Ages. Yet the truth is that the United States is safer today than it has been at any time in the past half-century. It's time for Washington to cut military outlays sharply.

While Al Gore and Bill Bradley were sparing over health care in the primary campaigns, the leading Republican candidates pushed to "strengthen" the military. For instance, Texas Gov. George W. Bush complains that "not since the years before Pearl Harbor has our investment in national defense been so low as a percentage of GNP." Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.) sounded like an echo when he warned that "the last time we spent so little on defense was 1940—the year before Pearl Harbor."

Even more apocalyptic is conservative radio personality Rush Limbaugh, who warns that "we cannot survive more liberalism" at home or abroad. After all, he explains, "the world is far more dangerous than the day Ronald Reagan left office."

It is unclear, however, in what world they believe Americans to be living.

True, the percentage of GNP devoted to defense, about 3.2 percent, is lower than at any time since before World War II. Although that number fell to 3.5 percent in 1948, it climbed sharply with the onset of the Cold War and the very hot Korean War. One must go back to 1940, when military outlays ran about 1.7 percent of GNP, to find a lower ratio.

But so what? America's GNP then was \$96.5 billion, or about \$1.2 trillion in today's dollars. That compares with a GNP of more than \$8.7 trillion in 1999. In short, one percent of GNP today means eight times as much spending as in 1940.

Moreover, the United States was a military pygmy in 1940, with just 458,000 men under arms, up from around 250,000 during the mid-1920s through 1930s. America lagged well behind Britain, China, France, Germany, Japan, Russia—and even Italy.

Today Washington dominates the globe. It accounts for more than a third of the globe's defense outlays. It possesses the strongest military on earth: a well-trained force of 1.4 million employing the most advanced weapons. The United States spends as much on the military as the next seven nations combined, five of which are close allies.

In short, to suggest that America is weak, let alone as weak as before Pearl Harbor, is nonsense.

No less silly is the contention that the United States faces greater threats today than a decade ago. The world is messy, yes,

and the end of the Cold War unleashed a series of small conflicts in the Balkans. But most of the globe's nasty little wars—such as in Angola, Kashmir, Sri Lanka and Sudan—began well before 1989. And none of these conflicts threatens the United States as did the struggle with the Soviet Union.

Moreover, virtually every pairing today favors America's friends. The Europeans spend more on the military than does Russia; Japan's outlays exceed those of China; South Korea vastly outspends North Korea. America's implacable enemies are few and pitiful: Cuba, Iran, Iraq, Libya, North Korea and Serbia collectively spend \$12 billion to \$13 billion on the military, less than such U.S. Allies as Israel and Taiwan.

A decade ago was not so rosy. Not only did the Soviet Union spend more than twice as much as does Russia, but it formally confronted America. The Warsaw Pact states spent as much as NATO's eight smallest members. Heavily militarized Third World communist nations such as Angola, Ethiopia, North Korea and Vietnam, threatened U.S. surrogates. Most important, the American homeland was at risk. Today the possibility of a foreign attack on the United States is a paranoid fantasy.

Except in one form—terrorism. Although foreign governments, facing the threat of massive retaliation, are unlikely to strike America, ethnic, ideological and religious groups might not be so hesitant. But they are unlikely to do so out of abstract hatred of the United States. To the contrary, most acts of violence, such as those perpetrated by Osama bin Laden, are in response to U.S. intervention abroad. Terrorism is the weapon of choice of the relatively powerless against meddling by the globe's sole superpower.

In this case, America's strength, its global pervasive presence, is America's weakness. The solution is not more military spending but greater military caution. The risk of terrorism must be added to the other costs of intervening in foreign quarrels with little relevance to U.S. security.

Should America's military be strengthened? Yes: Problems with readiness, recruiting and retention should be addressed, and missile defenses should be constructed. But outlays could still be slashed by shrinking force levels to match today's more benign threat environment. The world is less, not more dangerous, than a decade ago. America is relatively stronger today than ever before, notwithstanding the misguided claims of Messrs. Bush and McCain.

#### HONORING THE CONGRESSIONAL AWARD PROGRAM

#### HON. W.J. (BILLY) TAUZIN

OF LOUISIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, March 22, 2000*

Mr. TAUZIN. Mr. Speaker, I urge all my colleagues to join me today in recognizing The Congressional Award and the thousands of young Americans and adult advisors who participate in this truly outstanding youth program. The Congressional Award is our own, United States Congress' own, award program for America's youth. The Congressional Award is a public private partnership created by Congress to promote and recognize achievement, initiative and service in America's youth. The Congressional Award provides a unique opportunity for young people to set and achieve personally challenging goals that build char-

acter and foster community service, personal development and citizenship.

A 1986 recipient of The Congressional Award Gold Medal, John M. Falk in commenting on The Congressional Award said the following:

The United States Congress, through the Congressional Award, has made a lasting and positive impact on every young person to receive this Award by simply recognizing and encouraging their service to our communities, their initiative and their unique achievements.

The Congressional Award is a true public private-partnership that is premised upon the very basic concept that by recognizing and encouraging young people to give of themselves to their communities and their neighbors, not only will our communities be better off but so will our young people by the very nature of the experience—hopefully for the rest of their lives.

The power and importance of the Congressional Award draws from the fact that truly any young person willing to accept the challenge can earn the Award. If you speak with a former Award recipient you will quickly learn how their lives have been changed in very positive ways by building self esteem and leadership skills, encouraging initiative and reinforcing the value of service to others. The Congress has every right to be proud of this bipartisan program and the manner in which they have directly enriched the lives of thousands of young Americans since 1979.

On Wednesday, March 22, 2000 The Congressional Award Foundation will hold its Annual Gala at the Ronald Reagan International Trade Center to celebrate 20 years of service and commitment to America's youth. I encourage all of my colleagues to support this program and join in the celebration. In addition, I would add special thanks to our private sector partners who make The Congressional Award possible through their support; they are:

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*March 22, 2000*

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Thousands of new participants will enjoy the benefits of participation in the Congress Award thanks to their efforts. I commend them for it.