

New defense plans have welcome cuts

After years of defense spending that is too high, with dollars wasted on programs that are exotic and unnecessary, it's refreshing to see a change in direction.

Last Tuesday, Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney told Congress that a \$10 billion cut in the defense budget would be possible by reducing personnel and delaying futuristic weapons systems such as the B-2 stealth bomber and the Strategic Defense Initiative.

When adjusted for inflation, this budget represents a 1 percent real decline in military spending. Cheney's trimmer budget is in response to the spending restraints agreed to by President Bush and Congress — and imposed by the \$305.5 billion spending limit; it is not a "kindler, gentler" one in the sense that the Bush administration is looking for ways to cut defense. With this caveat in mind, we still wish to express our support for Cheney's proposal.

The best thing about the new defense secretary's spending plan is that it eliminates the "sacred cow" mentality that was so common in the last administration. President Reagan was overly fond of big, new, expensive weapon systems such as Stealth technology and Star Wars; systems that took too much money from basic defense.

A disturbing trend began during the Reagan years. With money going to the big, nuclear/strategic proposals, the country's conventional army was facing slow attrition. Enlistments were dropping, parts were becoming outdated, and the armed forces as a whole were arguably less able to defend the country.

Under the Cheney plan, new toys go to the back of the line. The secretary has made it very clear that he does not want a "hollow army." Although the numbers of active personnel will be at their lowest level since the Korean War (a legacy of the Reagan years), these soldiers will be provided with the spare parts and ammunition necessary for war.

Another welcome addition under Cheney's plan will be annual pay increases for enlisted personnel. These raises will be small — slightly more than 3 percent a year — but should raise troop morale and increase enlistment. We would rather see our military dollars support the men in uniform than over-paid defense industry chairmen.

We do have some quibbles with the budget. We wish Cheney would make further cuts in other programs (the MX and Midgetman missile programs will continue to receive funding at low levels), but at least the new secretary of defense has demonstrated an ability to put together a defense that recognizes priorities.



Big ships still have no small role in Navy

The battleship USS Iowa made it through World War II and the Korean War undamaged, but the turret explosion that killed 47 seamen last week may be all that's needed to scuttle this old boat and her three sister ships.

Immediately after the Iowa disaster, an old question resurfaced to face the country's military planners: Is the Navy's policy on capital ships (aircraft carriers and battleships) able to survive in this nuclear age?

Critics of the big ship policy claim that it takes only one very cheap, expendable, well-aimed missile to side-line an expensive, irreplaceable aircraft carrier or battleship. With this warfare of dollars, they say it makes more sense to build fleets of smaller cruisers and destroyers.

Great Britain's messy little 1982 war in the Falkland Islands demonstrated the power of anti-ship missiles. But since that time, the Navy has also shown (against Libya and in the Persian Gulf) that the big ships are well able to protect themselves. When one examines this record and the other benefits of a "big-ship" policy, it becomes easy to defend the Navy's policy.

First of all, the Navy's big ships can survive in the modern battlefield. Part of this is

the modern equipment these ships carry; although the WWII-era battleships could benefit from a \$4 billion refurbishing program, the modern aircraft carrier is well-armed. In the few scrapes our Navy has gotten into this decade, opponents have wisely chosen to avoid the capital ships and pick on the smaller ones instead.

Part of this protection though, is the projection of power the big ships provide. On one modern platform, the Navy is able to bring to bear the anti-submarine defense, air power, shore support and logistics necessary in times of conflict. These piggyback services (especially anti-submarine and air-power capabilities) serve to protect the big ships and create a buffer zone from foes — zones the smaller ships lack.

Finally, this projection of power suits the national interests of the country better. The American armed forces has often been called — sometimes in dire need, sometimes in foolhardiness — to go to parts of the world far away from home. In these cases, the Navy must bring everything it needs with it; there will not always be friendly bases to provide air cover or supplies. When putting together a Navy that must cover a big world, defense planners must think big.

Letters

Public display

In response to "Defeated Candidates" (ODE, April 24):

"America, land of the free and home of the brave." I wish people who voluntarily put themselves on public display, hoping to make a difference or receive all-campus recognition, would join us in the real world and realize why we live in a "free" country.

Elections are a process by which candidates impress their intentions upon voters, and voters let candidates know what the voters do or don't want. The University is primarily "mainstream" and diversification is indeed integrating itself. We need civil and equal rights, not exclusive privileges for special interests. I equal you. No one's a privileged character.

I suggested my fraternity withhold dinner from inactive voters, and am glad the "leaders of the Greek system would

turn toward "voter activism." If encouraging people to vote days before elections is a constitutional infringement, then why do candidates spend months beforehand trying to increase voter participation? No one was told how to vote and I remind everyone that abstention (casting an empty ballot) is a right too.

I don't support death threats or physical threats towards anyone, but from my experience, two familiar sayings come to mind: "People who push get pushed back" and, "If you can't take the heat, get out of the kitchen."

So do it: protest, investigate, allege and file. Then, if the results don't change — sit back, take it like an American and respect yourself for trying.

"Don't be afraid to fail; no one loses all the time."

Todd Gummer
English, music, theater arts

Fight for rights

Having known Maureen Kirk since I entered this University three years ago, I must express my dismay and sadness that she will not be the next ASUO vice president.

I first saw Maureen in action at an OSPIRG meeting when I was a freshman and was greatly impressed by her eloquence, knowledge, involvement and commitment to the issues she pursued — at the time, the Oxfam Fast for a World Harvest. After getting to know her through mutual classes, I was even more amazed at the energy and dedication she gave to political and campus activism. She was always on the go, affecting positive change, and when I couldn't keep up with her, I read about her progress in the newspaper.

Besides having such talent in the problem-solving arena, Maureen is a warm and wonderful human being who really cares about people and works

her butt off to try to make this campus and this world a better place for all of us. It was practically her destiny to ascend to one of the ASUO presidential offices.

Instead, she was attacked verbally and physically for running with a "controversial" candidate, shoved to the ground, her leaflets stolen. I saw her break down and cry when the death threats to her running mate Tim Hughes were played at a press conference. But Maureen never gives up fighting for what's right. It is the students at this University who lose.

Robin Madell
Senior, English

So cool

Hey kids! Like if you missed it, the April 20 "getting-to-know-you" press conference called by our pals in the Greek system was a reel super hit! Some students (and, like, the

Emerald too, I think) asked the representatives (I forget their names) what the frats and sororities were gonna do about their, like, supposedly gross image, ya know? And the reps answered them reely polite and careful — I mean, they were, like, so, like, professional! They didn't mess up or anything.

I think it's reely cool that the Greeks are gonna begin to start to look into this stupid (and totally unfair, dontcha think?) reputation for being nothin' but a bunch of racist, sexist, homophobic, alcoholic snobs. I mean, it's like, time the campus realize what Greek life is, like, really all about, ya know? I mean, I wouldn't be surprised if the frat guys and sorority gals start their annual image-improvement campaign early this year. Wow! We could, like, have a function! Wouldn't that be, like, so cool?

Robert C. Kenneth
Graduate
Thursday, April 27, 1989