

Think Tank Defense Vision Targets Big Ticket Projects

Proposes Axing JSF, New Carrier, Crusader To Fund Transformation

By ROBERT HOLZER
Defense News Staff Writer

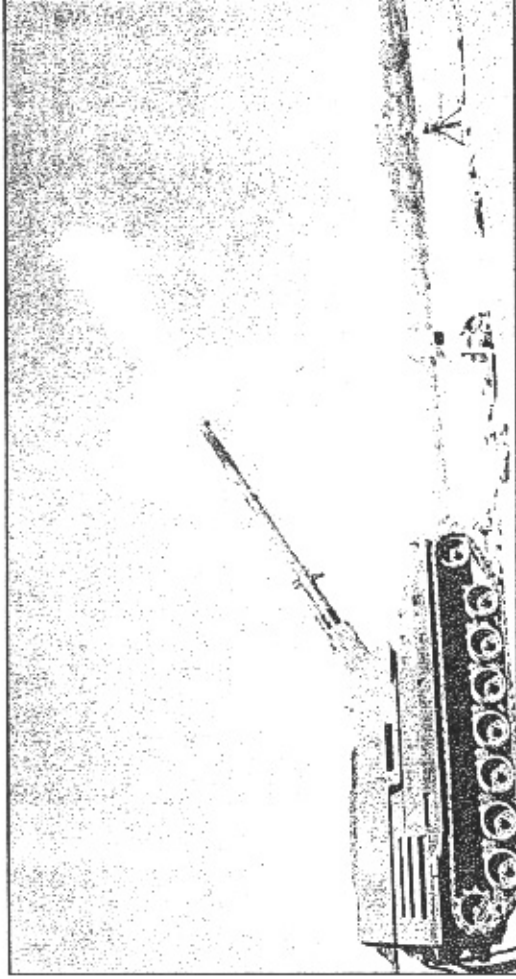
WASHINGTON — The U.S. military should jettison development of so-called roadblock weapon systems like the Joint Strike Fighter, or new types of aircraft carriers and tanks that absorb huge amounts of resources, in favor of funding the armed forces' transformation in coming decades, says a new defense strategy by a conservative think tank, the Project on the New American Century.

It is the first of many assessments expected in coming months, as different groups present alternative defense strategies and budgeting options as the U.S. presidential race heats up. The next administration takes office in January.

Called "Rebuilding America's Defenses: Strategy, Force and Resources for a New Century," the New American Century study will be released in mid-August. "Our report can become an important road map for a new administration," said Gary Schultz, co-chairman of the project. "It can open up the debate in very significant ways."

Arguing that the U.S. military faces inadequate resources to defend "the American security perimeter" around the globe, the New American Century study says far-reaching investment changes are needed.

Money to invest in new types of weapon systems, innovative force structures and other technologies can be generated by eliminating



UNITED DEFENSE L.P. PHOTO

Funding Roadblock?: The Crusader self-propelled howitzer (above) was cited as one example of excessive spending that makes it difficult for the U.S. military to afford future transformation.

the huge future investments required to build the Joint Strike Fighter, the Navy's next-generation CVNX aircraft carrier and the Crusader self-propelled howitzer for the Army, the study concludes.

These programs "absorb so much money, they are a roadblock to transformation," said Thomas Donnelly, principal author of the New American Century report. "If we [develop these programs], we will be doing the same thing 50 years from now. The question is, where do we take the fork in the road?"

Donnelly argues that the U.S. military is at such a crossroads today and should instead invest in future capabilities such as unmanned combat air vehicles, a new and separate Space Force, and new types of surface combatants. "It is the opportunity-cost of this action that is even greater than the sum of its parts," he said.

Other studies of the U.S. military

Navy:

- Cut aircraft carrier force to nine carriers instead of today's 12, but retain 10 airwings.
- Build up to 150 surface combatants and 72 attack submarines.
- Increase budget to \$100 billion-\$110 billion annually from today's level of \$80 billion.

Air Force:

- Buy F-22s and increase airlift, tanker and support fleets.
- Deploy upgraded composite wings in such locations as Aviano, Italy; Incirlik, Turkey; Kuwait and Saudi Arabia.

■ Increase budget to \$110 billion-\$115 billion annually instead of today's level of \$85 billion.

Marine Corps:

- Increase to 200,000 active vs. 173,000 today, and focus on naval infantry role.
- Purchase additional MV-22 tiltrotor aircraft, including a gunship version.
- Extend life of the Harrier jump-jet and buy the Advanced Amphibious Assault Vehicle.

The study also calls for increased Navy and Marine Corps involvement in East Asia, including the establishment of a new Marine base in the region, and says the Army should consider establishing permanent bases in the Balkans. It also says the Army should along with the Air Force should develop deployment bases in the Pacific region.

But a renewed U.S. drive to establish more permanent, or deployment bases for regional crises could backfire, other experts said, by increasing resentment of perceived American hegemony.

"It appears designed to alienate all allies, antagonize all potential adversaries into a counter alliance, and is the one sure approach to lose the support of the American taxpayer," said Frank Hoffman, a defense analyst and author based here. "It is designed to fail."

"Transformation at the current budget level is relatively painful," said Michael Vickers, director of strategic studies at the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments. However, according to Vickers, "The big dollars are in force structure, not in procurement. If you are willing to give up a division or two, that would save a lot of money."

Meanwhile, the study by the Project on the New American Century proposes the following for each of the military services:

Army:

- Increase to 525,000 active forces from today's level of 480,000, with greater attention to combat service support.
- Invest in medium-weight vehicles, Comanche helicopter and High Mobility Artillery Rocket Systems.
- Increase annual budget from \$70 billion to as much as \$90 billion by 2007.

are being conducted by:

- The Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge, Mass., under the direction of Cindy Williams.
- Harvard University, Boston, in collaboration with Stanford University, Palo Alto, Calif., and led by Ashton Carter, former assistant secretary of defense for international security policy under President Bill Clinton.
- The Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, here, led by Andrew Krepinovich.

Williams, whose study should be published by Jan. 15, acknowledged that its timing is late, but said it is being framed as a guide for the next presidential administration. "It's geared to the new administration," Williams said. "It's a combination of strategy and budgets."

Transforming the military will require several decades, according to Schmitt and Donnelly's study.