

RELEASE IN PART B6

From: H <hrod17@clintonemail.com>
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From: Burns Strider [mailto:
Sent: Thursday, April 19, 2012 02:42 PM
To: H
Subject: Redirect the nuclear weapons budget by Brig. Gen. Keith Kerr

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The piece below (representing the work of The American Values Network) just posted. General Kerr is one of our great friends out in California:

<http://thehill.com/blogs/congress-blog/homeland-security/222531-redirect-the-nuclear-weapons-budget>

Redirect the nuclear weapons budget
 By Brigadier General Keith Kerr (Ret.)

Every few years, some outrageous abuse of the taxpayer's dollars rightfully grabs headlines. Many will remember the infamous \$400 toilet seats that were part of the defense procurement scandals of the 1980's. More recently, there was the "bridge to nowhere," a \$25 million dollar boondoggle that perfectly exemplified poor Congressional oversight of our taxes.

The problem with these headline grabbers is that they often focus on comparatively small matters in the relative scheme of federal spending and arguably distract attention from vastly more wasteful spending.

You need look no further for an example of this than the hundreds of billions of dollars that the U.S. is projected to spend on redundant and unnecessary nuclear weapons over the next decade.

It is hard for any of us to fully appreciate the scale of the numbers involved. To put it in perspective, the \$600 billion that the New York Times has reported as the next decade's overall nuclear weapons budget is the equivalent of 24,000 "bridges to nowhere."

These nuclear weapons programs, ill-suited to combat 21st Century threats, are fiercely guarded by the pork barrel politics of what some have termed the Congressional "Doomsday Caucus" – but there's little to justify the expense.

Current proposals call for building 12 new nuclear submarines at a total costs of almost \$350 billion, but just eight would be more than adequate to deploy the number of warheads planned under 2010's New START Treaty. Four of them are, functionally, "subs to nowhere" and canceling them would also save at least \$18 billion. Similarly, delaying production of a new bomber would save \$18 billion with no impact whatsoever on our ability to deploy the same number of bombers planned under START. And cancelling a redundant and unnecessary nuclear lab in New Mexico would save another nearly \$6 billion.

Of course, if these expenditures were necessary to keep America safe, they would be worth it, but excessive spending on nuclear weapons contributes nothing to our security. Worse, these expenditures siphon money away from more important national security priorities.

Almost a decade ago, General Colin Powell sounded a warning about the expense of America's arsenal of nuclear weapons, "We have every incentive to reduce the number. These are expensive. They take away from soldier pay." He added, "They take away from lots of things. There is no incentive to keep more than you believe you need for the security of the nation."

General Powell is hardly alone in his assessment. In February, Major General Paul Monroe wrote "It would be irresponsible not to evaluate whether maintaining a large nuclear arsenal is relevant to addressing [current] threats, and whether some of the hundreds of billions spent on that large arsenal would be better spent on other defense priorities. We are in a time of tightening budgets, and our troops require the very best possible equipment." The fact is, we can maintain a strong and reliable deterrent at far less cost and with far fewer weapons. As Lt. General Robert Gard recently noted, "If the essence of deterrence is a credible threat, then it's safe to say we can make significant reductions with no impact whatsoever on our deterrent or security capacity."

In a hopeful sign, some leading Senators have expressed interest in rightsizing the nuclear weapons budget. Sen. Tom Coburn (R-OK), a consummate deficit hawk has identified the nuclear weapons budget as a priority for savings, while Sen. Lindsay Graham (R-SC) recently stated, "I'm willing to put the nuclear arsenal on the table for reform and restructuring and maybe downsizing."

These types of misdirected expenditures should rightly become an election issue. Appropriating money for unnecessary and redundant programs has nothing to do with being strong, especially when funding is tight and there are far more important national security priorities competing for the same dollars.

The "Doomsday Caucus" is feverishly resisting any cuts in nuclear programs, whether those expenditures make sense or not. It's a small group, but there's far more at stake than a single \$25 million dollar "bridge to nowhere." The more attention the proposed misuse of funds receives however, the less likely it is to continue.

Keith Kerr served 33 years in the US Army, retiring with the rank of Colonel. He was commissioned as a Brigadier General in the California State Military Reserve.