

Pentagon Aide Urges Cutback On Defense 'Frills'

By MARY AMIDON
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A new maxim "bigger is not necessarily better" is gaining a lot of attention these days especially in Washington and its being used a lot in discussions of the national defense budget.

This year defense spending will cost \$122 billion — or \$600 for each American. How well that money will be spent is a question gaining considerable momentum in the corridors of Washington offices. Do we spend astronomical sums on highly sophisticated equipment too expensive to test, too expensive to repair, and too expensive to train the military on, or do we opt for smaller, less complex warheads and build more of them? While opinions on these issues differ markedly, "most all" in the know "share a nervous concern" about the nation's military might.

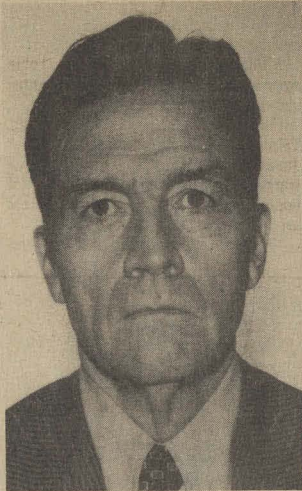
In the current issue of *Atlantic Monthly* magazine, Washington editor James Fallows explores the complexity of these issues in his article, "The Muscle-Bound Superpower," a highly readable analysis of the defense machinery written in terms the average American can digest. Among the numerous defense officials and military personnel Fallows interviewed during three months of research is retired U.S. Air Force Col. John R. Boyd.

An Erie native and graduate of Strong Vincent High School, Boyd was a renowned combat fighter pilot and instructor in the Korean War. Retired from the military in 1975, Boyd, 52, now is a consultant to the Pentagon. Currently he is working on a lengthy research project he calls "Patterns of Conflict" among nations. His voluminous research, resulting in nearly four years of work, dates back to 400 B.C. and includes observations of Napoleon, Clausewitz, the Blitzkrieg, and Vietnam War. Boyd anticipates the first draft of his "brief" will be completed by the year's end.

In a recent telephone interview from his Alexandria, Va. home, Boyd discussed his views on defense expenditures and related matters with a *Times-News* reporter, relying on analogies to make his point when asked about particularly sensitive topics.

Boyd talked at length about the nation's highly technical, ultra sophisticated weaponry and called for a cutback of "frills" in the defense budget.

"You can buy expensive things, but that doesn't mean they have more utility. You don't build complication or sophistication per se, and I think too much of our technology is to generate sophistication and complication per se," he says in carefully measured tones.



JOHN R. BOYD
Erie Native

"We can turn technology around to build more simple, more reliable, less expensive, and more systems in which complication and sophistication are not required. In some special cases, of course, you may have to have a certain sophistication. It seems the prevalent tendency is to go for sophistication and complexity which tend to diminish our numbers."

While acknowledging there is growing support in Washington to reduce the level of defense funds channeled into expensive weaponry, Boyd maintains more simplified warheads is not the solution, either.

"You need a shrewd combination of ideas, people and materials. There has been no search for a balance of these things. If you buy expensive commodities and your budget is limited, as is everyone's regardless of your position, and if you feel you need numerical strength to offset your adversaries, you can't do it. Are we interested in frills or substance?"

Boyd makes another point by referring to an expensive automatic fare card machine inaugurated by Washington, D.C.'s metro transit system after considerable fanfare. The system, in operation but a few short months, has not worked adequately and is being abandoned — but only after an outlay of millions of dollars. "You can't buy complicated machinery during wartimes that in peacetimes will work even less," he emphasizes.

What sounds like a harsh statement is more truth than emotional appeal, ac-

cording to Fallows's article in which he talks with military officials who criticize the defense departments zeal for missiles and equipment yet to be tested successfully.

"I'm not anti-technology, only anti-complexity," moans one defense official. "There are going to be only so many dollars for the military to spend, and if we insist on complexity, we're going to end up with systems we can't rely on to work."

The case of Minuteman missiles is a good example of this nearsightedness resulting in a nightmarish scenario for the U.S. The ultra-sophisticated missiles

have never successfully been tested and, after four attempts, "the Air Force stopped trying," Fallows writes.

Another case in point is the 18,500-ton nuclear Trident submarines which can house as many as 24 nuclear missiles. Touted as the 'biggest and best' submarine system in the world, it falls short on several grounds and has high-ranking defense officials thinking twice about it, Fallows writes.

The problem with the submarine, according to one defense consultant, is that it's too big. To ensure deterrence, some say, it would be better to divide the missiles between two or more ships so that

the loss of one sub would not be as costly. To compound the situation, the Tridents cost \$1.59 million each, 12 times the cost of a modern destroyer. One cabinet head, assistant Secretary of the Navy Dr. David Mann, recently made headlines by reporting the Tridents could be simplified and built for two thirds the cost.

Faced with these kinds of issues, Boyd maintains the U.S. will soon be forced to look more carefully at its shopping list and pare what has been regarded as a defense department spending spree.

Asked if the Soviet Union's defense capabilities are more stable than the U.S.,

Boyd responds carefully. "Their bureaucracy is larger than ours and that may be one of the things going for us. Even though we seem to have problems, who is to say theirs aren't greater. We don't want to underestimate them. They are a very strong adversary. Remember it's not just equipment, but people and ideas. Do we have a superior combination?"

Although Boyd says he does not know, how many millions the Soviets pump into their defense programs, he did concede the Soviets devote "a lot of emphasis and effort to their military operations and affairs."