

Missile Defense Funding Eases Through Congress

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In defense appropriation bills passed separately by the Senate and House of Representatives in July, lawmakers essentially matched the Bush administration's earlier \$9.1 billion missile defense budget request for fiscal year 2004.

The Republican-controlled Congress gave the Pentagon more than it requested for programs that might yield specific systems in the near term but shaved and shifted funding away from futuristic concepts or programs that legislators said were ill-defined.

Both houses of Congress added money to support the development and deployment of the strategic ground-based midcourse system, the initial elements of which the Pentagon plans to field next year. The Senate added \$231 million, while the House approved about \$16 million in extra funding.

The largest boost in funding by the House was \$90 million for buying more Patriot Advanced Capability-3 (PAC-3) interceptors to counter short- and medium-range ballistic missiles. The Senate did not copy the House's action. Instead, senators approved an increase of the same amount for the U.S.-Israeli Arrow system, which has a similar mission as the PAC-3 system.

The two bodies further disagreed over who should be in charge of future research and development of the PAC-3 system, as well as a joint project with Germany and Italy based on the PAC-3 interceptor. The Senate assigned the responsibility to the Missile Defense Agency, while the House vested the Army with the job.

Legislators agreed upon significant cuts to the Pentagon's \$301 million request to develop, in part, a common interceptor to be launched from a variety of platforms to destroy ballistic missiles minutes after they are fired. The House basically halved the request for this new boost-phase interceptor, and the Senate reduced it by more than two-thirds.

Both bodies also reduced funding for researching general missile defense hardware and software. The Senate exacted nearly \$87 million in cuts and the House \$63 million. A House report justifying the reductions stated that "it is not clear what activities, levels of effort, or deliverables warrant the level of funding proposed."

Selected members of the Senate and the House Appropriations Committees will work out the differences between their two bills this fall in a conference committee.

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