

July 19, 2007

Dr. Robert M. Gates
Secretary
Department of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301-1000

Dear Secretary Gates,

With Congress now routinely passing emergency Defense supplemental appropriations bills costing upwards of \$100 billion every year, there is no justification for Congress to misspend defense dollars on frivolous and wasteful pork projects. This is especially true since guaranteeing that our troops have the best armor, weapons, and medical care should be the highest priority of Congress, rather than securing earmarks for wealthy defense contractors and campaign donors.

The total amount spent on Congressional pork projects, known as "earmarks," in Defense appropriations over the past five fiscal years has cost taxpayers approximately \$55 billion.¹ The House Fiscal Year 2008 Defense authorization bill committee report includes 13 pages of charts with 458 individual projects totaling \$7.7 billion. The Senate Defense authorization bill discloses 309 earmarks costing a total of \$5.6 billion.² An analysis completed by Taxpayers for Common Sense, however, claims that the bill contains 90 additional undisclosed earmarks at a cost of \$8 billion.³

This is an overwhelming number of projects and since most members of Congress are not experts on defense systems and military hardware, guidance from military experts is needed to ensure defense dollars are wisely allocated.

Last year, the Senate twice overwhelmingly approved an earmark "report card" that would have directed the Pentagon to determine the cost effectiveness of Congressional pork projects. Both times, the language was stripped during closed door conference meetings with the House of Representatives. The only reason to oppose this analysis, of course, is to hide from taxpayers the fact that many Congressional pork projects costing tens of millions of dollars are unjustifiable and wasteful.

The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) has previously issued a Statement of Administration Policy (SAP) asking Congress not to fund unnecessary or wasteful

¹ Citizens Against Government Waste, "Pig Book, 2002- 2007 editions;

http://www.cagw.org/site/PageServer?pagename=reports_pigbook2007

² <http://armed-services.senate.gov/Publications/S%201547%20FY08NDAA%20Projects.pdf>

³ <http://www.taxpayer.net/budget/fy08authchart.html>

projects. The National Drug Intelligence Center (NDIC), for example, has “proven ineffective in achieving its assigned mission, and the Administration believes closure of NDIC and reassignment of its missions to other organizations represents a step towards more efficient coordination and management of counter-drug intelligence activities,” according to OMB.⁴ Yet, Congress has earmarked nearly \$240 million for the NDIC over the past five fiscal years.

There are plenty of other examples.

Last year, the *Washington Post* published an article titled “The Project That Wouldn’t Die; Using earmarks, members of Congress kept money flowing to a local company that got \$37 million for technology the military couldn’t use.” Vibration & Sound Solutions Ltd., a Virginia defense contractor, has received a steady flow of federal funds for various purposes and, according to the *Post*, “all the applications have one thing in common: The Pentagon hasn’t wanted them.”⁵

The DP-2 aircraft has received \$63 million in taxpayer funds-- entirely through earmarks-- despite a series of Pentagon and NASA studies that from the beginning found fault with the project.⁶ More than \$40 million has been earmarked to 21st Century Systems Inc. (21CSI) for the development of military software yet only one piece of that software has been used-- in a single Marine camp in Iraq-- and it is no longer in use.⁷

This year, nearly \$1.7 million was earmarked for Arcadia Biosciences, based in Seattle to improve the shelf life of vegetables. The funding would help “establish and evaluate variant populations of bell pepper, cantaloupe and strawberry.”⁸

These are just a few examples of the wasteful earmarks funded through the Pentagon that have siphoned away funds from our national defense budget.

Earmarks contained within Defense appropriations bills have been linked to a number of recent Congressional corruption and ethics probes. Congressman Randy “Duke” Cunningham resigned from the House of Representatives after he admitted to taking \$2.4 million in bribes from two defense contractors. Federal investigators are examining whether Congressman Jerry Lewis, as the House Appropriations Chairman,

⁴ Statement of Administration Policy, “H.R. 2862, Departments of Commerce and Justice, Science, and Related Agencies Appropriations Bill, FY2006,” September 8, 2005;
<http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/legislative/sap/109-1/hr2862sap-s.pdf>

⁵ Charles R. Babcock. “The Project That Wouldn’t Die,” *Washington Post*, page D1, June 19, 2006;
<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/06/18/AR2006061800631.html?referrer=emailarticle>

⁶ Jerry Kammer and Paul M. Krawzak. “Pentagon rejected aircraft built by campaign donor,” *San Diego Union Tribune/COPLEY NEWS SERVICE*, June 13, 2007;
<http://www.signonsandiego.com/news/politics/20070613-9999-1n13airmark.html>

⁷ Paul Goodsell. “Firms count on Congress for funding,” *Omaha World-Herald*, April 29, 2007;
http://www.omaha.com/index.php?u_page=2798&u_sid=2374508

⁸ “Murray and Cantwell Announce Senate Approval of nearly \$57.5 million in Job-Creating Defense Contracts for Washington State,” press release, September 29, 2006
<http://murray.senate.gov/news.cfm?id=264157>

abused his position by steering earmarks to his political allies and former employees. The *Wall Street Journal* notes that, “the Lewis episode underscores the link between Member-steered earmarks and the opportunity for corruption. Convicted lobbyist Jack Abramoff openly boasted that earmarks were his political currency and he called the Appropriations Committee that doles them out a ‘favor factory’ for lobbyists.”⁹

Following last November’s elections, the incoming Chairmen of the House and Senate Appropriations Committees promised “to restore an accountable, above-board, transparent process for funding decisions and put an end to the abuses that have harmed the credibility of Congress.” With no Senate earmark rules changes yet in effect, the Senate Appropriations Committee has apparently decided to abandon the pledge to “place a moratorium on all earmarks until a reformed process is put in place.”

It is obvious that taxpayers and policymakers can not count on Congress to provide transparency for how federal funds will be spent. We can only guess as to whether or not projects inserted into legislation are for necessary national security purposes or to satisfy the parochial self-interests of politicians and defense industry lobbyists.

I would, therefore, request that the Department provide a critique of each earmark contained within Defense appropriations and authorization bills within 48 hours of being reported out of the House and Senate committees. Specifically, I would like to know whether or not the Defense Department believes each earmark is useful and cost effective in advancing the goals of the Department and if not, why. Please also provide an analysis of the impact of the unnecessary earmarks on the Department’s budget priorities.

This will provide needed information to lawmakers about projects inserted into bills that have not had proper oversight, debate or discussion. It will also ensure that every member of Congress can cast a truly informed vote on how federal funds are to be spent and provide a better understanding of the impact of unnecessary earmarks on overall military preparedness, our national defense, and other defense-related priorities.

Thank you for your assistance with this request. I look forward to working with you to ensure our troops have the resources and support they need to win the war against terrorism and protect our nation.

Sincerely,



Tom A. Coburn, M.D.
U.S. Senator

⁹ “Earmarker in Chief,” *Wall Street Journal*, June 15, 2006, page A14;
<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB115033555119580784.html>