



Senators Kennedy and Feinstein Seek to Eliminate
Funding for Next Generation of Nuclear Weapons
June 3, 2004

Washington, DC – U.S. Senators Edward Kennedy (D-MA) and Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.) today offered an amendment to the Defense Authorization bill that would eliminate this year’s funding for the research and development of a next generation of nuclear weapons.

The bill currently before the Senate contains:

- \$27.6 million for the development of the 100-kiloton bunker buster known as the “Robust Nuclear Earth Penetrator; and
- \$9 million for the Advanced Concepts Initiative, including so-called “low yield” weapons (less than 5 kilotons).

This funding was originally requested by the Bush Administration.

“I am deeply concerned that this Administration may well be encouraging the very nuclear proliferation we seek to prevent – through its policy of preemption combined with the pursuit of new nuclear weapons,” Senator Feinstein said.

The first hints of the Administration’s nuclear policy came in the 2001 Nuclear Posture Review – which was leaked to the press in early 2002. The Review cited the need to develop a new generation of tactical nuclear weapons, blurring the lines between conventional and nuclear forces.

According to press reports, it named seven countries against which it would consider launching a nuclear first strike: North Korea, Iraq, Iran, Syria, Libya, China, and Russia. It also proposed a “new triad,” in which nuclear and conventional weapons co-exist along the same continuum.

“The Administration’s nuclear policy blurs the distinction between nuclear and conventional weapons and suggests that they could be used as offensive weapons,” Senator Feinstein said. **“This represents a major departure from past U.S. policy and makes our nation less safe – not more.”**

In the last year’s Defense Authorization Bill, the Administration sought, and ultimately obtained permission, to repeal the 10-year old Spratt-Furse Amendment, which prohibited research to develop a low-yield (less than 5 kiloton) nuclear weapon.

However, Senators Kennedy and Feinstein and others opposed to developing tactical nuclear weapons were able to scale back the Administration’s proposal. They were able to:

- Cut the funding for the Robust Nuclear Earth Penetrator in half, from \$15 million to \$7.5 million;
- Condition \$4 million of the \$6 million for Advanced Concepts on further reporting and planning on Stockpile Stewardship;
- Require that any move to develop a Robust Nuclear Earth Penetrator further than the 6.2A phase (past design definition and cost study to development engineering) to require a specific congressional authorization.

Despite these efforts, the Bush Administration asked for significantly more funding for research into new nuclear weapons this year.

The Administration's budget requests for new nuclear weapons this year totals \$96.5 million. Furthermore, the Congressional Research Service now reports that the Administration's own long-term budget plans, including \$485 million for the Robust Nuclear Earth Penetrator between 2005 and 2009, "cast doubt" on the contention that the study of new nuclear weapons are, in fact, only a study.

"This ramp-up in funding can mean one thing and one thing only: the Administration is determined to develop and deploy a new generation of nuclear weapons. Yes, the Administration is seeking to re-open the nuclear door and is seeking more 'usable' nuclear weapons."

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