

Transcript of Congressman Duncan's April 1st, 2008 Speech on Pentagon Spending

Madam Speaker, the front page of the Washington Post today carries a story about \$295 billion in cost overruns at the Pentagon; \$295 billion. That is a mind-boggling, almost incomprehensible figure to anyone who stops to think about it. The headline reads, "GAO Blasts Weapons Budget."

Listen to this story. Government auditors issued a scathing review yesterday of dozens of the Pentagon's biggest weapons systems, saying ships, aircraft and satellites are billions of dollars over budget and years behind schedule. The story continues, "The Government Accountability Office found that 95 major systems have exceeded their original budgets by a total of \$295 billion, bringing their total cost to \$1.6 trillion and are delivered almost 2 years late, on average."

Apparently, there are no fiscal conservatives at the Pentagon. Apparently they believe that the Congress will just keep giving them more money, no matter how wasteful or inefficient they become. Of course, almost all the defense contractors hire plenty of admirals and generals, so almost all of these contracts are sweetheart deals anyway.

It is what the International Herald Tribune a few years ago called the "revolving door" at the Pentagon. \$1.6 trillion in total costs, and \$295 billion in cost overruns, and this was just on the major systems. No telling how much more was wasted on the smaller contracts.

\$295 billion would run the entire government of Tennessee, schools, health care, roads, prisons, parks, and on and on for the next 11 years.

Then, on top of all this waste, the request for the Iraq War for the coming fiscal year is \$189 billion, or over \$500 million a day. Apparently we are having so much success over there that we have to give them more money, more troops and more contractors than ever before.

There is nothing fiscally conservative about the war in Iraq. Conservatives, above all, should realize that any gigantic government bureaucracy is always going to ask for more money and always find reasons to justify it.

And Congress is afraid to cut the Defense Department for fear of being seen as unpatriotic. Yet, it is a very false and very blind patriotism that allows the Pentagon to continually waste mega billions

and allows the Defense Department to spend like there is no tomorrow.

In a few short years, we will not be able to pay all of our Social Security, Medicare, veterans' pensions, veterans' health care and many other things if we do not bring Federal spending under some type of control.

In a newsletter I sent to my constituents in Tennessee a few weeks ago I wrote these words before I knew about these cost overruns I've spoken about today. ``Jonah Goldberg wrote in a recent issue of National Review that the ``insight that involvement abroad fuels the expansion of the state was central to the formation of the modern conservative and libertarian movements.'

`` In other words, perpetual war leads to bigger government and goes very much against traditional conservatism.

`` Yet some conservatives have fallen into a trap of never questioning any military expenditure even though there is great waste and overspending in the military just as there is in any giant government bureaucracy.

`` Our Constitution is a very conservative document, and our founding fathers felt very strongly that we should have civilian control of the military:

`` Service in our military is very honorable and patriotic, but we need strong national defense, not international defense.

`` We simply cannot afford to be the policeman of the world, and with the speed of communication and transportation today, we do not need our military in so many countries.

`` Conservatives should support an efficient, fiscally conservative military, but it should not believe in turning the Department of Defense into the Department of Foreign Aid as it is in many ways today."