

# WebMemo



Published by The Heritage Foundation

No. 1621  
September 18, 2007

## Follow the Leader: The House and Senate Fiscal Year 2008 Defense Appropriations Bills

*Mackenzie M. Eaglen*

The U.S. House of Representatives recently passed its version of the fiscal year 2008 defense appropriations bill. The Senate is expected to begin debate on its bill (the version approved by the Senate Appropriations Committee) next week, with a goal of passing the final legislation by mid-October. Both the House bill and the Senate bill provide an additional \$1 billion to alleviate immediate equipment shortfalls in the National Guard and Reserves. This funding is vital for the military to fulfill its current and future missions.

However, each version omits essential funding that the other version includes. The House cut funding for the Army's Future Combat Systems (FCS) by more than \$400 million. The Senate did not provide an extra \$1 billion to outfit a new, eighth Stryker brigade—a move supported by senior Army leaders. In conference negotiations, the House must follow the Senate's lead in funding the FCS at the full requested amount of \$3.7 billion, and the Senate must follow the House in funding an eighth Stryker brigade.

**Army Modernization Is Essential, Not Optional.** The President's 2008 budget request of \$3.7 billion to continue development of the FCS includes \$100 million in procurement funding. FCS is the Army's primary modernization program; this would be the first upgrade of this magnitude in nearly four decades. Given that the Army went to war in Iraq in 2003 with equipment that was already more than 20 years old, FCS is critical not only for future missions but also for soldiers on the battlefield today.

The recent surge of additional units and equipment underway in Iraq required five extra Army brigade combat teams and associated support units. According to the Congressional Research Service, the unforeseen requirement to fully equip these reinforcements will likely cause additional strain on already depleted equipment stocks—particularly jammers, M117 Armored Security vehicles, and Mine Resistant Ambush-Proof vehicles.

A major component of FCS is, quite simply, a family of vehicles—platforms that are essential to the Army functioning effectively. The FCS program will procure 18 different manned and unmanned ground vehicles, which—along with other weapons and equipment—will constitute the majority of the equipment needed for a brigade combat team. If fully funded by Congress this year, the first FCS “spin out” will begin fielding vehicles and prototypes. This equipment will be evaluated by the Army Evaluation Task Force and then distributed to operational units.

The Army is undertaking a dramatic transformation of its platforms and systems while simultaneously restructuring into a brigade combat team force—all while fighting in major combat opera-

This paper, in its entirety, can be found at:  
[www.heritage.org/Research/NationalSecurity/wm1621.cfm](http://www.heritage.org/Research/NationalSecurity/wm1621.cfm)

Produced by the Douglas and Sarah Allison  
Center for Foreign Policy Studies

Published by The Heritage Foundation  
214 Massachusetts Avenue, NE  
Washington, DC 20002-4999  
(202) 546-4400 • [heritage.org](http://heritage.org)

Nothing written here is to be construed as necessarily reflecting  
the views of The Heritage Foundation or as an attempt to  
aid or hinder the passage of any bill before Congress.

tions overseas. The goals of these modularization efforts are to increase the number of available units for rotation, provide more predictable deployment schedules for soldiers and their families, and reduce mobilization times for the National Guard and Reserves. Ultimately, the transformation and modernization efforts will alleviate the strain on current ground forces.

Drastic cuts to FCS will destabilize the program, wreak havoc for program managers, and increase overall costs. The cut proposed by the House could lead to its cancellation. The Army's chief of staff, General George Casey, told Congress earlier this year that cuts to FCS would drive up costs over the long run and would delay near-term technologies, forcing soldiers to continue fighting with Cold War-era equipment for the next 30 years or more.

**Equipping the Reserve Component.** The House bill provides \$925 million to address the equipment shortfalls that are widely acknowledged as being detrimental to both the Guard and Reserves. These additional funds will allow the National Guard to fulfill both its domestic and overseas wartime mission requirements with an emphasis on dual-use equipment. This means that troops will train and deploy with the same gear for both domestic and overseas missions and will ensure interoperability with active units.

The Senate version provides an additional \$1 billion for Guard and Reserve equipment, including aircraft, missiles, tracked combat vehicles, ammunition, and other weapons. The Senate report directs Guard and Reserve leaders not to divert the funds to meeting active duty equipment shortfalls, which happens all too often.

Constant shortages of equipment for stateside Guard and Reserve units was causing the preparedness of non-deployed units for future missions to decline and overall unit readiness to dramatically fall. Congress heard the Reserve Component's cries for help and has taken a critical first step toward addressing this long-term shortfall. The final defense appropriations bill must include the \$1 billion for Guard and Reserve equipment provided by both the House and Senate versions.

**Additional Stryker Brigade.** The House bill provides \$1.1 billion to outfit an additional eighth Stryker brigade. This measure supports the Army's evolution to a larger and more rapidly deployable force. The Stryker framework offers a middle ground of capabilities, and its equipment and vehicle composition are ideally suited for, and proven in, domestic and overseas missions.

In the House Appropriations Committee report, members commend the Army for the overall success of the Stryker program. Stryker brigade soldiers and vehicles have "performed well in combat, demonstrating reliability and survivability." Committee members justify the increase in part because it was one of the Army's unfunded requirements this year. Members were told that additional Stryker units would "greatly benefit the Army's overall combat power, deployability, flexibility and sustainability."

While the Senate bill does not currently include funding for an eighth Stryker brigade, the Secretary of the Army will provide a report to Congress by December 1 to officially weigh in on this issue. Army leaders have already given Congress their off-the-record support for the additional help. The report will formally express the utility of adding an eighth Stryker unit to the Army's force structure. The Senate should support this effort to fund another fast, maneuverable Stryker platform that includes medical evacuation, reconnaissance, fire support, engineer squad, and troop carrier variants.

**Conclusion.** FCS is less than 3 percent of the Army's baseline budget for fiscal year 2008. However, this does not diminish its necessity as the Army's highest priority request this year. Now is the time for the Army to field its "future force." Congress must include the following in the final version of the 2008 defense appropriations bill: full funding for the FCS; funding for additional Guard and Reserve equipment; and the addition of an eighth Stryker brigade.

—Mackenzie M. Eaglen is Senior Policy Analyst for National Security in the Douglas and Sarah Allison Center for Foreign Policy Studies at The Heritage Foundation.