



## Pentagon Spending for Basic Research and Darpa Would Fall Under Senate Panel's Bill

Defense spending on basic research would receive no increase in 2008 under a plan approved by the Senate Appropriations Committee. The budget for Darpa, the Pentagon's premier research agency, would be trimmed by nearly 7 percent.

The spending bill would give basic research a total of \$1.56-billion, which represents a cut of 0.2 percent from this year's total but a larger drop when adjusted for inflation. About 60 percent of the Pentagon's basic-research money typically flows to universities and colleges, mostly through merit-based grants.

The Defense Department's applied-research spending would decline by 13 percent, to \$4.65-billion. A much smaller percentage of that category has historically gone to universities.

Within the overall Pentagon budget, a bright spot is spending on the National Defense Education Program, whose outlay would more than double, to \$44.4-million. The program provides scholarships to college students who study science and foreign languages, and who agree to work for the Pentagon or military contractors after graduation (The Chronicle, May 13, 2005).

The proposed spending cut for Darpa – formally, the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency – is significant, given the agency's history as a sponsor of research that has led to revolutionary new technologies, especially the Internet. The agency has financed academic research in computer science and engineering, but in recent years has shifted its spending toward corporations to meet short-term technical needs (The Chronicle, May 27, 2005).

In a report accompanying the bill, the Senate committee said that a cut was warranted because Darpa had failed to spend all of its appropriations. In 2006 about 17 percent of its budget was unspent or "reprogrammed" by the Pentagon for other purposes. For the first nine months of the 2007 fiscal year, nearly 8 percent of the agency's budget was deemed "excess". The Senate would give Darpa \$2.91-billion in 2008. (Much of Darpa's spending falls under the applied-research category.)