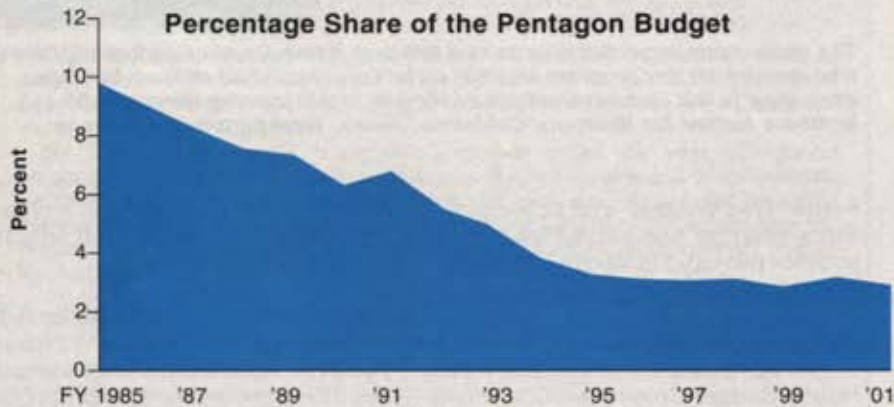
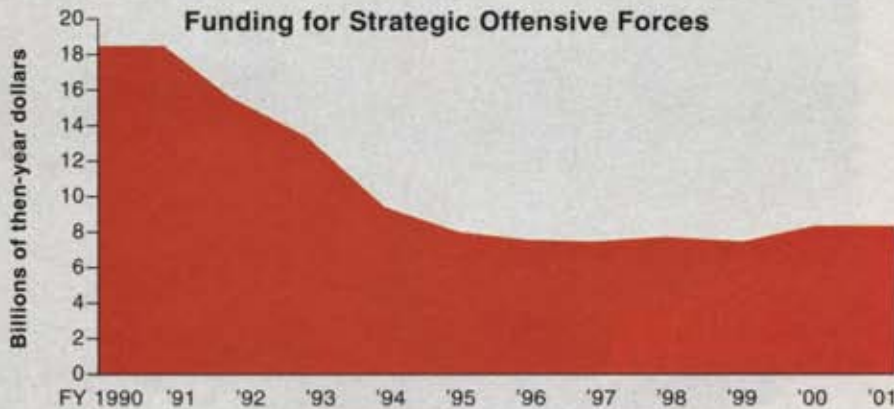


The Chart Page

By Tamar A. Mehuron, Associate Editor

Strategic Arsenal on the Decline



The end of the Cold War and the reduction of the strategic nuclear threat to the United States have caused a dramatic drop in funding for US strategic nuclear forces (heavy bombers, intercontinental ballistic missiles, strategic submarines, and submarine-launched ballistic missiles). Total expenditure has plummeted to its lowest level in more than thirty years (top figure). The nuclear arsenal's share of the Pentagon budget also has declined (center). In 1984, during the Reagan Administration's rearmament drive, strategic offensive nuclear programs consumed eleven percent of the Pentagon budget. In 1995, this defense category accounted for only about three percent.

Internal funding priorities are changing. The United States is buying no new bombers, ICBMs, or submarines and only a limited number of SLBMs. In the 1990s, expenditures have increasingly been used to sustain a shrinking strategic force, with such readiness funding growing from forty percent of the total in 1991 to about sixty-six percent today (bottom). Despite force reductions and budget cutbacks, strategic forces remain a crucial part of US military policy, and the Pentagon says it will maintain a capability to expand the nuclear arsenal if overseas threats warrant such a step.

Source: William J. Perry, US Secretary of Defense, "Annual Report to the President and the Congress," February 1995.