

DoD perpetuates tactical shortfall

PAUL LEWIS/WASHINGTON DC

THE US DEPARTMENT of Defense (DoD) is likely to be well short of the number of replacement tactical aircraft and helicopters required to sustain force levels, even if its request for a \$13.5 billion rise in its fiscal year 2001 budget is approved.

The Pentagon request was part of the government's overall spending plans submitted to Capitol Hill last week. It was the start of a process which is expected to see the US lawmakers heavily amend the budgets for 2001 before approving them. This, the final budget of the Clinton Administration is likely to attract fierce attention from Republicans and Democrats as they manoeuvre for political advantage before this year's Presidential and Congressional elections.

A major theme of the \$291.1 billion DoD budget request is stemming the outflow of manpower, with a 3.7% pay increase and improved housing and medical benefits. The US Air Force is 10,300 personnel under strength and 84% of its rank and file must decide on re-enlistment by 2003/4.

The \$60 billion-worth of planned equipment procurements includes the first 10 production

Lockheed Martin/Boeing F-22 Raptors for the USAF and 42 more Boeing F/A-18E/F Super Hornets for the US Navy. This is fewer than the 120-160 tactical aircraft the DoD says are needed next year to sustain the USAF, USN and Marine Corps.

No major improvement in numbers are expected before 2010-15 and the introduction of the Joint Strike Fighter.

Having ordered 10 more Lockheed Martin F-16C/Ds in FY2000, the USAF does not plan to fund any more before FY2003, when it has pencilled in six aircraft and seven each year in 2004 and 2005. It does not want any more Boeing F-15Es, and is having difficulty

agreeing with Boeing on the \$75 million asking price for the five fighters Congress added last year.

The USAF wants instead to spend \$280 million on additional spares, including \$63 million for F-16s. Another \$2.8 billion is sought for modernisation, including upgraded General Electric F110 and Pratt & Whitney F100 engines for F-16s and F-15s and fitting the Rockwell B-1B with Raytheon ALE-50 towed decoys.

Included is over \$95 million for an avionics upgrade and re-engineering of the Lockheed C-5 Galaxy. The USAF has cut funding for the Boeing C-17, from 15 to 12, to bolster the F-22 programme and to advance by a year the initial pro-

urement of two Lockheed Martin C-130J Hercules. This will avoid a production shutdown at Lockheed Martin and a \$600 million penalty in FY2002 to re-open the line, says the DoD. The USMC is to order another two KC-130Js. Boeing is also hit by the USAF's decision to cut \$92 million from the 747-based airborne laser, pushing back the first firing by two years, to 2005.

Northrop Grumman fares better, with a \$22.4 million request for long-lead funding for two RQ-4A Global Hawks, accelerating the high-altitude, long-endurance unmanned air vehicle programme. Money is also sought for a 15th E-8 Joint STARS and jammer upgrades for USN EA-6Bs. □



The procurement of the first 10 production F-22s is included in the USA's FY2001 budget

DoT earmarks \$11 billion for FAA from record \$55 billion allocation

THE US Administration has earmarked a record \$55 billion for US Department of Transportation (DoT) spending in fiscal year 2001, nearly \$5 billion higher than the figure finally agreed for the current year.

The US Federal Aviation Administration's share of the request is \$11 billion, including \$6.6 billion for operations, nearly \$700 million above FY2000, and \$2.5 billion for facilities and equipment. Research and development funding requests have risen to \$184 million. The remainder of the budget is split between a number of agencies including the National

Transportation Safety Board and the Coast Guard.

The request for facilities and equipment related to the FAA would boost current spending by \$450 million. Included among the budget requests is \$111 million for implementation of the Wide Area Augmentation System, while the Standard Terminal Automation Replacement System would receive \$190 million.

The US aviation agency will continue implementation of Free Flight Phase I and begin Free Flight Phase II, if the \$221 million request for funds is approved by Capitol Hill. □

NASA focuses on Shuttle heir

A FIVE-YEAR, \$6 billion programme to develop technology for a Space Shuttle replacement is the centrepiece of NASA's fiscal year 2001 budget request—the first for seven years to seek an increase in funding for the agency.

Also included in NASA's \$14 billion budget request—up 3% from last year—is initial funding for the Small Aircraft Transportation System programme to enable safe, efficient use of the USA's 5,000 small airports; and the Quiet Aircraft Technology programme to develop an air transport system that is free of noise constraints.

The heart of the budget, however, is the second-generation re-usable launch vehicle (RLV)

programme, which is intended to reduce the risks associated with developing a "safe, reliable and affordable" Shuttle replacement.

Of the \$6 billion NASA proposes spending over the next five years, \$2.35 billion is earmarked for the demonstration of at least two competing options of the second-generation RLV. Planning calls for responses by October, and multiple contract awards next January.

NASA plans a competitive launch services procurement in 2005. The winner will be developed commercially and enter service alongside the Shuttle in 2010. NASA will spend \$2.1 billion by 2005 on upgrades to keep the Shuttle in service until at least 2015. □