



Science In Our Lives

For Military Technology, the Future is Now

by John J. Politi

(NAPSA)—The United States prevailed in the military conflicts of the 1990s primarily because of investments made in science and technology in the 1980s and earlier. Research and development has helped to produce the weapons that have made America the world's leader in defense technology. Today, as we continue the war on terrorism, the equipment used by our armed forces is second to none in quality, reliability and lethality.



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After a decade of neglect, funding for the military is once again rebounding. However, science and technology (S&T) has often taken a back seat to more immediate needs such as operations and maintenance, modernization and procurement.

If we fail to adequately fund research and development today, it could place U.S. armed forces at a serious disadvantage on the battlefields of tomorrow.

As a nation, we must place increased emphasis on—and investment in—science and technology, research and development, and industrial base facilities. We must be successful in generating the breakthrough technologies for the military of the future.

The Department of Defense's goal for investment in S&T is three percent of its overall budget. Unfortunately, that goal has not been realized. The level of industry investment is also wanting and affects the recruiting and retention of scientists and technical personnel.

In a hopeful sign, funding for the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) has grown considerably over the past three years. Still, more funding is needed, particularly for basic and applied research.

Our future national security hinges on the investments made today. The declining level of investment in defense-related S&T is a concern that must be addressed now—there is no time to delay.

Adequate resources are also needed to invigorate and strengthen the public/private partnership between the military, industry and academia in this important area. The technologies of the future cannot be developed on a shoestring budget.

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