

A new cold war?

by Adriano V. Autino

An article in Florida Today, signed by Steven Siceloff, dated 1st May 2001, deserves some reflection. In it we read: "... President Bush has already requested \$310.5 billion in military spending for the 2002 fiscal year, a 4 percent increase over 2001. But Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, close to finishing a months-long study of previous national security needs, is expected to ask for \$200 billion to \$300 billion more over the next six years."

My political judgment on the acts of the new administration has, by now been suspended (this also seems true for the majority of the US comments that I have been able to read). Still it is not clear whether Bush is gripping an axe, trimming shears (it is normal in springtime, it seems, in America) or a small scout-knife. But the article adds a feeling of unease: we can read from it that Bush is (maybe) reducing public expenditure, and with it, civil space expenditure, but not military expenditure. For the military budget he asked the Congress to approve a 4% increase for 2002. The Pentagon (beautiful appetite!) asks for "only" 300 USD billion more in 6 years, i.e. 50 billion per year, and a majority of this budget would be *targeted on space spending*.

The US Administration is therefore preparing to spend 310.5 billion US\$ in expensive war toys. If the expense for civil space (NASA) reaches 14,5 US\$ billion (as I understand from other articles) the disproportion is monstrous: the expenditure for civil space would be less than 5% of the increase of military expenditure!

The 4% increase of the military budget corresponds to approximately 12 USD billion. Nearly equal to the entire expense of NASA!

The state, led by republicans, would make, yes, a backwards step in civil space, just in order to increase its presence in military space! In spite of people who hoped to have more space research for private enterprise!

The author of the article (also considering the recent incident with China) asks himself if a new cold war has begun. As I have said I suspend judgment, because, if I have understood properly, Congress still did not decide anything. But, seeing the first measures taken, Bush does not seem to me to be a great libertarian.

To the small emergent companies, with an astronomical vocation, nothing remains but to enrol in the US Air Force (:-<)!