

AAAS NEWS AND NOTES

edited by Coimbra Sirica

SCIENCE POLICY

War Serves as Backdrop to U.S. Funding of Science

The federal budget for science, like many other areas of government spending, is feeling the impact of the events that have followed the 11 September attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, according to AAAS staff who follow the budget process.

"We're in a very unusual situation," said Al Teich, director of the AAAS Directorate for Science and Policy. "The war on terrorism has driven almost everything else off the agenda."

As Congress worked in mid-November to pass the appropriations bills for the fiscal year that began 1 October, Teich noted that the policy-makers had agreed to temporarily shelve controversial proposals for legislation regarding stem cell research.

"Issues that were once on top have now been pushed down," Teich said. Although many appropriations bills had not been signed as of 20 November, it was possible to deduce how science would be funded in fiscal year 2002. According to Kei Koizumi, director of the AAAS R&D Budget and Policy Program, Congress appears on track to fulfill its promise to double the budget for the National Institutes of Health (NIH) by 2003, a 5-year process that began in 1998. The House had approved an NIH appropriation of \$22.9 billion (up almost 13%) and the Senate had set the appropriation at \$23.8

billion (up almost 17%). Although the House had not yet filed an appropriation bill for the Department of Defense (DOD), Koizumi said the agency is expected to receive substantial increases.

"The large increases go to DOD and NIH," Koizumi said. "Most other agencies will get only small increases."

For now, the budget for science does not seem to be affected by the nation's apparent economic downturn, Koizumi said. "The recession is not having an impact this year, but it will next year. Money is going to get much tighter for nonhealth, nondefense agencies."

In addition to funding new weapons systems and missile defense, Congress is interested in supporting biometric research that will help enhance security at federal buildings, allowing machines to recognize faces, for example. Teich noted that the nation's recent bout with anthrax had led policy-makers to seek ways to correct weaknesses in the system for combating bioterrorism. The Centers for Disease Control (CDC), for example, is scheduled to receive a \$55-million increase. Under the House version of the NIH bill, some of these funds will be used to develop anti-infective agents to combat emerging diseases.

"What this means is that in future years it is going to become increasingly difficult

to find money for things like basic research," Teich said. "That concerns me. And NIH is doing fine in the immediate future, but the big question is, what is going to happen in 2003?"

AAAS began publishing federal budget numbers for R&D in 1976. Every year, the AAAS R&D Budget and Policy Program publishes three major reports that follow and analyze the budget process. More information on the AAAS R&D Budget and Policy Program is available on the AAAS R&D Web site www.aaas.org/spp/R&D/.

INTERNATIONAL

AAAS Helping Association in Search for Expanded Role

Twenty-seven years after its 1974 launch in Recife, Brazil, the Interciencia Association is seeking to expand its role of promoting science in Mexico and the nations of the Caribbean and Central and South America.

For the next 3 years, the organization plans a series of workshops and seminars—some on research issues of importance to the region and others that will train scientists and program administrators in various aspects of science management and dissemination.

Founded with the help of AAAS, Interciencia gained its independence about 15 years ago. It has its own monthly journal, which has gone online this year (www.interciencia.org). Nonetheless, AAAS staff continue to aid in fund raising and asset management. "We help with proposal writing and with organizing the symposia," said Marina Ratchford, program manager with the AAAS International Directorate. She noted that after the death of former AAAS president Leonard Rieser, his family had started an endowment fund for Interciencia that was launched in 2000.

Dr. Mahabir Gupta, a pharmaceutical scientist, directs Interciencia from his office at the University of Panama in Panama City. He was in Washington, DC, in early November with a straightforward message for funders. "We are trying to foster integration of scientific effort in the region and to promote science in places where it is not given as much attention as it should get," said Gupta. "We are a small organization with few funds, but we are working hard."

AAAS

New Fellowships in Global Security

AAAS, in collaboration with the Nuclear Threat Initiative, is sponsoring a new fellowship program that will focus on issues relating to biological weapons, bioterrorism, nonproliferation, and federal response efforts. Scientists who are interested in applying their public health and medical expertise to these issues can obtain information about the fellowship by contacting AAAS at the following e-mail address: science_policy@aaas.org. More information is available on the following Web site: www.fellowships.aaas.org.

The application deadline for the AAAS/NTI Fellows in Global Security Program is 10 January 2002, by which time all applicants must have been awarded an M.D., D.V.M., or Ph.D. in the biological sciences, public health, or a related field. International experience is preferred, but not required. At least one Fellow will be selected. U.S. citizenship is required. Federal employees are not eligible.