

Anti-drug grants among budget casualties

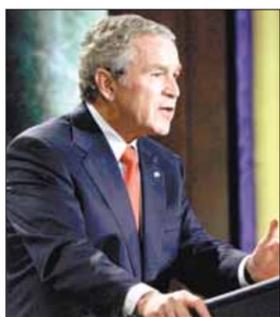
Congress balked last time Bush proposed cuts

By Andrew Taylor
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON

Grants for safe and drug-free schools, vocational education and reading programs for jailed young people are among 141 federal programs President Bush wants to eliminate or cut significantly.

Bush has proposed axing most of them before, only to see Congress save them. The Office of



AP PHOTO
President Bush speaks at the National Guard Memorial Building in Washington on Thursday.

Management and Budget released the new list Thursday.

Many of the programs proposed

for elimination have an emotional pull, like one providing \$107 million for food for the elderly poor.

Others are pretty arcane, like one giving the Postal Service \$29 million to pay it back for the generous subsidies it once provided to nonprofit mailers.

And how many Americans know there is a \$9 million "Exchanges With Historic Whaling and Trading Partners" program, which gives money to museums, aquariums and heritage centers in Alaska, Hawaii and Massachusetts?

Killing or cutting these and scores more would save taxpayers almost \$15 billion, the White House estimates.

In issuing the list, Bush wants to build upon the success he had last year in killing or cutting 89 programs saving \$6.5 billion. He's

also hoping to take advantage of efforts on Capitol Hill to rein in lawmakers' abuse of special projects wanted by individual lawmakers.

But most of this year's proposed cuts were rejected by lawmakers last year and likely will be again. Of 91 programs slated to be killed altogether, to save \$7.3 billion, only about one in six are new proposals.

The programs slated for elimination are congressional favorites funded through annual appropriations bills. They include \$3.5 billion from the Department of Education, including grants for safe and drug free schools and vocational education grants.

Another 50 programs are slated for large cuts but not outright elimination, for savings of \$7.4 billion. They include \$394 million

from Amtrak subsidies, \$694 million from Department of Homeland Security grants and training programs and an almost 25 percent cut from construction funding for Indian Schools.

The Office of Management and Budget said the programs on its ambitious list are those "not getting results or not fulfilling essential priorities."

By its count, the White House succeeded in killing or weeding funds from 89 out of 154 programs proposed for cuts.

Congress reacted with a shrug to the White House document.

"Oldies but goodies," quipped House Appropriations Committee spokesman John Scofield, who said "it's going to be a very lean year and everything is on the table."



AP PHOTO
Gov. Mitch Daniels, seen at the Statehouse in Indianapolis on Jan. 31, faces possible changes to his highway plan by the Senate.

Senate wary of toll-road proposal

By Mike Smith
The Associated Press

INDIANAPOLIS

A top state senator said Thursday he is likely to seek changes in Gov. Mitch Daniels' highway plan, including the removal of some provisions that helped it win narrow passage in the House.

The bill, which would allow Daniels to lease the Indiana Toll Road to a private, Australian-Spanish consortium for 75 years in exchange for a \$3.85 billion upfront payment, passed the Republican-controlled House on a 52-47 party-line vote. If the Senate makes any changes to the legislation, it would have to be reconsidered by the House and need at least 51 votes to pass.

Still, Senate Appropriations Chairman Robert Meeks, R-La-Grange, said he would remove a provision that would freeze toll rates at their current level for 10 years for residents of the seven counties in northern Indiana through which the toll road passes. House Republicans added the freeze to appease members whose districts include the toll road.

But Meeks told reporters he would strike it because it might violate the interstate commerce clause of the U.S. Constitution by treating out-of-state motorists differently than those from Indiana.

Meeks, speaking after his committee's initial meeting on the bill, said he might remove a provision that would steer \$100 million to a new regional authority to spend on economic development projects in three northeastern Indiana counties.

Meeks plans at least two more committee meetings before the panel votes on whether to send the bill to the full Senate.

Fund would aid military families

By Deanna Martin
The Associated Press

INDIANAPOLIS

When a member of the military leaves for war, relatives at home can struggle financially if the soldier's pay is less than what he or she was making in civilian life.

The transition can be especially tough for reservists or members of the National Guard who are called to duty with relatively short notice, said Joe Ryan, with the Military Officers Association of America.

A House committee unanimously advanced a bill Thursday that would create a fund to help families of those called to duty since Sept. 11, by providing money for necessities, including housing, food, medical bills or car payments.

Sen. Mike Delfino, a Republican from Carmel who is a captain in the Army Reserves said it's important to help families as their loved ones serve the country.

Lawmakers haven't yet decided how to fund the program.

The L.A. terror plot

President: U.S. intelligence helped stop 2002 skyscraper attack

By Deb Riechmann
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON

Under fire for eavesdropping on Americans, President Bush said Thursday that spy work stretching from the United States to Asia helped thwart terrorists plotting to use shoe bombs to hijack an airliner and crash it into the tallest skyscraper on the West Coast.

"It took the combined efforts of several countries to break up this plot," Bush said. "By working together we stopped a catastrophic attack on our homeland."

Some information about the foiled attack was disclosed last year, but Bush offered more details to highlight international cooperation in fighting terrorists. He did not say whether information about the West Coast plot was collected by his administration's program to monitor — without court warrants — some calls and e-mails between people overseas and in the United States when links to terrorism are suspected.

The president's monthlong campaign to convince Americans the eavesdropping program is essential to the war on terrorism appears to be making an impact.

In a new AP-Ipsos poll, 48 percent now support wiretapping without a warrant in cases of suspected communications with terrorists, up from 42 percent last month. Half say the administration should have to get a warrant, down from 56 percent. Men in particular have come around to Bush's view over the last month, the poll suggested.

In his speech, at the National Guard Memorial Building, Bush said Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, the reputed mastermind of the Sept. 11 attacks, began planning the West Coast operation in October 2001. One of Mohammed's key planners was a man known as Hambali, the alleged operations chief of the terrorist group Jemaah Islamiyah, which is affiliated with al-Qaida.

"Rather than use Arab hijackers as he had on Sept. 11, Khalid Sheikh Mohammed sought out young men from Southeast Asia, whom he believed would not arouse as much suspicion," Bush said.

As the plot was described, the hijackers were to use shoe bombs to blow open the cockpit door of a commercial jetliner, take control of the plane and crash it into the Library Tower in Los Angeles, a 73-story building since renamed the US Bank Tower.

The president said the plot was derailed when a Southeast Asian nation arrested a key al-Qaida operative. Bush did not name the country or the operative.



AP PHOTO
President Bush said on Thursday that the United States helped stop a 2002 terrorist attack on the U.S. Bank Tower in downtown Los Angeles. Bush said that terrorist planned to fly a commercial airplane into the Los Angeles skyscraper in 2002.

OTHER NEWS

Senate Republican holdouts reached an agreement Thursday with the White House on changes in the Patriot Act designed to clear the way for passage of anti-terror legislation stalled in a dispute over civil liberties.

Sen. John Sununu, R-N.H. said the changes would better protect civil liberties even as we give law enforcement important tools to conduct terrorism investigation."

Frances Fragos Townsend, assistant to the president for homeland security and counterterrorism, said Mohammed, working with Hambali in Asia, recruited four members of the terrorist cell and trained

its leader in how to use shoe bombs.

Townsend said all four members of the cell have been apprehended. She declined to disclose their names or say where they were being held. She also would not identify the two South Asia and two Southeast Asian nations that helped foil the attack.

In Los Angeles, Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa complained he first learned of Bush's remarks while watching TV.

"I'm amazed that the president would make this on national TV and not inform us of these details through the appropriate channels," said the mayor, a Democrat.

Bush press secretary Scott McClellan said that the White House did reach out before the speech to officials in California and that there was appreciation for the notification.

American hostage pleads for help, says time is short

By Qassim Abdulzahra
The Associated Press

BAGHDAD, Iraq

Kidnapped American journalist Jill Carroll appeared in a video aired Thursday on a private Kuwaiti TV station, appealing in a calm, composed voice for her supporters to do whatever it takes to win her release as quickly as possible.

Carroll, wearing traditional Arab attire, said the date was Feb. 2, nearly a month after she was seized in Baghdad by armed men who killed her Iraqi translator.

The 28-year-old freelance reporter for The Christian Science Monitor said she had sent one letter and was sending another to "prove I am with the mujahedeen."

"I sent you a letter written by my hand, but you wanted more evidence," she said. "I am here. I am fine. Please just do whatever they want, give them whatever they want as quickly as possible. There is very short time. Please do it fast. That's all."

The 22-second video was carried by Al Rai TV, a private Kuwaiti channel, and included audio.

The tape was delivered earlier Thursday to Al Rai's Baghdad office and was aired in its entirety, Hani al-Srougi, an editor at the station's headquarters in Kuwait said. It included a letter written by Carroll.

The newscaster said on the air that the station would hand the letter over to authorities, but would not disclose the letter's content.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

P.O. Box 699
Franklin, IN 46131
letters@thejournalnet.com

MANAGEMENT TEAM

Publisher
Jeffrey W. Owen 736-2744
jowen@thejournalnet.com

Editor

Scarlett Syse 736-2749
syse@thejournalnet.com

Assistant managing editor

Michele Holtkamp-Frye 736-2774
mholtkamp@thejournalnet.com

Assistant managing editor

Jennifer L. Gaskin 736-2721
jgaskin@thejournalnet.com

Circulation director

Mike Warren 736-2711
mwarren@thejournalnet.com

Delivery manager

Bruce Powell 736-2702
bpowell@thejournalnet.com

Advertising director

Christina Cosner 736-2750
ccosner@thejournalnet.com

Administrative manager

Linda Wirey 736-2751
lwirey@thejournalnet.com

Information technology manager

Kathy McDermott 736-2782
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