

Letter from the Director

Kate Cell

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You've probably already noticed some changes in this edition of the newsletter. Color has returned; new processes make it only slightly more expensive and an attractive publication is more likely to catch the over-worked eyes of policy-makers. It's thinner. We plan to publish three newsletters in 2004 and as a result each will be a little shorter. And this time, we're focusing on aspects of a single issue: One year after the invasion of Iraq, what do we do now?

These changes are part of our ongoing efforts to become a clearer and more effective voice in critical debates on international security, economic well-being and peace. I am very proud of ECAAR's activities over the last few years: to name a few, our oft-cited study on ballistic missile defense; our new publication, *The ECAAR Review*; our founding membership in the Security Policy Working Group (see www.funder.org/spwg/); conferences in Russia and South Africa (and one organized for Australia, see <http://www.ecosoc.org.au/conferences.html>).

But recently I explained our mission to someone who stopped by our table at the Eastern Economic Association's annual conference, and he asked, "So your goal is to cut US military expenditure? How's that working out so far?" The US spends \$150 billion a year more on defense than three years ago, when I became director at ECAAR (though I am happy to cede all credit to George Bush, with whose tenure mine merely coincides). US military expenditure is now more than the rest of the world's put together. This has serious opportunity costs, not only for social welfare as we have traditionally argued, but for international security itself.

Are there hopeful signs of change? Absolutely. The Bush military budget has been widely derided for its dishonesty in leaving out costs, if not predictable at least estimable, for Iraq and Afghanistan. A new Gallup poll indicates that a growing percentage of the US public feel that military spending is too high. Members of Congress on both sides of the aisle are concerned about sharply rising budget deficits and the long-term fiscal outlook. And it seems likely that in this election year we will have a vigorous debate about the role of the US, and the US economy, in maintaining global stability and peace. ECAAR and its members are speaking out and being heard in this debate. I urge ECAAR members to write, write, write: to your political representatives, to your local paper, to your colleagues, students and friends.

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