

Congress cuts Reagan's SDI requests by a third; other research budgets grow moderately

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The 1987 federal budget passed by Congress in mid-October provides moderate growth for most research programs and increases the Strategic Defense Initiative funds by 14 percent.

President Reagan had asked for a much larger increase in SDI funds — 71 percent — but Congress slashed his request by 32.8 percent. The SDI budget grew from \$2.8 billion to \$3.2 billion.

Congress also restricted how Defense Department funds could be spent on

SDI research. The military appropriations law, contained in Joint Resolution 738, restricts other research budgets so their funds could not be applied to SDI efforts. Limits include barring funds transfer to SDI from the \$200,000 Conventional Defense Initiatives program and requiring that SDI's \$15 million research on free-electron lasers be confined to medical and material science applications.

Congress also diverted \$10 million originally earmarked for SDI to the

National Aerospace Plane Program, which is an attempt to develop aircraft that launch from commercial airports into suborbital trajectories, letting them cross the globe in a few hours.

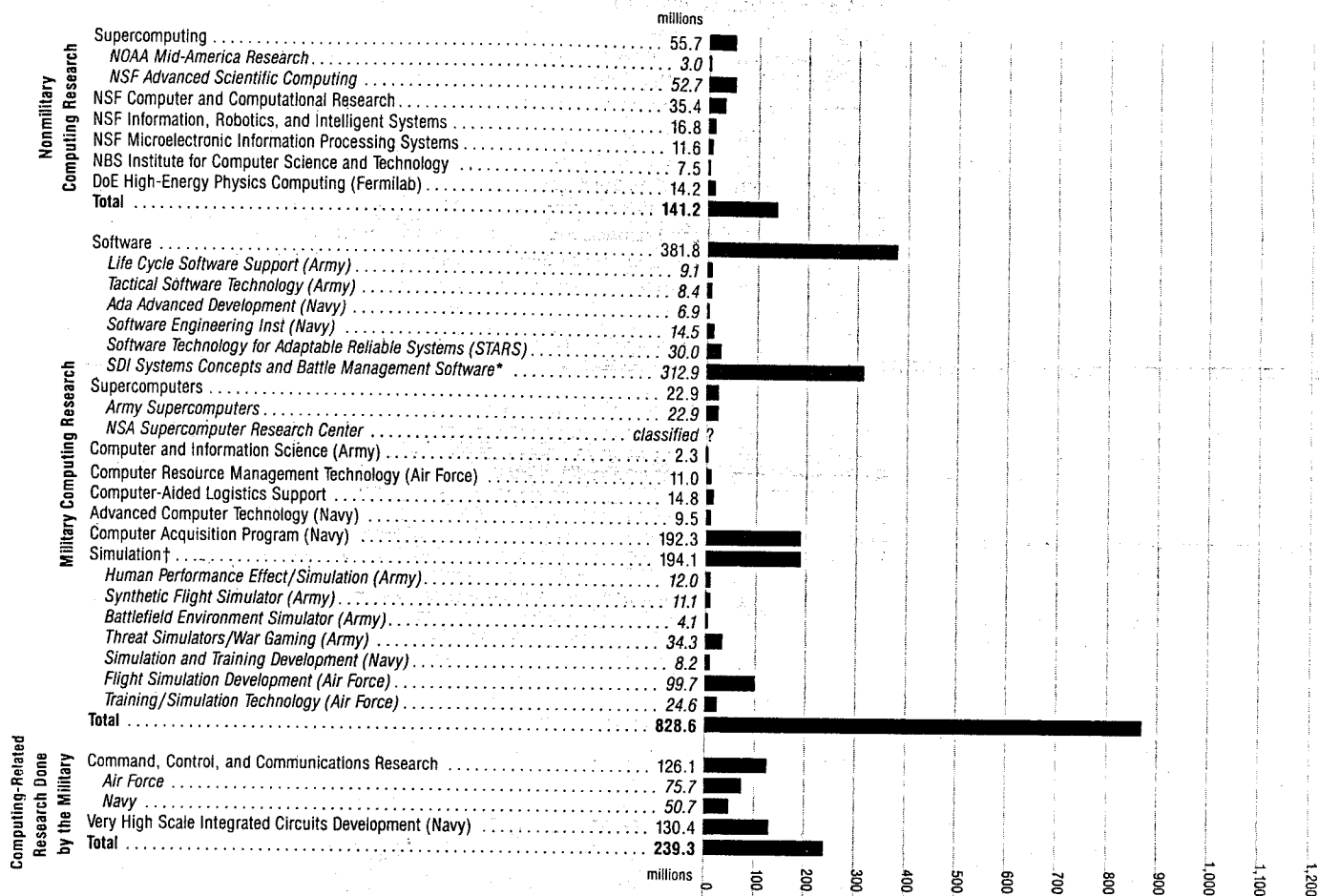
The Defense Department, which manages the SDI program, has the authority to decide how the cuts should be implemented. If the cuts are applied evenly, SDI software funds will rise 29 percent to \$312.9 million, down from the requested \$462.2 million but up from 1986's \$242 million.

Other research areas did not get the large percentage increases that SDI did. Instead, most received four- to seven-percent growth. The National Science Foundation's computer research budget increased about eight percent, said Thomas Keenan, director of the NSF's software systems science office. "We're doing a lot better than some people are doing." Exact increases are hard to measure because the NSF recently reorganized the four divisions in its computer research efforts, he said.

While the National Aeronautics and Space Administration computer-research budgets were not available, NASA's overall budget saw moderate increases — plus a \$2.1 billion allocation to replace the destroyed space shuttle *Challenger*. The Energy Department's general science and research program received \$708 million, a 5.7-percent increase. The National Bureau of Standards budget rose 6.1 percent to \$35.8 billion. The Defense Department's research funds increased 6.5 percent to \$35.8 billion. (The table at right details computer-related outlays.)

The moderate growth was welcome, especially when compared to the four- to eight-percent cuts in 1986 required by the Gramm-Rudman budget balancing law. That law was partially invalidated by the Supreme Court, but Congress and Reagan have vowed to follow its deficit guidelines nonetheless. Despite such avowals, deficit projections for 1987 range from \$163 billion to \$170 billion. Gramm-Rudman's 1987 ceiling is \$144 billion. The total federal budget is \$994.7 billion.

1987 Federal Budget for Computer Research.



*Congress cut SDI's total budget by 32.8 percent but left SDI the choice of what to cut. The figure assumes SDI will cut all programs evenly. (The original SDI software request was \$462.2 million.)
 †Simulation includes research, prototyping, and testing.

Budget Selections from the Big Picture.

