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Story by KEVIN HOWE, Monterey Herald Staff Writer

Sept. 28, 2006 - More than $20 million has been allocated in the House of Representatives defense appropriations bill passed Wednesday for programs at the Naval Postgraduate School and Defense Language Institute in Monterey.

The $447.6 billion spending bill contains $3 million for research that would apply air bag technology to military vehicles to protect crews from improvised explosive devices, said Rep. Sam Farr, D-Carmel, a member of the House Appropriations Committee.

The bill, which has been sent to the Senate, contains "quite a nice, unexpected bunch of surprises," said NPS Provost Leonard Ferrari.

These include $1.9 million for a doctoral program in homeland defense, the first in the nation, which will be offered by the Navy school in conjunction with the University of Colorado, Ferrari said.

"We have had a homeland security and defense program at NPS for several years," he said. "This will allow us to get into some of the science and technology areas," applying military technology to homeland security.

The big-ticket item in the appropriations bill for the Navy school is $8 million for modernizing its library and laboratories.

"That's the stuff that changes rapidly," Ferrari said. "It makes sure our students are getting as modern and up-to-date an education as possible. Those are hard funds to find, usually."

The defense spending bill allocates $3.25 million to the school's Center for Defense Technology and Education for the Military Services to fund programs in its Center for Stabilization and Reconstruction Studies and its regional security education program. Ferrari said the program includes participation by members of nongovernment organizations as well as the military.

Other programs include $1 million each for the school's field experiment program for special operations, a scholarship program to recruit students for the science and engineering programs, and development of the Coalition and Operating Area Surveillance and Targeting System in support of shipping and naval operations, particularly in Asia and the Pacific.

DLI will receive $4.1 million in funding, including:

• $1.85 million for language laboratory modernization;

• $1.25 million for a virtual convey operations trainer that will allow DLI training to respond to rocket, small-arms, explosives and mortar attacks on convoys, using a computerized simulator;

• and $1 million to recruit instructors and convert courses to a distance format for the global studies program, which combines foreign language training with foreign area studies.