

[http://www.sdcitybeat.com/sandiego/blog-333-rep-hunter-introduces-\\$19m-in-defense-projects.html](http://www.sdcitybeat.com/sandiego/blog-333-rep-hunter-introduces-$19m-in-defense-projects.html)

Rep. Hunter introduces \$19m in defense projects

Another \$3m marked by Rep. Davis at UCSD's request

By [Dave Maass](#)



Rep. Duncan Hunter introduces \$19 million in earmarks - Credit: hunter.house.gov
During subcommittee hearings on the House Armed Services Committee's defense-authorization bill last week, Rep. Duncan D. Hunter, R-El Cajon, introduced \$19 million in

"funding initiatives" for specialized defense projects.

Hunter, an Iraq war veteran, succeeded his father in East County's 52nd congressional district in 2008. His father, Duncan L. Hunter, chaired the Armed Services Committee from 2002 to 2006 and was well known for earmarking projects for local defense contractors. Last year, Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington (CREW), a progressive watchdog group*, [issued](#) the junior Hunter special recognition for following in his father's porky tradition.

The descriptions of the "funding initiatives" (the term Hunter uses) introduced during subcommittee "markup" [hearings](#) are quite vague, in part, because House Republicans have instituted a so-called moratorium on earmarks. Although members of Congress can't direct money to specific contractors, they are still able to set aside funding for specific projects and technologies suited to a particular contractor, who then can win it during a competitive bidding phase.

In other words, members of Congress can no longer hand money to specific contractors, but they can throw it in their direction. Contractors still lobby and donate campaign money to get these opportunities created and, if possible, tailored to their advantage.

Think of them like fuzzy earmarks. Pork potential. Here are Hunter's:

\$5 million for development of helicopter "brownout" situational awareness tools (Army)

Note: Hunter introduced a similarly [described earmark](#) in Fiscal Year 2010, which was set to benefit TREX Enterprises, a company founded by his uncle and one of the primary reasons CREW added him to the "[Pork Parade](#)."

\$2 million for development of innovative aircraft deoxygenation systems (Air Force)

\$7 million for Common Data Link Waveform Improvements (Army)

\$5 million for Lightweight Airborne Recovery Systems (Air Force)

We sent Hunter's office a list of questions including: What are these for? Why are they necessary? Who asked for them? Did the Congressman meet or speak with any lobbyist about the appropriation?

His office did not answer these questions and, instead, offered this emailed statement: The only thing worth noting is that each funding initiative is subject to a competitive bid process put in place by the Department of Defense. It's up to the Defense Department to pick the contractor—not Congress. So I would recommend that you contact the Department about its ideas in this area. Congress simply identifies the broader funding priority as it creates the annual defense bill.

For Fiscal Year 2010, Hunter posted on his website a list of his "[funding initiatives](#)" with detailed descriptions, including the contractor set to benefit. So what changed? According to Hunter's Press Secretary Joe Kasper:

That was in calendar year 2009, before House Republicans put the moratorium [on earmarks] in place. The process is different now. DOD will have a competitive bidding system open to any entity capable and eligible to compete. In the case of brownout, new technology has been pursued for years through multiple entities. Its still a priority but now up to DOD to develop its own process and identify the best innovators.

Rep. Susan Davis, D-San Diego, who also sits on the House Armed Services Committee, introduced one defense authorization, and is a lot more direct about its origin:

\$3 million for modeling and simulation technologies for testing of blast structures

Davis spokesperson Aaron Hunter provided this back story via email:

UCSD made the request. The request that Susan made before the committee was to add funding - in this case \$3 million - that DOD would then use to competitively award a contract, for which UCSD could apply. UCSD has a blast simulator that helps evaluate structures for protection of people and property. For example, it shows how a certain architectural structure is going to respond to an explosion with the intent being to understand and mitigate the damage caused by a car bomb from the outside or a suicide bomber from inside the structure. And that is just part of the military applications. The simulator is also used for civilian purposes, too.

Even if the pork is only a possibility, it's still got that unmistakable aroma.