

The proposed Department of Defense budget authority for fiscal year (FY) 2010 is \$534 billion--\$686 billion after factoring in the costs for redeploying units from Iraq and increasing troop levels in Afghanistan. Further, the budget blueprint drastically reduces defense spending to just 3 percent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 2019, far below the current spending levels of approximately 4 percent.

What is essentially a flat budget topline for the military in 2010, however, is really a declining defense budget: The costs of doing everything in the military--from paying people to buying new equipment--greatly outpaces inflation every year.

Senator James Inhofe (R-OK) and Representative Trent Franks (R-AZ) have introduced legislation--Senate Joint Resolution 10 (S.J.Res. 10) and House Joint Resolution 23 (H.J.Res. 23)--that would allocate the core defense budget toward maintaining today's force structure with a special emphasis on developing and deploying the next generation of weapons and equipment that U.S. forces will need to fight effectively in the future.

Congress should support a final budget resolution that increases defense by \$27 billion in 2010 in order to meet the 4 percent benchmark identified as the minimum funding level necessary to train and equip America's military as advocated by Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Admiral Michael Mullen.

Inadequate defense budget proposal for 2010

Reform is the buzzword of the day, but it is becoming overused and undervalued while falsely raising expectations for potential savings in the FY 2010 defense budget. Worse, "reform" is becoming a euphemism for defense budget "cuts" to major weapons systems.

As a result of the 2010 defense budget shortfall, the White House has directed the Pentagon to reduce the defense modernization accounts by up to \$5 billion. Ongoing Pentagon budget deliberation reports indicate that Defense Secretary Robert Gates is considering terminating production of the F-22 Raptor, cancelling the Air Force's next-generation bomber, slashing missile defense programs, eliminating an entire aircraft carrier and carrier wing, and delaying or cancelling many vehicles in the Army's Future Combat Systems. And that is only this year's budget.

Without a sound fiscal policy or National Security Strategy, cutting the defense budget when nearly all domestic programs are increasing in size is both arbitrary and unwise. If the defense budget ultimately is reduced this year or even next, the logical conclusion will remain that the defense budget cuts are based on the need to find a billpayer for domestic priorities and programs.

Smarter defense spending

Unanimous among Washington policymakers and defense officials is the notion that the U.S. military is the best-trained and best-led in the world. What assessments of America's military often overlook, however, is that the bulk of platforms and weapons systems that equip today's forces are decades old and in need of replacement. Due to the funding decisions of the last 15 years, the current U.S. military force is too small and too old relative to the requirements of the National Military Strategy. Without at least maintaining today's levels of procurement spending, the U.S. will be unable to modernize its forces to the degree necessary to preserve its security within the necessary margin of safety.

Because longer-term economic growth is a priority for a robust defense budget, smarter defense spending is needed in Washington to maintain the basic military building blocks that form the foundation of strategic planning. The federal government should operate within an environment of finite resources, a requirement to which the defense budget is not immune. There is no blank check that would allow defense officials to avoid prioritizing budget needs. As responsible stewards of taxpayer dollars, senior defense officials and Members of Congress must acknowledge that reforming the weapons acquisition process and military pay system are required. However, as Senator Lindsey Graham (R-SC) highlighted in a conference call this week, any potential savings realized as a result of procurement reform should be reinvested within the defense budget.

Maintaining military primacy

Current modernization plans are intended to replace equipment and platforms that in many cases have exceeded their projected operational lives. Robust investment in new, next-generation technology is not about letting defense contractors profit but rather what ultimately:

- * Avoids conflict by deterring potential adversaries; and
- * Saves lives on the battlefield with better armor, air superiority, secure sea lines of communication, and every other capability that allows the men and women in uniform to prevail.

Ironically, while many critics of the defense budget rush to cite the need for elimination of unnecessary "Cold War relics" or systems, it is precisely these systems that maintain U.S. military primacy. What is military primacy? There has not been a single soldier or Marine who lost his life in combat due to a threat from the air in over 56 years, for example. This is due to one fact: air superiority. U.S. air dominance exists today thanks to a force structure that combines both legacy and fifth-generation fighter aircraft. As the legacy aircraft retire at ever increasing rates, however, maintaining that superiority is not guaranteed. Sufficient amounts of fifth-generation aircraft must be purchased to keep this tremendous capability and technological edge for the next four decades.

Other core American military capabilities that could be lost unless they are proactively maintained--regardless of the political party in power--include protecting and defending the U.S.

and its allies against attack, maritime control, space control, counterterrorism, counterinsurgency, the ability to seize and control territory against organized ground forces, projecting power to distant regions, and information dominance throughout cyberspace.

Amend the pending budget resolution

Unfortunately, the Obama Administration's budget blueprint has the defense budget declining significantly by 2019 to a mere 3 percent of GDP. Meanwhile, the President projects that same year the U.S. will be spending 12 percent of GDP paying down interest on the national debt. The military cannot afford a "modernization depression"--yet that is exactly what is coming. Congress should amend the pending budget resolution to add \$27 billion to the defense budget in 2010 to adequately meet the military's basic requirements.

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