



Will Cuts Cripple Military or Help in Broader Mission?

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CAPITOL HILL -- Washington has a spending problem, but now that spending problem has the White House eyeing the military for massive cuts.

Many critics worry those cuts could seriously hurt America's national defense.

For decades, no other country could rival the supremacy of America's armed forces -- not its people, weapons, technology or equipment.

But some military analysts believe President Obama and his chief military advisers are on a course to gut America's defense, while other countries, like China and Russia, ramp up their next-generation military arsenals.

"Secretary Panetta's magic bullet -- that he can cut away all these dollars and capabilities from the U.S. military and keep it as strong as it is today -- are really just words on a memo flying around the Pentagon," said Mackenzie Eaglen, a Research Fellow for national security at the [American Enterprise Institute](#), a conservative think-tank in Washington, D.C. Eaglen believes the president's proposed \$525 billion defense budget will weaken the military by cutting 100,000 active duty troops and spending less on the weapons and technology they use.

More Defense Cuts Coming

But she says that's not the worst of it. Another wave of across-the-board cuts are scheduled to kick in next January.

"This possibility of an additional half trillion in defense cuts, coming on the first half trillion's part of the debt ceiling deal would truly set the military

back into where basically we become a regional power. We lose our global superpower status as a military," Eaglen explained.

Those concerns are echoed by defense hawks on Capitol Hill, saying it will put America and allies at risk.

Many are trying to find ways to avoid the cuts, and that includes some of the same lawmakers who voted for them as part of the debt ceiling deal.

Still, others disagree with the doomsday predictions about America's declining military might.

"The U.S. military will remain, by any objective standard, the most dominant military -- relative to any comparable combination of possible adversaries," said Christopher Preble, the vice president for defense and foreign policy studies at the [Cato Institute](#).

Preble says the cuts are needed to curb government spending and to modernize military strategy.

He says the president's proposed budget mirrors how much the U.S. spent during the Cold War buildup under President Reagan. Preble believes it's time to rethink deployments and missions overseas and here at home.

"People become accustomed to having a base in their district or building ships or building planes. And so you build up a whole set of political constituencies that want to keep that ball rolling," he explained.

The Affects

And what about the people who work in the military? How will the cuts affect them?

As the wife of a retired army officer, Joyce Raezer, executive director of the [National Military Family Association](#), knows about the sacrifices military families make and that's why she fights to support their well-being.

Raezer feared military families would have to sacrifice more than their share in the president's 2013 budget, but she was relieved to learn the Pentagon's chopping block spared military family programs.

"The fact that family programs stayed the same -- to us, in a very cynical way, we're going to look at that as good news" she said.

Even though family programs are safe for now, President Obama promised to veto any attempt to undo next year's automatic cuts unless Congress can find the savings elsewhere.

But even now as lawmakers review the budget, many are planning counterproposals to fund the military beyond the president's request, especially with about 90,000 troops still in Afghanistan.

Raezer hopes Washington will continue supporting the military with the tools it needs on the battlefield and the homefront to address the long-term effects of war.