



Trump's defense plan draws response

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US President Donald Trump made his first speech to the joint session of Congress on Tuesday night, laying out his "optimistic" vision for a divided nation.

Trump talked about his goal of building the US economy and infrastructure, beefing up the military, revamping immigration policy and tax code, and repealing and replacing Obamacare.

"The time for small thinking is over. The time for trivial fights is behind us," Trump said in a speech he described as of "unity and strength" and a message "deeply delivered from my heart."

China was mentioned once in Trump's speech when he blamed NAFTA for the loss of a quarter of US manufacturing jobs, adding that "we've lost 60,000 factories since China joined the World Trade Organization in 2001".

China has long described the two-way trade between China and the US as mutually beneficial. China also has been a major engine for global growth in recent decades.

Trump asked Congress for a defense budget increase. "I am sending Congress a budget that rebuilds the military, eliminates the defense sequester, and calls for one of the largest increases in national defense spending in American history," he told lawmakers.

The budget plan Trump released on Monday called for a \$54 billion increase in military spending.

The increase will be paid for by cutting budgets at the State Department, USAID and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The State Department has a budget of \$50 billion during the current fiscal year, a little more than 1 percent of the federal budget.

Senate Lindsey Graham, a Republican from South Carolina, on Tuesday told NBC that Trump's budget is "a disaster" and "dead on arrival".

The US now spends more on its military than the next seven countries combined.

Ted Carpenter, a senior fellow of defense and foreign policy studies at Cato Institute, described Trump's defense spending increase as "entirely unwarranted".

"The proposed strengthening of what is already by far the world's most powerful military sends a hostile message to both Russia and China, especially in light of existing tensions over such issues as the South China Sea and Ukraine," Carpenter told China Daily on Tuesday.

"It also creates an incentive for both countries to seek large increases in their own military spending. Such a ruinous contest will create needless tensions and endanger world peace. The US military does not need more money, it needs to do less - a lot less - around the world."

"It's important for this White House to understand that you cannot achieve national security and safety by just investing in a big pile of guns," said Melanie Hart, a senior fellow and director of China policy at the Center for American Progress.