



## US House passes \$700 billion annual defense bill

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The defense budget as proposed by the House bill that passed Friday violates the 2011 Budget Control Act spending caps, which must be lifted or altered to give the military the level of funding the House is seeking.

"Congress should grant our military the authority to eliminate waste, and ensure that vital defense resources flow to where they are most needed", the CATO Institute argued in an open letter published last month.

The Republican-led House decisively approved a defense policy bill on Friday that declares climate change a national security threat, demands rigorous oversight of the Pentagon's cyber operations and rejects the Trump administration's bid to close military bases.

House Armed Services Chairman Mac Thornberry acknowledged the opposition in the Pentagon, but argued major reforms in the past often meet resistance from military leaders.

The Senate will vote on its version of the NDAA later this year, and the two versions must be reconciled before the measure can be sent to the White House for Trump to sign into law or veto.

Secretary of Defense James Mattis has argued that Congress must pass a budget instead of continuing to rely on continuing resolutions.

Ignoring the recommendations of the Pentagon, and budget proposals by Presidents of both parties, the Congress is again poised to approve legislation this year that blocks any effort by the Department of Defense to get rid of excess military installations, blocking efforts that the Army, Navy and Air Force say would save them billions of dollars in the future. Thornberry, a Texas Republican, has described the measure as a way to promote greater transparency and accountability for one of the most classified elements of the American arsenal.

The bill includes more funding for joint training exercises with USA allies in the Pacific, in order to address the North Korean nuclear threat, said officials.

It also defeated a proposed Republican amendment that would have prevented the Pentagon from implementing climate-change and green energy policies.

In total, the bill authorizes spending \$695.9 billion in national defense spending for both domestic and overseas. But with the additional funding, the measure authorized an additional 17 F-35 fighters, eight F/A-18 Super Hornets and five more new ships than the Trump budget sought.

A almost \$30 billion increase is targeted at improving the military's readiness for combat in key areas that lawmakers say Trump neglected.