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Republicans Must Think the Pentagon is Immune From Government Waste and Inefficiency

By Richard A. Viguerie | 11/22/11

Today, U.S. defense spending stands at \$513 billion, not including the cost of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. The failure of the Super Committee to develop a bipartisan deficit reduction bill means that, beginning in 2013, defense spending is slated to be reduced by around \$600 billion dollars over ten years. That's an average of \$60 billion a year over the next decade.

Arizona Senator Jon Kyl, a notorious earmarker, hadn't even let the ink dry on the minutes of the first Super Committee meeting before he said he would quit the committee if it cut defense spending.

Likewise, Congressman Buck McKeon, Chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, had this reaction to the Super Committee's failure to develop a bipartisan deficit reduction plan, "...America's military is facing cuts that will devastate the armed forces and force us to break faith with service members," said McKeon in a press release. "I do not accept that outcome."

But the real problem is not the purported defense cuts -- because there are none. The real problem is that this talk of devastating defense cuts is all bluster and lies.

Under both the Obama budget and the House Republican budget, crafted by Congressman Paul Ryan, defense spending is projected to grow each year. And as Christopher Preble of CATO pointed out -- of the \$178 billion in defense cuts the Obama administration already plans, only \$78 billion, if they ever materialize, is slated for deficit reduction. The remaining \$100 billion are to be "reinvested" elsewhere in the Pentagon.

So if we follow the numbers used by Ryan (and former Defense Secretary Robert Gates) and \$78 billion actually goes toward deficit reduction over the next five years -- that's a reduction of approximately 2.6 percent of the Pentagon's base budget (excluding the wars) over that same period. Even with the projected sequestration, defense spending is flat or increases every year -- it never goes down.

Kyl and McKeon need to get serious. The Pentagon's base budget has nearly doubled during the past decade, and according to the Ryan budget (and the Obama administration's projections), the U.S. government will spend nearly \$6.5 trillion on the military over the next ten years. It is hard to believe that tucked in among the green energy projects, museums and other non-shooting activities the Pentagon funds, there isn't one thing that can't be cut.

Kyl and McKeon are neither honest nor serious if they cannot see the massive waste and inefficiency in the Pentagon. Defense is clearly an enumerated power of the federal government and as such it should command a higher priority and a greater call on the national purse than many of the other expenditures Congress approves every year -- but that doesn't mean the Pentagon should be immune from the same scrutiny we should give every taxpayer expenditure.