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Tim Pawlenty's DC Hosts Irked With Pawlenty's DC Appearance

Evan McMorris-Santoro | May 26, 2011, 8:30AM

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Tim Pawlenty

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"There is a difference between military spending and defense spending," Crane told Ward. "The constitution [sic] provides for a military to defend the U.S -- not to democratize the world. One would hope that presidential candidates would consider America's commitments overseas very seriously before endorsing those commitments."

This is a pretty common libertarian view, best exemplified by the screaming fans of Rep. Ron Paul (R-TX), who cheer at Republican events when Paul lets loose with his trademark push for isolationism. It's not so common in the mainstream GOP.

But, as Ward points out, defense spending cuts (in theory anyway) are fairly well accepted among Republicans as part of any real fiscal belt-tightening. Pawlenty made it clear in his appearance that he's willing to ruffle feathers among that GOP set, too.

"I'm not one who's going to stand before you and tell you that we should cut the defense budget," he said Wednesday.

Cato's position is that in balance, Pawlenty's plan to slash the federal workforce and his promise to take on entitlements are "more fundamentally important" than his view that America should remain the world's policeman (as Paul would put it.) It remains to be seen if the rest of the Republican base will consider Pawlenty the best budget cutter in the field now that he's taken the defense budget off the table.

On Wednesday the libertarian Cato Institute hosted former Minnesota governor and presidential candidate Tim Pawlenty to talk about his approach to government spending -- or, more accurately, his promise to cut government spending as much as he can. Pawlenty offered up most of what Cato folks wanted to hear: everything's on the table when it comes to balancing the federal budget, he said, except raising taxes and cutting the defense budget.

That last thing caused Pawlenty's hosts a little agita. *Huffington Post's* Jon Ward reports that the libertarians were unimpressed with his promise to leave the defense budget where it is.

After his prepared remarks, Pawlenty was asked by member of the audience if he would examine drawing down some of the thousands of American forces stationed overseas in the name of reducing spending. Pawlenty said unequivocally that he would not, save for continuing the troop drawdowns in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Ward reports that Cato president Ed Crane -- who introduced Pawlenty at the event -- was less than thrilled by Pawlenty's view on projecting American power overseas.

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	Barack Obama Job Approval	51.0% Approve	44.4% Disapprove	+6.6 Spread
	Congressional Generic Ballot	42.0% DEM	41.3% GOP	+0.7 Spread D

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"...because I'm never, ever going to be in an office that gives me any control over the US military. EVER. So such an examination would be pointless. Next question?"

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