

## **No Death By A Thousand Cuts By Any Means**

---

“...overgrown military establishments, which, under any form of government, are inauspicious to liberty, and which are to be regarded as particularly hostile to Republican Liberty.”

— George Washington, George Washington's Farewell Address

I long wondered throughout my military career why our nation has been adverse to maintaining long standing armies since its inception, but during most of my life our country has been quite wealthy and that rarely seemed to be a hindrance based on fiscal grounds.

Now with the last mode of Department of Defense (DOD) research, development, production and procurement it is much easier to see why this is considered an essential underpinning to our national defense strategy. Simply put, weapons systems are just too expensive in the modern era of corruption and cost overruns to even complete any whole cycles in the present mode of arming and equipping our armed services.

Common sense budgeting was in the past always the motivating determinate to demobilize our large sets of forces immediately upon completion of a large scale war or conflict. Nowadays, that no longer appears to be so. Now the ever expanding DOD budget appears to be a function of the procurement system in and of itself.

“In his {farewell} speech, Eisenhower warned about the growth of a 'military-industrial complex,' and the risks it could pose. 'The potential for the disastrous rise of misplaced power,' Ike said, 'exists and will persist.' His anxieties back then were prompted by the ten-fold expansion of the US military after two world wars, and by the development of a 'permanent arms industry of vast proportions". (Cornwell 2011)

(Cornwell 2011) “Year after year, the defence budget seems to rise – irrespective of whether the country is actually fighting major wars, regardless of the fact that the Soviet Union, the country's former global adversary, has ceased to be, and no matter which party controls the White House and Congress. One common thread however exists: the military-industrial complex, or perhaps (as Eisenhower himself described it in a draft of his speech that was later amended) the military-industrial-congressional complex.”

NBCs Tim Gregory, in trying to get R-money to utter more than a few scripted

syllables in a recent interview:

“MITT ROMNEY: Well, I want to maintain defense spending at the current level of the GDP. I don't want to keep bringing it down as the president's doing. This sequestration idea of the White House, which is cutting our defense, I think is an extraordinary miscalculation in the wrong direction.

DAVID GREGORY: Republican leaders agreed to that deal to the extend the debt ceiling.

MITT ROMNEY: And that's a big mistake. I thought it was a mistake on the part of the White House to propose it. I think it was a mistake for Republicans to go along with it.” (Legum 2012)

Note: Sequestration was not solely "an idea" of the current administration by any stretch of the imagination:

“Sequestration Procedures Under the 1985 Balanced Budget Act: Sequestration is a procedure under which automatic reductions are made in spending programs if specified budgetary goals are not met.” (Congressional Research 2001)

“Last summer, Congress passed the Budget Control Act (BCA), raising the federal debt ceiling and pledging to cut budget deficits by at least \$2.1 trillion from 2012 to 2021. Of that, cuts of \$900 billion were included in the BCA — with half from defense. Congress then created a “supercommittee” of 12 of its members to achieve the remaining \$1.2 trillion of deficit reduction through more spending cuts or tax increases.” (Samuelson 2012)

But the so-called supercommittee couldn't come to an agreement on anything and the do-nothing Congress, well you know.

"The 'National Security and Job Protection Act,' sponsored by Rep. Allen West (R-Fla.), was a new measure included on the House Majority Leader's legislative calendar on Friday. The bill says that the sequestration cuts to defense spending go too far and would harm national security, arguing that alternatives must be found. While the still-unnumbered bill could get the votes to pass the House, it's unlikely to go anywhere in the Democratic-controlled Senate. While both parties want to undo sequestration, the disagreement over taxes has prevented them from acting, and nothing is expected to move until after the election." (Herb 2012)

"(6) An analysis of the impact of the sequestration prepared for the Chairman of the House Armed Services Committee found that if left in place, sequestration would cut the military to its smallest size since before the Second World War, all while we are still a nation at war in Afghanistan, facing in-

20 creased threats from Iran and North Korea, unrest  
21 in the Middle East, and a rising China." (thehill.com 2012)

R-money and his Teapublican crew apparently need to attend another lecture by "Big Dog" Bill Clinton on arithmetic:

"They want to cut taxes for high- income Americans, even more than President Bush did. They want to get rid of those pesky financial regulations designed to prevent another crash and prohibit future bailouts. They want to actually increase defense spending over a decade \$2 trillion more than the Pentagon has requested without saying what they'll spend it on. And they want to make enormous cuts in the rest of the budget, especially programs that help the middle class and poor children." (Armbruster 2012)

After ending the war in Iraq, and winding down the war in Afghanistan, why would we feel the need to maintain a force capable of world war as Rep. West is concerned about ? That would not be consistent with our entire history regardless of ideology. Rep. West actually has professional credentials in this policy area, but to demand the maintenance of a DOD budget that has more than doubled since 2002 smacks of denying his instincts and pandering to the neocons surrounding R-money and his warmongering company. Be scared, be very scared.

We've seen what happens to honest statesmen such as Secretary Colin Powell, who was duped to fall on his sword by VP Cheney at the time, and any other members of the military-industrial-congressional complex:

"(...)n Admiral Fallon's public and private outspokenness on a variety of subjects, including his rejection of the notion that Iran posed a significant threat to the U.S., coupled with spirited denunciation of a pre-emptive U.S. attack on Iran when that thinking was de rigueur in the George W. Bush administration. Such defiance of the Washington consensus, especially in an area where precise correctness is required among neo-cons and other supporters of Israel, got Fallon promptly fired and dispatched to the wilderness by George W. Bush. (Cockburn, CDI 2011)

"The drivers of out-of-control federal spending are medical costs and the Pentagon budget. Leave aside health care for the moment and reflect on the fact that military spending has roughly doubled since 2002. Are we twice as safe? Can we really afford to spend two-thirds of a trillion dollars on defense every year? (Robinson 2011)

(Robinson 2011) If we could trim the Pentagon's spending by 15 percent—I know I'm dreaming, but humor me—we'd save another \$1 trillion over 10 years."

While I'd certainly miss having that Class 6 store around for an occasional bottle of wine, Senator Coburn (R-Kansas) certainly has some good points in this video

interview:

"We can have just as many fighter planes as we need, just as many ships as we need, the nuclear arsenal we need, just as many troops as we need, if we take the waste, duplication and ridiculous out of the Pentagon," said Coburn, who sits on the Senate Finance Committee. Coburn says a full report, coming out soon, will show how \$95 billion defense dollars could be saved painlessly over 10 years. Savings of \$25 billion would come alone if the Pentagon could audit itself, which it hasn't been able to do yet in the 22 years since the law started requiring it." (Attkisson 2012)

"Actually, the real problem for DoD is not the budget cut as much as the way it will be enacted: a 10-percent slice across the top of every program, regardless of its merits.(...) Good programs will suffer, and bad ones will not be punished in the way they normally would. (...) This is unfortunate, as the real remedy, short of a budget compromise, should simply be to let sequestration set in but give the Pentagon the latitude to make its cuts at its own discretion. (...) Until we have leadership that is impartial toward, knowledgeable about, and truly interested in defense reform, nothing will change, and sequestration will end up being the bombshell it threatens to be. Such reform would require revision of both the 1986 Goldwater-Nichols Act (responsible for DoD reorganization into its present form) and the procurement system, among other measures." (Blady 2012)

(Blady 2012) "Unfortunately, much of what goes on is too complex or technical for the average American's interests. Attempting to explain to the average person why the Littoral Combat Ship program makes a mockery of just about every fiscal principal of procurement would only draw a look of boredom. Start listing other programs like the F-35 fighter, the Expeditionary Fighting Vehicle, or the latest class of Amphibious Assault Ship, and the constituent runs screaming."

I certainly hope those constituents who read my blog don't do the same thing after reading the following sections of the Christian Science Monitor on defense cuts, but I'll take that risk in the interest of understanding these complex issues (and see the Cockburn reference above for even more on the DOD complex system):

"If we had done a budget for this country, and the Senate Budget Committee functioned in the way it was intended to function, then we wouldn't in this situation in the first place," Senator Ayotte said on the Senate floor on Thursday. That's certainly true, House conservatives say. But they're quick to note that Republican leadership went along with the entire plot. (Grant 2012)

(Grant 2012) "I think it's completely hypocritical for the people who voted to raise the debt ceiling, who voted for sequestration, now to be calling it 'devastating,'" said Rep. Justin Amash (R) of Michigan, a libertarian lawmaker who frequently bucks his party for not being stringent enough on spending.

(Grant 2012) "I thought we believed as Republicans that government spending doesn't create jobs at all?' asked Rep. Raul Labrador (R) of Idaho. (...) I am just so disappointed with Republicans that are making the argument that we cannot cut the military because military-defense spending creates jobs,' said Representative Labrador. 'We need to spend money on the military because we need to defend our nation. We need to spend money on education because we need to educate our children. We need to spend money on welfare because we need to protect the most vulnerable."

Defense cuts: three things Americans should know (from the Christian Science Monitor 2012 Election Coverage):

"1. America today spends more on defense (even adjusting for inflation) than it did during the Reagan buildup. (...) 'The evidence for that is pretty thin,' says Christopher Preble, vice president for defense and policy studies at the libertarian Cato Institute. 'The Soviet Union on its worst day was capable of ending life on this planet in a few minutes. It could do more damage in a few minutes than Al Qaeda has managed to inflict in over a decade.' Still, the United States continues to spend some \$520 billion every year – plus the costs of the Afghanistan and Iraq wars – for US military operations." (Mulrine 2012)

"2. Most Americans, regardless of political party, support more defense cuts. A new study finds that Americans want more defense cuts than do the politicians who represent them. They are also willing to accept on the order of one-quarter more cuts in military spending than the Obama administration is proposing." (Mulrine 2012)

(Mulrine 2012) "Americans surveyed by the Stimson Center proposed the highest cuts for the Afghan war, where they would like spending to be \$53 billion. Annual spending in Afghanistan currently totals \$115 billion. The administration has proposed a drop to \$89 billion."

(Mulrine 2012) "Most interesting to Matthew Leatherman, a research analyst at Stimson, is that support for defense cuts is equally strong in congressional districts that would stand to lose the most from them – in other words, areas where big defense corporations and jobs are based. Indeed, 75 percent of voters in the top 10 percent of districts that benefit the most from defense spending actually want more cuts than the average of voters in the survey."

3. "Automatic defense cuts won't devastate the US economy – and may even help it. The companies that make America's fighter jets, drones, and big-ticket weapons items warned in a press conference this week that a series of forced budget cuts known as 'sequestration' would cost America more than 2 million jobs if it goes into effect." (Mulrine 2012)

(Mulrine 2012) "Others, however, say it's a good idea to keep the budget cuts in perspective. The DOD base budget under sequestration would be \$469 billion – about what the Pentagon spent in 2006, when it was in the middle of fighting wars in both Iraq and Afghanistan. It was “not exactly a lean year for the Pentagon,” Dr. Preble notes."

(Mulrine 2012) "Indeed, many of the predictions are overly dire, says Preble, who has studied regions that have experienced reductions in military spending in the past. Cuts initiated after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 “were far deeper and faster than what we’re contemplating under sequestration,” he says."

(Mulrine 2012) "As for claims that defense cuts would mean millions of lost jobs? 'That seems implausible considering that the cuts would amount to less than 3/10s of 1 percent of GDP,' Preble says. 'More to the point, the defense budget should never be seen as a jobs program.'"

Now of course R-money has included his own VP pick as part of the "Republicans that made a mistake" in voting for the sequestration plan. And of course "Iyin' Ryan" has denied what he's on the Congressional record as doing:

"O'DONNELL: Now you're criticizing the President for those same defense cuts you're voting for and called a victory.

RYAN: No, no — I have to correct on you this, Norah. I voted for a mechanism that says the sequester will occur if we don't cut \$1.2 trillion in government. ... We can get into this nomenclature; I voted for the Budget Control Act. But the Obama Administration proposed \$478 billion in defense cuts. We don't agree with that, our budget rejected that, and then on top of that is another \$500 billion in defense cuts in the sequester.

O'DONNELL: Right. A trillion dollars in defense spending, and you voted for it!

RYAN: No, Norah. I voted for the Budget Control Act.

O'DONNELL: That included defense spending!

RYAN: Norah, you're mistaken." (Beauchamp 2012)

The gist of the above article was that Ryan claims he "didn't vote for the defense cuts he voted for". And so it goes, his label of being a liar is now considered to be pathological, and its sticking to him. My hunch that he's a sociopath is being confirmed.

"Mr. Ryan professes to be a defense hawk, though the true conservatives of modern times — Calvin Coolidge, Herbert C. Hoover, Robert A. Taft, Dwight D. Eisenhower, even Gerald R. Ford — would have had no use for the

neoconconservative imperialism that the G.O.P. cobbled from policy salons run by Irving Kristol's ex-Trotskyites three decades ago. These doctrines now saddle our bankrupt nation with a roughly \$775 billion "defense" budget in a world where we have no advanced industrial state enemies and have been fired (appropriately) as the global policeman. (Stockman 2012)

(Stockman 2012) "Indeed, adjusted for inflation, today's national security budget is nearly double Eisenhower's when he left office in 1961 (about \$400 billion in today's dollars) — a level Ike deemed sufficient to contain the very real Soviet nuclear threat in the era just after Sputnik. By contrast, the Romney-Ryan version of shrinking Big Government is to increase our already outlandish warfare-state budget and risk even more spending by saber-rattling at a benighted but irrelevant Iran."

Well, we know that the whole Teapublican presidential ticket are both national security and foreign policy neophytes, as R-money proved during his visit to Europe, and as they both continue to constantly contradict themselves on defense issues.

"While running for the GOP nomination for president in 2007, Romney was asked by reporters if he agreed with comments by then-candidate Obama that if Osama bin Laden were discovered in Pakistan he would take action if the Pakistanis did not. Romney responded, 'I do not concur in the words of Barack Obama in a plan to enter an ally of ours.' Earlier this year, on the anniversary of the death of bin Laden (who was killed by American Special Forces in Pakistan), Romney diminished President Obama's role by claiming, 'Anybody would have made that call.' Well...not just anybody." (Howard 2012)

There's only about 60 days left until the election, not enough time for this Teapublican Ticket to brush up on what they're weak on, especially surrounded by that same old group of Bushie neocon bumblers from the last administration. No, we would NOT be better off than we were four years ago with these rookies in office at the present time. I don't even want any of them anywhere near that phone that rings at 0300 in the morning in the White House, much less the defense or any other budget. These are perilous times for a bunch of bumblers to take over the reins, and simply not a time for a change of command.