



CAMPAIGN 2012

Obama's Pentagon cuts assailed by Republicans

by **Brian Hughes** Staff Writer

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President Obama's plan to pare down the U.S. military, unveiled Thursday, immediately became a major issue in the 2012 presidential campaign, opening one of the president's strongest assets -- his foreign policy and national security record -- to Republican opponents who argue he is diluting America's strength abroad.

"Some will no doubt say the spending reductions are too big; others will say they're too small," Obama said at an unusual presidential news conference at the Pentagon, where he was surrounded by top military officials. "After a decade of war, and as we rebuild the sources of our strength -- at home and abroad -- it's time to restore that balance."



President Barack Obama speaks at the Pentagon, Thursday, Jan. 5, 2012, on the defense strategic gu are, Army Secretary John McHugh, Defense Secretary Leon Panetta, Army Chief of Staff Gen. Raymo president, Marine Corps Commandant Gen. James F. Amos, Joint Chiefs Chairman Gen. Martin E. De Secretary Ray Mabus. (AP Photo/Pablo Martinez Monsivais)

Without outlining specific cuts, Obama called for a smaller army and Marine Corps and the relocation of t Europe, where they've been based for decades, to Asia in recognition of a shift in global power.

In unveiling a plan to cut \$500 billion in defense spending over the next decade, the president is attemptir showcase his commitment to slashing the budget deficit while adapting American's national security capa swiftly changing foreign arena. He also is appealing to liberal supporters who long argued that any deficit strategy must include military cuts, pointing to an explosion in defense spending in the post-Sept. 11 era.

Though Obama pointed out that defense spending would increase -- albeit more gradually -- in coming ye Republicans say Obama is skimping on crucial American investments needed to stay ahead militarily.



"This is a lead-from-behind strategy for a left-behind America," said Rep. Howard "Buck" McKeon, R-Calif of the House Armed Services Committee.

Yet White House officials said the president has established enough foreign policy clout to make such a recommendation, citing the killing of al Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden, the ending of the Iraq war and the drawdown in Afghanistan.

And some conservative analysts argued that Obama's pared-back military blueprint could help him with v

"Politically, it makes a lot of sense," said Christopher Preble, vice president for defense and foreign policy the Cato Institute. Wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have become "quite unpopular" with a conflict-weary pub whom are likely to support Obama's shifting troops from Europe to Asia, he said.

GOP presidential candidates critical of Obama, Preble said, are walking a "fine line between prudent defe military support and overkill."

Yet, Republican White House contenders say Obama's plan is a job killer, pointing to Boeing's announcer week that it was closing a Kansas factory because of anticipated cuts in business. And conservatives say weakened military will harm U.S. missile defense capabilities and the country's ability to monitor a growing threat.

However, Defense Secretary Leon Panetta, joining Obama, said the president's plan would shift the U.S. away from traditional massive ground forces to a more flexible force that could deal with terrorist threats. would be necessary even if the U.S. didn't have to cut spending, he said.

Under Obama's plan, nearly \$500 billion would be slashed from projected Pentagon budgets over the con decade. Hundreds of billions of dollars more could be cut in 2013 if Congress doesn't approve deficit-cutti measures.

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