

Spiralling Defense Budget. Congress Urges Cuts in Pentagon's Budget

By Project on Defense Alternatives (PDA)

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Over 50 Representatives and Senators Send Letter to Commission on Fiscal Responsibility to Include Real and Necessary Cuts to Defense Budget

Washington, D.C. – As the President's National Commission on Fiscal Responsibility and Reform reviews ways to address America's national debt crisis, Reps. Barney Frank (D-MA), Ron Paul (R-TX), and Sen. Ron Wyden (D-OR) have brought together a large group of representatives and senators to call for a specific solution.

In a letter sent Wednesday to members of the Commission, they call on the Commission to look closely at excessive defense spending in an effort to reduce the Federal deficit and national debt. Specifically, the group of 57 members of Congress urges "in the strongest terms that any final Commission report include among its recommendations substantial reductions in projected levels of future spending by the Department of Defense."

"It is now indisputable," said Congressman Frank, "that if we do not substantially reduce planned worldwide defense expenditures, particularly on behalf of our allies who can and should be doing more to defend themselves, that we will not be able to meaningfully reduce our budget deficit without doing significant damage to our quality of life here at home. Given our long failure as a nation to recognize this fact, and the strong political resistance to changing course, I am pleased that a significant number of my colleagues are joining me in the effort to address this issue."

The letter's signers state that given the size of the U.S. deficit and rapidly growing debt, cutting the military budget must be a part of any viable proposal. The Department of Defense currently takes up almost 56 percent of all discretionary federal spending, and it accounts for nearly 65 percent of the increase in annual discretionary spending levels since 2001. The letter also states that the group of representatives and senators strongly believes that significant cuts to defense spending are necessary and can be made in a way that will not endanger national security.

"I am pleased to join Chairman Frank and so many of our colleagues who realize that the United States cannot sustain a military budget that costs nearly as much as the rest of the world's defense budgets combined," said Congressman Paul. "I sincerely hope for the future of our country that the National Commission on Fiscal Responsibility and Reform takes a thorough look at the military budget when crafting a proposal to reduce unsustainable government spending."

Earlier this year, these leaders also brought together a task force of national security experts with a diverse set of views to specify ways to reduce defense spending in the context of the new fiscal restraints. The task force's findings pointed out ways to trim U.S. defense spending by nearly \$1 trillion in the next 10 years without endangering American security. The report, "[Debt, Deficits and Defense: A Way Forward](#)," was released in June 2010 by the members of the Sustainable Defense Task Force.

"Cutting military spending requires limiting the ambitions it serves. We spend too much on defense because we choose too little, confusing our ambitions with the requirements of our safety," said Benjamin Friedman, Research Fellow in Defense and Homeland Security Studies at The Cato Institute. "By shedding missions, the Pentagon could cut force structure — reducing personnel, weapons and vehicles procured and operational costs. The resulting force would be more elite, less strained and far less expensive."

"We strongly urge the Commission to consider our recommendations for making significant cuts to defense as part of their analysis," said Carl Conetta, Co-Director of the Project on Defense Alternatives (PDA) at the Commonwealth Institute. "These savings can be realized not only through targeting waste and mismanagement at DoD, but also through a frank assessment of current U.S. military goals and strategies, which in many cases involve outdated assumptions that leave the United States spending money on commitments as well as weaponry that are no longer necessary for our national security."

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