



POLITICS

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Washington Beat: Obama Unveils Extensive Cuts To Military

By: Erin Billups

Following the end of the Iraq War and drawdown in Afghanistan, President Barack Obama and military leaders announced their plan to lower troop levels and change the overall strategy of the United States Armed Forces. NY1's Erin Billups filed the following report.

Surrounded by top military leaders, President Barack Obama made an unprecedented appearance at the Pentagon Thursday to unveil their plan to address growing budgetary constraints and trim the United States Armed Forces.

"Yes, our military will be leaner but the world must know the United States is going to maintain our military superiority," said Obama.

The \$487 billion in cuts to spending growth over 10 years will mean the U.S. will not be able to maintain large scale stability operations like the one in Iraq.

And while saying the new strategy will require tradeoffs and more risks, Defense Secretary Leon Panetta insists the American military will still be able to take on more than one adversary at a time.

"We will structure and pace the reduction in the nation's ground forces in such a way that they can surge, regenerate, and mobilize capabilities needed for any contingency," said Panetta.

The focus will be on improving efforts to combat cyber-warfare and missile defense. There will also be a shift in priorities to keeping an eye on China and maintaining resources in the Middle East.

Criticism of the plan is already flowing in. Those on the right say the change will leave the U.S. unprepared for future attacks.

Others argue the new strategy doesn't go far enough.

"We spend about 48 or 49 percent of global military spending. If that doesn't buy you security, your strategy might be worth revisiting," said Justin Logan, director of foreign policy studies at the Cato Institute.

Panetta also reiterated his concerns about the \$500 billion in additional defense budget cuts scheduled for January 2013, and he's urging Congress to do what it can to soften the blow.

"It would result in what we think would be a demoralized and hollow force," said Panetta.

The president will release specifics in his budget next month, but the fight over whether to undo the automatic cuts scheduled in 2013 is sure to grow more contentious.

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