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Brennan: 'There have been some devastating leaks' ... Inside the Israel-Iran shadow war ... BRAC: Dead -- or undead?

By [AUSTIN WRIGHT](#) | 08/09/12 5:53 AM EDT

With Hadas Gold and Philip Ewing

EXCLUSIVE: BARTLETT KNOCKS SEQUESTRATION UPROAR -- Roscoe Bartlett is not exactly toeing the party line when it comes to this winter's threat of looming, across-the-board restrictions in military spending. A senior Republican on HASC and chairman of the Tactical Air and Land Forces Subcommittee, Bartlett said of the uproar over the potential spending cuts, "We need to stop dramatizing the thing."

This stance, of course, puts Bartlett a world apart from other HASC Republicans -- especially Chairman McKeon, who's emerged as one of the top critics of the potential cuts to defense spending and has been no stranger to dramatization. From "doomsday mechanism" to "time bomb," McKeon has denounced the cuts in the harshest possible terms, saying they would hollow out the military.

For his part, Bartlett acknowledged it would be nearly impossible to apply across-the-board cuts to nearly every account in the Pentagon budget, noting that such an endeavor would require DOD to renegotiate more than 2,500 contracts. "If we do it the way the law is written," he told Morning D, "it will be totally devastating."

Instead, he expects the White House ultimately will propose an alternate budget for the next fiscal year -- one that would reduce military spending by about 10 percent, the amount required under last year's law that mandated sequestration. He declined to say whether he'd support such a plan, explaining that he's open to a discussion about the proper size of DOD. "The average American out there, by big percentages, wants to cut defense by twice the sequester amount," Bartlett said, citing recent polls. "We need to stop with all the superlatives about the thing and be rational about it." Our story is here: <http://politi.co/NJfAqI>

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BRENNAN: 'THERE HAVE BEEN SOME DEVASTATING LEAKS' -- Deputy National Security Adviser John Brennan said yesterday that recent leaks of national-security information have caused serious damage, but he blasted as "unfounded" claims that it's the White House that's doing the leaking.

"It's easy to get up in front of a TV camera, quite frankly, and point fingers at the White House and say they're doing it for this or that," Brennan said at a Council on Foreign Relations event. "Frankly, I think a lot of those allegations are highly irresponsible." POLITICO's Josh Gerstein has more: <http://politi.co/NJ7ePI>

-- THE GIST OF BRENNAN'S SPEECH, THOUGH, WAS ABOUT YEMEN. He said all counterterrorism operations there "are conducted in concert with the Yemeni government" and addressed criticisms of the targeted killing program there aimed at Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula. "Contrary to conventional wisdom, we see little evidence that these actions are generating widespread anti-American sentiment or recruits for AQAP," he said. "In fact, we see the opposite."

TRIVIA TIME -- The second atomic bomb to be used in war was dropped on this day in 1945 on the Japanese city of Nagasaki -- just three days after the attack on Hiroshima. The bomb's drop date was moved up because of the weather. For which day in August was the attack on Nagasaki originally planned? For the answer, read on.

CATO STUDY CASTS DOUBT ON DEFENSE DOOMSDAY RHETORIC -- Sequestration might not be the economic equivalent of the Cretaceous asteroid strike after all, according to a study this week by the libertarian Cato Institute. "Data examined ... by scholar Benjamin Zycher 'suggest strongly that the adverse effects of spending cuts would be small in the aggregate because defense spending is' less than 5 percent of the nation's gross domestic product," writes John Bennett on his U.S. News blog DOTMIL.

Of course, that's not what the defense industry and its allies in Congress have said. A series of studies and warnings have predicted 1 million jobs lost or more if sequester were to take effect, and industry officials have said the uncertainty alone over whether Congress can avert the spending cuts is already causing tremors for their businesses. Bennett's post: <http://bit.ly/RAPoVC>

OH, NO -- AIR-SEA BATTLE! Yes, that. WaPo's Greg Jaffe dropped a water balloon right into the beehive with his Aug. 1 story about the concept that isn't a doctrine that isn't a strategy. The piece is still resonating throughout the defense world, both with people who rejected it because they thought it was off base and with people who embraced it as having finally put a name to the emperor's new wardrobe.

The latest counterattack came yesterday from Thomas P.M. Barnett, who took the baton and ran with it. Barnett wrote on Time's Battleland blog that the "big war" crowd inside the Building is "seeking to lower the threshold of great power war," and that viewed in a normal context, the reality of the Pentagon anticipating World War III is "Strangelovian." The war scenarios assume a conventional engagement but ignore the danger of nuclear escalation and discount the larger dynamic of China as the top U.S. foreign creditor, Barnett says. Moreover, he is alarmed with what he called the reemergence of China hawks inside the defense establishment, trying to scare up a bad guy to justify big budgets:

"This is what I meant when I said that 9/11 saved us from ourselves," Barnett writes. "The Bush neocons were all wound up about China prior to 9/11, and now that that strategic narrative has been consummated -- in our minds, at least -- by Osama Bin Laden's assassination, the China hawks are once again ascendant. Why? There is simply more of the right kind of defense dollars in this vision (meaning uber-expensive high tech stuff -- not those pesky troops). This vision fits the country's mood: what's wrong with America is China -- not what's actually wrong with America. Since fixing America would be hard, it's better to blame China and feel better about our failings by gearing up for high-tech war with the Chinese." Here's the full post: <http://ti.me/MudcDX>

-- **BUT AIR-SEA BATTLE IS NOT ABOUT CHINA**, DOD insists. It's just a lil' old "focusing lens" that helps commanders continue to operate against "advanced adversaries" trying to keep out American forces by means of "anti-access" and "area denial."

STATE DEPT. OFFICIAL: THERE'S BEEN A 'SEA CHANGE' IN STATE-DOD RELATIONS -- Andrew Shapiro, assistant secretary of state for political-military affairs, extolled the virtues of a stronger relationship between the Pentagon and the State Department, saying the State Department has an increased influence in international security policy despite having a much smaller budget than DOD. Speaking at a CSIS event yesterday, Shapiro credited Hillary Clinton, Panetta and Robert Gates with bringing the two departments closer together.

At the event, former Deputy Secretary of Defense John Hamre quipped: "I used to say these are two organizations who love each other like brothers -- Cain and Abel."

BRAC: DEAD -- OR UNDEAD? With Panetta conceding defeat on Monday in his fight to begin closing a new batch of bases next year, a new dynamic has emerged. On one side, there's the defense secretary, who says a smaller force size means BRAC has to happen at some point -- whether Congress likes it or not. "It's an important debate that we have to have and, frankly, it's not going away," Panetta said.

On the other side, there are lawmakers who are emboldened by the ease with which they killed off BRAC this year and are now predicting new base closures won't happen anytime soon. SASC Democrat Richard Blumenthal, for instance, told POLITICO, "The Department of Defense has recognized that its BRAC request was dead on arrival." Asked whether another round of BRAC would be able to pass Congress in the near future, Blumenthal said, "Not by a long shot."

Of course, for BRAC to be a possibility it would require major presidential buy-in, and that doesn't seem likely, especially in an election year. "We just went through some base closings and the strategy that we gave does not call for that," President Obama said last month. POLITICO's Kevin Cirilli has the story: <http://politi.co/O5ZJlg>

WALTER REED BOMB SCARE -- Yesterday around 9 a.m., someone called Walter Reed National Military Medical Center and said there was a bomb there that would detonate about an hour later. The building had to be closed for several hours and swept for explosives. None were found. The AP has the story: <http://politi.co/The4RI>

WHO'S WHERE WHEN --

10 a.m.: Panetta speaks to service members at the Niagara Falls Air Reserve Station in New York.

1:15 p.m.: Greenert speaks at the Association of Naval Services Officers in San Diego.

SPEED READ --

-- **"Plots are tied to shadow war of Israel and Iran,"** by NYT's Nicholas Kulish and Jodi Rudoren: "A magnetic bomb detonated on a diplomatic car in New Delhi. The police uncovered a cache of explosives at a golf course in the Kenyan city of Mombasa. Five Israeli tourists and a Bulgarian bus driver were killed in an attack outside the airport in the Black Sea coastal city of Burgas. These were just a few of what some Israeli and American intelligence officials say were nearly a dozen plots that form the backbone of a continuing offensive by Iran and Hezbollah against Israel and its allies abroad. But the links seem tenuous at times, the tactics variable, the targets scattered across the globe, from the Caucasus to Southeast Asia to the Mediterranean." <http://nyti.ms/P1i0Vq>

-- **"U.S. sweetens offer to Taliban to swap Bergdahl for prisoners,"** by CNN's Elise Labott: "In an effort to revive peace talks with the Taliban, the Obama administration has sweetened a proposed prisoner swap under which it would transfer five Taliban prisoners to Qatar in exchange for a U.S. soldier held by the Taliban, senior U.S. officials said. The new proposal involves sending all five Taliban prisoners to Qatar first, before the Taliban releases Sgt. Bowe Bergdahl, the sources said. The original offer proposed transferring the Taliban prisoners into two groups, with Bergdahl being released in between." <http://bit.ly/QOuFyn>

DESSERT: HILLARY HITS THE DANCE FLOOR -- On her Africa tour, the secretary of state let off some steam at a dinner in Johannesburg, South Africa. The video is here: <http://politi.co/TicSx9>

TRIVIA ANSWER -- The second atomic bomb, nicknamed "Fat Man," was originally scheduled to be dropped on Nagasaki on Aug. 11, 1945. Plans were changed because of a bad weather forecast. A third atomic bomb was ready if the Japanese did not surrender, but Emperor Hirohito declared that "continuing the war can only result in the annihilation of the Japanese people." He agreed to an unconditional surrender. The History Channel's website has more: <http://bit.ly/OMEyXF>

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