

[POLITICO](#)

Letter to the editor

By POLITICO READERS | 10/5/11 9:42 PM EDT

I hope that what Benjamin Friedman and Caitlin Talmage wrote in their Opinion article, “What Defense Cuts?” (POLITICO, Sept. 19.), is correct and that steep cuts to our military are not around the corner. But, if they’re wrong, no one should minimize the damage such cuts would cause.

Experts both inside and outside the Pentagon have warned these cuts would be devastating. Defense is already at postwar lows, just 16 percent of federal spending (down from 40 percent in the 1970s), and the critical investments funding research and modernization are down to a little more than 1 percent of gross domestic product.

While the U.S. has spent plenty on combat in recent years, we’ve spent relatively little replacing equipment that has been destroyed. We have no new manned fighter in design, and the average age of U.S. fighter planes, bombers and tankers is at its highest since the Air Force was founded.

As Russia and China roll out fifth-generation stealth jets, U.S. pilots are flying the same planes their fathers took to war in the 1970s. Not the same models — the same aircraft.

Our strategic industrial base is also at risk. The Defense Department says sequestration would add a full point to the unemployment rate, costing hundreds of thousands of U.S. jobs. Jobs we should be fighting to protect.

Pentagon spending did not create the deficit. Even steep cuts to defense will not make it disappear.

*Marion Blakey
President and Chief Executive Officer
Aerospace Industries Association*