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McCain slams Paul on defense spending

Wed, 11/17/2010 - 3:17pm | posted by Jason Pye

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Yesterday, Sen. John McCain (R-AZ) criticized Senator-elect Rand Paul (R-KY) for his calls to cut defense spending:

McCain, speaking Monday at an event sponsored by the Foreign Policy Initiative in Washington, D.C., was asked whether he thought that support for the war on terrorism might be eroding within the GOP.

"I worry about it, and I worry a lot," McCain said. "Because throughout the history of the Republican Party in modern times there's two wings: the isolationist wing manifested before World War II and at other times; and the internationalist side.

"So I think there are going to be some tensions within our party," he said.

McCain singled out incoming Sen. Rand Paul (R-Ky.), son of Rep. Ron Paul (R-Texas), who is known for his non-interventionist stance on foreign policy. The younger Paul, McCain said, has already talked about cuts to defense spending, causing the senior Republican to worry.

"I don't know the incoming Senator Rand Paul - I respect him and admire his victory - but already he has talked about withdrawals, cuts in defense, etcetera, and a number of others are" as well, said McCain.

The Arizona senator also said he had "no doubt" about the sincerity of Paul and others to fight for spending cuts, saying he worried that such an aggressive stance could be justified on protectionist and isolationist grounds.

While I am as hardcore an advocate for free trade as there is, cuts to defense spending are not isolationist, and they are certainly not protectionist. Like McCain, I do worry that the populist streak in among conservatives and tea partyers could be taken as anti-trade. But his concerns about Rand Paul are unfounded.

On defense spending, you're not going to find another place as ripe for cuts as that budget. As Christopher Preble notes over at [Downsizing Government](#), there are \$1.2 trillion in cuts over the next 10 years that could help bring the country toward having a sustainable budget.

McCain's famous for not taking earmarks. That's great, but show me real spending cuts as well, Senator. Not just talk.

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