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Noteworthy Report: Budgetary Savings from Military Restraint

September 24, 2010

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By [Risa Trump](#)

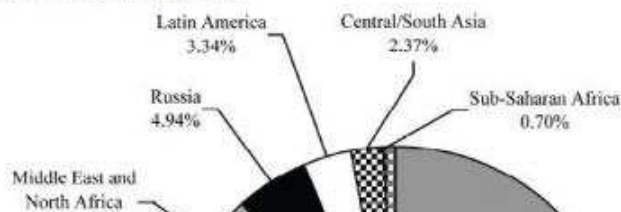
The CATO Institute's Benjamin Friedman and Christopher Preble [released a report](#) this week recommending significant defense budget cuts. Molded around a security strategy of restraint, Friedman and Preble find \$1.2 trillion of savings between FY 2011 and 2020 by setting priorities.

The report argues that DOD has taken on too much, stretching our forces thin and resulting in significant waste. A strategy of restraint recognizes that "power tempts the United States to meddle in foreign troubles we should avoid. Restraint means fighting that temptation." By choosing a more rigid security strategy, the U.S. is able to clearly define what will make Americans safer., resulting in significant budget cuts because it requires less from the institutions that support the military.

Suggested cuts include reducing the end-force strength of the Marine Corps and Army by a third, cutting carrier battle groups to three, and eliminating six Air Force fighter-wing equivalents. Friedman and Preble propose cutting the Pentagon's research and development budget by 10 percent and the overall intelligence budget by 15 percent. An added benefit is that a significant by-product of these cuts is the reduction in administrative overhead costs, which account for "approximately 40 percent of [the department's] budget."

Friedman and Preble are able to justify most of the force cuts by pointing out that most other countries are do not have anywhere near the same military capabilities as does the U.S., nor the same spending levels. This chart, located on page 4 of the report, shows just how much the US spends compared to other nations.

Global Military Spending 2008



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With mid-term elections approaching and Americans becoming more leery of the growing budget deficit, this report proposes actionable recommendations not only in the realm of the budget but also more generally for national security. Emphasizing the need to choose a strategy and reduce the burden on not just the troops but also the Department on the whole, Friedman and Preble recommend a series of cuts that logically combine strategy and reality.

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