

## Cato less than thrilled with Pawlenty's defense of Defense spending

By Derek Wallbank | Published Thu, May 26 2011 2:46 pm

WASHINGTON — Tim Pawlenty may have gotten an "A" grade from the libertarian Cato Institute as governor of Minnesota, but analysts there were none too pleased when he showed up Wednesday and, in response to a question, said he wouldn't cut U.S. Defense spending by a single dime on its baseline.

In a rebuttal on its Cato@Liberty blog, Christopher Preble, Cato's Director of Foreign Policy, took note of media coverage on "how the just-declared presidential candidate has been pretty adept at annoying audiences with his answers to questions. This one rankled the questioner," Preble said, "and a number of others in the auditorium.

*"One can sort of forgive a governor for not knowing much about foreign policy, although governors who aspire to be president should probably know that the U.S. government could cut military spending in half and still spend more than our next two potential rivals, combined."*

The basic point of Preble's dissent (accentuated with charts and graphs) is that the U.S. taxpayer is subsidizing the security of our allies and even some countries that otherwise don't like or barely tolerate us. The U.S. accounts for nearly 48 percent of military spending in the entire world. The rest of the NATO alliance, including Britain, France and Germany, combine for 17 percent. China, the most cited potential national threat to America's world number one standing, is at nine and a half percent, while our Cold War opponent Russia is now way behind at less than four percent of global military spending.

*Cato scholars have been out in front for years making the case for a principled, constitutional view of "defense" that does not include defending others who can and should defend themselves. If we adopted a strategy of restraint, we could responsibly make significant cuts in military spending, deliver the savings to American taxpayers, and remain the safest and most secure country on the planet. Yesterday, Tim Pawlenty took the opposite tack. He argued that the U.S. military should continue to serve as the world's policeman/armed social worker, allow other countries to free ride, and require U.S. taxpayers to foot the bill.*

*Although that might be popular elsewhere in Washington, I can't imagine it will sell in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, or Manchester, New Hampshire.*

The full thing can be read in its entirety [here](#).

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