



## **Analysts expect 'no surprises,' further program kills in DoD request**

By John T. Bennett - 02/06/11 02:54 PM ET

The 2012 spending plan the Pentagon will deliver next week to Capitol Hill will likely feature no further weapons program terminations, defense analysts said Sunday.

Defense Secretary Robert Gates last month announced plans to cancel several hardware programs in the 2012 budget plan as part of a broader effort that unearthed \$150 billion in savings. Gates plans to take some of those monies and shift them to other needs -- but some lawmakers and analysts say the secretary might lose a good chunk as Congress grapples with paring the federal deficit.

"I don't expect any major surprises" next week when the next budget plan is made public, said Jim Thomas of the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments.

"I don't think there will be more immediate program cuts," Thomas added Sunday during "This Week in Defense News."

Chris Preble of the CATO Institute said deficit-reduction efforts will not be the lone hurdle for Gates' so-called "efficiencies" effort. Keeping the \$150 billion in savings could be further complicated if the planned troop draw downs in Iraq and Afghanistan do not go as planned.

"A lot of the efficiencies [program] is based on troop levels coming down. That's where you get real savings," Preble said. "That's a big if."

And, he added, there is opposition in Congress -- especially among House Republicans -- to trim one dime from the Pentagon budget.

"There are already people in Congress saying we shouldn't be considering budget cuts until the wars are over," Preble said.

One major program Gates announced he will propose terminating in the 2012 plan is the Marine Corps' Expeditionary Fighting Vehicle (EFV). Its overall expected price tag had grown to \$14 billion, and the secretary and Marine leaders said last month that was simply too expensive.

EFV prime contractor General Dynamics and some Republican lawmakers are fighting back, saying the service should buy about 200 and upgrade over 300 of its current amphibious troop-hauling truck.

The analysts said the expeditionary vehicle battle in Congress this year will be a telling sign of calls for deeper defense spending cuts.

Preble said after years of developmental issues, the troubled EFV program has for some time been on just about every "cut list."

"So if you can't cut this one," he said, "then it's going to be really tough to cut anything else."

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