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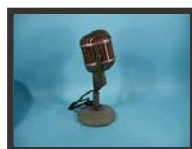


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Jun 23, 2011

Hi, My Name Is America and I Have a Defense Spending Problem

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By BEN FREEMAN



The Department of Defense is ripe for budget cuts, according to the ["Show Me the Missions"](#) panel at The New America Foundation this morning. "We can do less with less because our security challenges are manageable," said [Chris Preble](#), the Cato Institute's Director of Foreign Policy Studies. Fellow panelist and former assistant Secretary of Defense under President Reagan, [Larry Korb](#), (now at the Center for American Progress) agreed that the DoD could use a downsizing. "Obama's proposed cuts are nominal compared to other Presidents," said Korb, comparing them to much larger cuts by Eisenhower, Nixon, and Bush Sr.

The odd one out on the panel was the Heritage Foundation's [Mackenzie Eaglen](#), who did not share her fellow panelists' zeal for reducing the DoD budget. Her advocacy for maintaining current levels of defense spending centered around the argument that we are not good at predicting the future, and must be prepared for any eventuality.

Another key to her argument was not utilizing actual estimates of Defense spending. She stated that, "The U.S. military is committed more to deficit reduction than any other agency...Defense has been cut, is being cut, and will be cut." Preble corrected this disingenuous statement by providing actual, inflation-adjusted, defense spending figures, which show a clear increase in defense spending. Even [Eaglen's own work](#) shows that Defense spending has risen every year since 1998 and is currently at its highest level since WWII. [Chart 1 of her report](#) shows a more than 50% increase in Defense spending from 1998-2010. Moreover, [the U.S. spends nearly as much on Defense as the rest of the world combined](#). Even if we consider defense spending as a percentage of GDP, [the U.S. spent more in 2009 than in any year since 1992](#).

The first step in having meaningful discussions about reducing defense spending is realizing how much we actually spend on defense. Refusing to admit that we have a problem and hiding behind false or misleading statistics is an injustice to taxpayers and all those looking for meaningful reform. Reform begins with a simple confession: We are America and we have a Defense spending problem.

*Ben Freeman is a National Security Fellow for POGO.*

Posted at 05:39 PM in [Defense](#) | [Permalink](#)

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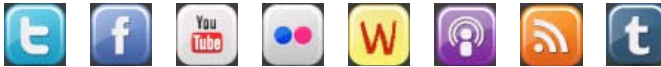
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