



Think tanks press Congress, Pentagon on base closures, compensation

By: Jeremy Herb – June 3, 2013

A diverse group of think tanks are calling on Congress and the Pentagon to tackle thorny issues to control costs that they warn threaten the long-term health of the military.

Defense analysts from 10 think tanks signed onto a letter, which appeared as an advertisement in *The Hill* on Monday, urging lawmakers and Pentagon officials to close excess bases, reduce the number of Pentagon civilians and reform military compensation.

“There is no shortage of useful ideas on how to begin addressing these pressing matters. The challenge has been getting Congress and the administration to admit change is required and take action,” the think tanks wrote.

“While we do not all agree on the best approach to reform in each case, we agree that if these issues are not addressed, they will gradually consume the defense budget from within.”

The think tanks included on the letter represent a range of policy views, from the conservative-leaning American Enterprise Institute to the liberal-leaning Center for American Progress.

The letter highlights a level of frustration among defense observers with the debate that has surrounded the Defense budget over the past two years, thanks, in part, to sequestration.

This year’s budgets in both Congress and from the Pentagon do not take the budget caps under sequestration into account for 2014, and the Pentagon’s request for base closures and new healthcare fees have been routinely rejected by Congress.

“Those of us who have joined together in support of these efforts find ourselves with differing views on many other issues, including the proper level of defense spending and how that money can best be allocated, they wrote. “But we are all in strong agreement on the need to pursue these key reforms for a transforming military.”

The other think tanks represented on the letter are the Center for a New American Security, the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, the Center for Strategic and International Studies, the Foreign Policy Initiative, the National Security Network, the Stimson Center, the Brookings Institution and the CATO Institute.