

## THE WEEK

<http://theweek.com/article/index/222975/will-the-pentagons-450-billion-budget-cut-decimate-the-military>

## OPINION BRIEF

## Will the Pentagon's \$450 billion budget cut 'decimate' the military?

Can we afford to adopt the Defense Department's new strategy for slashing spending on weapons and troops?  
Can we afford not to?

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Defense Secretary Leon Panetta this week is expected to unveil his plan to [cut \\$450 billion from the Pentagon's budget](#) over the next decade, an effort that will shape the U.S. military's fighting capabilities after the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. With a tighter budget, the Pentagon will lose its ability to fight two sustained ground wars at once, but remain big enough to fight a major war and "spoil" another enemy's aggression somewhere else. Given Washington's debt crisis, Panetta has no choice but to cut back. Is he going too far, or not far enough?

**This could "decimate" our military:** Panetta's cuts are just the beginning, [says Rick Moran at \*The American Thinker\*](#). Congress' failure to reach a debt-reduction deal could trigger another \$500 billion in cuts — together, these reductions would "decimate" our ground forces. This all "might be doable if we continue to see China and Russia as, if not friends, then as not quite enemies," but not if we want to be able to "fight a winning war" against either of them.

["Panetta to unveil plan to decimate the military"](#)

**Relax, we'll still have the strongest military on Earth:** Even with Panetta's spending reductions, our military "will still be larger and more capable than any conceivable combination of rivals," [says Christopher Preble at the \*Cato Institute\*](#). With today's challenges — fiscal and military — the U.S. needs "smaller and more elite" fighting forces. Saving money might mean we have to expect less from our own soldiers and more from those of our allies, but it won't put our security at risk.

["A do-it-yourself guide to cutting the military budget"](#)

**If anything, the cuts aren't deep enough:** "The Pentagon's bloated budget" has roughly doubled since the late 1990s, [says Robert Dreyfuss at \*The Nation\*](#), and that's "not counting the vast sums spent on wars in Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and elsewhere." The bottom line is "the United States is an empire in decline, and it can no longer afford a military budget equal to the rest of the world combined." Even if we cut \$1 trillion, that's just one-sixth of expected spending, which simply is "not enough."

["Panetta's sacred hippopotamus"](#)



U.S. Marines work to open a door while searching for explosives: The Pentagon's proposed budget cuts mean the U.S. military could not fight two ground wars at once.  
*Photo: U.S. Defense.gov/ Cpl. Reece Lodder*