

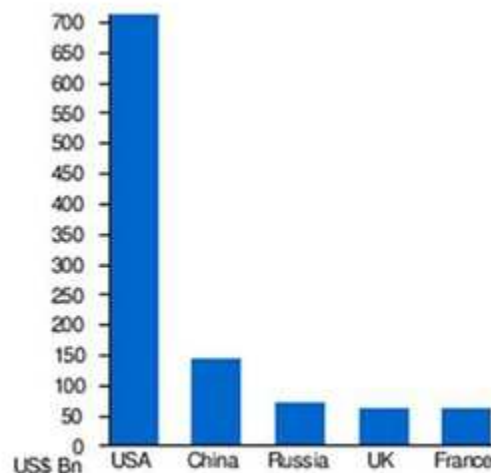
As House Vote Looms, Prepare for a Fight on Military Cuts

By JOHN T. BENNETT

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Pentagon spending cuts took center stage in Washington Tuesday, with both sides jockeying for position just one day before the House is slated to vote on a measure that would require the Obama White House to lay out its plans for the cuts.

In a preview of a fight expected to simmer until election day then boil over in December, proponents and foes of \$500 billion in cuts to planned Pentagon spending took turns making their cases. On one side are advocates of deep reductions to federal defense and domestic spending who say \$1 trillion in automatic cuts are Washington's best shot at significantly trimming the deficit. On the other side stand U.S. weapons makers and their congressional allies who are warning of even bigger job losses unless lawmakers void the cuts.



Defense Spending

After issuing a report late last year that warned of 1 million lost jobs in 2013 if \$500 billion in cuts to planned national defense spending are allowed to happen, the Aerospace Industries Association upped the scary rhetoric with an new version of that report.

The defense company advocacy group now warns that over 2 million jobs would be lost of the federal budget were cut by \$1 trillion over 10 years. The group also says the economy would lose \$215 billion.

[[Photo Gallery: London 2012: Make Way for the Olympics.](#)]

Some longtime Washington budget gurus questioned the first version of that study, saying it failed to take a laundry list of relevant economic factors into account.

Hours later, proponents of allowing both the defense and domestic cuts to go through struck back.

"Sequestration may be the only way to achieve real spending cuts. Let's let it happen," Christopher Preble of the CATO Institute said in a statement, referring to the name of the process under which the cuts would be implemented.

"To be clear, sequestration is not the best way to cut the military budget, or federal spending overall," Preble said. "It wasn't supposed to happen at all; the threat of spending cuts was supposed to compel the various parties to reach a compromise. But it may be the only feasible way to cut spending. And it isn't going to get any easier in the future."

The spending tete-a-tete came just 24 hours before the House is slated to vote on a measure designed to force the Obama administration into detailing how it would enact \$1 trillion in across-the-board federal cuts. Under the sequestration process, the cuts would be implemented by simply cutting a yet-unspecified amount from all federal accounts.

Pentagon officials, for example, warn such "salami slicing" will hurt some areas, like accounts used to develop and buy weapons, harder than others that likely will be exempted.

"This is a bill that will bring needed transparency to the administration's process for implementing devastating cuts to our national defense and many social programs on Jan. 2," House Majority Leader Eric Cantor, a Virginia Republican, said last week, according to media reports.

With Democrats in control of the Senate, it is unlikely the upper chamber ever will come close to voting on the bill. That means Wednesday's House floor debate and vote is almost purely a bit of election-year theater.

John T. Bennett covers national security and foreign policy for U.S. News & World Report. You can contact him at jbennett@usnews.com or follow him on [Twitter](#).

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