



Report proposes downsized military

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Wednesday's Marine Corps Times reports that a bipartisan task force study recommends cutting the size of the Corps and the Army to help reduce the nation's deficit.

The study by an independent team called The Sustainable Defense Task Force also proposes cost savings, from delaying or canceling development of Joint Strike Fighter Marine and Navy variants and ending new MV-22 Ospreys fielding.

The task force report said its suggestions could reduce defense spending by \$960 billion from 2011 to 2020, the Marine Corps Times reported.

The Sustainable Defense Task Force was formed in response to a request from Rep. Barney Frank, D-Mass., working in cooperation with Rep. Walter B. Jones, R-N.C., Rep. Ron Paul, R-Tex., and Sen. Ron Wyden, D-Ore., to explore possible defense budget contributions to deficit reduction efforts that would not compromise the essential security of the United States. The report was issued June 11.

Jones said he is not necessarily in favor of reducing the size of the military but would consider closing some foreign bases.

"I do think we need a strong military, but you can't keep spending and spending," Jones said. "I want to make sure we have the manpower we need because we're in a fragile state as a world right now."

He said, "My idea was just to take a look across the board" at defense spending and then make some determination about what to do.

Ideas included in the 56-page report effectively call for a rollback of the recent Grow-the-Force initiative as the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan wind down, reducing the strength of the Corps from 202,000 to 175,000 and the Army from 547,000 to 482,000.

Reducing Army brigades from 45 to 42 and Marine infantry battalions from 27 to 24 would save \$147 billion, it claims, and delaying or canceling F-35B and F-35C orders, using F/A-18 Hornets instead, could save another \$9.85 billion.

The Marine Corps would be left without jump jets once AV-8 Harriers age out, under the report's recommendations, but it said that capability has not proven critical to operations in recent wars.

The reports said another \$10 billion to \$12 billion could be saved by buying new MH-60S and CH-53K helicopters to replace the outdated CH-46 fleet.

It says the Corps could save \$8 billion by refurbishing cheaper, existing amphibious assault vehicles instead of continuing development of the Expeditionary Fighting Vehicle (EFV), a notion also reported last week by defense newsletter "Inside the U.S. Navy."

The task force report also suggests a \$5 billion reduction in recruiting budgets over the next decade.

A second set of conclusions by conservative Cato Institute analysts in a five-page section at the end of the

report suggests that a national strategy of restraint that reacts to danger rather than going out in search of it could allow for reductions as significant as 36 percent for the Army and 28 percent for the Marine Corps, making them smaller than at any time since 1950.

The Cato analysts said the nation is spending more on its military than any point since World War II without a more substantial threat.

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