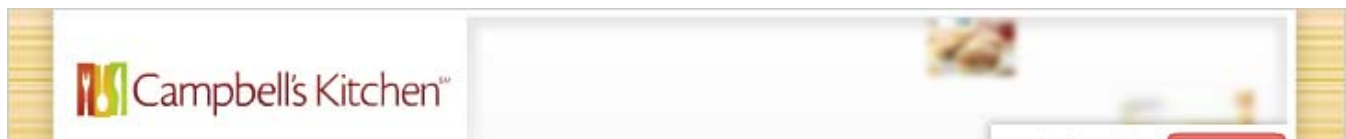


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Gates: We Can Cut Military Spending

Well, he didn't exactly say that. But in his speech last Saturday at the Eisenhower Library, Obama Secretary of Defense Robert Gates acknowledged that the United States has such a huge lead in conventional military power that we can afford to do without a few ships here, a few planes there (and many more if we follow Gates's statement to its logical conclusion):

Finally, this Department's approach to requirements must change. Before making claims of requirements not being met or alleged "gaps" - in ships, tactical fighters, personnel, or anything else - we need to evaluate the criteria upon which requirements are based and the wider real world context. For example, should we really be up in arms over a temporary projected shortfall of about 100 Navy and Marine strike fighters relative to the number of carrier wings, when America's military possesses more than 3,200 tactical combat aircraft of all kinds? Does the number of warships we have and are building really put America at risk when the U.S. battle fleet is larger than the next 13 navies combined, 11 of which belong to allies and partners? Is it a dire threat that by 2020 the United States will have only 20 times more advanced stealth fighters than China?

Good questions all. So why are we spending a post-World War II record of over \$700 billion per year for military purposes, most of it in the Pentagon's regular budget, not even for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan? For one example of how we can do better, see the Unified Security Budget, the product of a task force assembled annually by the Institute for Policy Studies. The most recent USB report calls for taking over \$50 billion from the Pentagon budget and investing it instead in diplomacy, foreign aid, alternative energy, and other non-military programs that will make us a lot safer than throwing more money at weapons systems we don't need (see Gates, above).

And stay tuned for a forthcoming report on how to cut nearly \$1 trillion from the Pentagon over the next ten years, assembled by a task force led by the Project for Defense Alternatives and including participation by analysts and staffers from the Cato Institute, the Center for American

Progress, the Center for Arms Control and Nonproliferation, the Center for Defense Information, the Institute for Policy Studies, the National Priorities Project, the National Security Network, the New America Foundation (represented by yours truly), Peace Action, and Taxpayers for Common Sense (apologies to any colleagues I may have forgotten in this hastily assembled list -- will make amends in a future post).

