

Guns cost money too, don't they?

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By GIL SMART, Smart Remarks

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It's an inviting target, as mandatory social spending — Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid and more — consumes about 56 percent of the fiscal year 2011 budget. Social Security alone is expected to cost \$730 billion. I'll concede that if we are to have a responsible, legitimate debate about spending, social spending must go under the microscope.

But it also must have company.

Consider that President Obama has proposed boosting Department of Defense spending by 3.4 percent in his 2011 budget, to \$534 billion. Add in the cost of U.S. military missions in Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan — \$159 billion — and we're spending a record \$708 billion on defense in fiscal year 2011, almost as much as Social Security.

So if Social Security is broken and must be fixed, what of defense spending?

We're not talking unilateral disarmament here, though it will be spun that way. The question, rather, is how can a nation facing such financial constraints continue policing the globe? As noted in a previous column, analyst Chalmers has estimated that we have more than 800 bases in more than 130 countries around the world.

Can we afford this? Do we need this? Or is it *verboten* to even ask?

"We're spending ourselves into bankruptcy to maintain America's Globocop role, to gird for possible war with China (an absurd proposition) and to pursue the profoundly unconservative project of trying to socially engineer failed societies like Afghanistan into modernity," wrote Gene Healy of the libertarian CATO Institute in a Feb. 10 column. And he challenged the tea partiers to "prove their authenticity by backing substantial cuts in entitlements and defense." Emphasis added.

But it's an article of faith, even among those who claim to be outraged at government's inability to live within its means, that we can't possibly reduce these costs. Indeed, we must spend ever more, because there are bad guys out there, and they want to get us!

Let's say it: Bunning, in the abstract, is correct. Additional federal outlays should be offset by cuts elsewhere. But the notion that "fiscal responsibility" means simply hacking back on social expenditures is deeply unserious. For too many on the right, the guns are sacrosanct; it's all about the butter.

Which makes their argument a slippery one, indeed.

Gil Smart is associate editor of the Sunday News. E-mail him at gsmart@lnpnews.com, or phone 291-8817.

So the news last week was that Republican Sen. Jim Bunning, of Kentucky, was re-enacting the famous Tiananmen Square scene where the lone guy stood in the way of all those battle tanks.

Bunning's move was less dramatic, though in the eyes of some, no less heroic. For several days he single-handedly held up legislation designed to extend unemployment and COBRA health insurance benefits, among other things.

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It's not that Bunning's heartless; no. He was merely concerned about government overspending, and "wants the \$10 billion price of extending the programs offset by reductions in spending elsewhere in the budget to not drive up the deficit," reported McClatchy Newspapers.

And in one respect that's laudable. Yes, the federal government is racking up unimaginably high deficits. And yes, this has turned into a major issue, although I'm old enough to remember when conservatives kept quiet about Ronald Reagan's deficits and pretended to agree when Dick Cheney said deficits don't matter.

Nonetheless: Let us agree that continued high deficits are bad for the nation, and the spending, ultimately, must be reined in.

So how should we do this?

The loudest critics of government spending, the tea partiers, aren't organized enough to suggest specific cuts. But conservatives in general appear driven by a great resentment that government would dare take their money and give it to those they deem undeserving. This suggests that if "the opposition" ever gets around to specifics, it will demand cuts in social spending, first and perhaps exclusively.

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[quote name='martin riggs' date='08 March 2010 - 09:14 AM timestamp='1268057693' post='711602']
daisy cuttersproudly made in the USA.
ROFL personal responsibility.....not even on the DEM radar.

Dems=the devil made me do it.
Funny thing how that last administration, the pair from the party of personal responsibility, were so quick to blame Bill Clinton for their mistakes.

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speaking of victimhood...
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[url="http://www.splcenter.org/get-informed/hate-map"]Hate groups stayed at record levels — almost 1,000 — despite the total collapse of the second largest neo-Nazi group in America.

Furious anti-immigrant vigilante groups soared by nearly 80%, adding some 136 new groups during 2009.

And, most remarkably of all, so-called [url="http://www.splcenter.org/get-informed/intelligence-report/browse-all-issues/2010/spring/active-patriot-groups-in-the-united-s"]"Patriot" groups — militias and other organizations that see the federal government as part of a plot to impose "one-world government" on liberty-loving Americans — came roaring back after years out of the limelight.

it happened under clinton....its happening again under obama..

conservatives won't be happy until more americans die..

for freedom...

[url="http://www.splcenter.org/get-informed/intelligence-report/browse-all-issues/2010/spring/rage-on-the-right"]http://www.splcenter.org/get-informed/intelligence-report/browse-all-issues/2010/spring/rage-on-the-right

mnepats52

[quote name='mnepats52' date='08 March 2010 - 10:58 AM timestamp='1268060316' post='711632']
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Oh, Mr. Cut-andPaste has come back to the building.

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mneputz52

[quote name='mneputz52' date='08 March 2010 - 10:08 AM timestamp='1268060900' post='711639']
Oh, Mr. Cut-andPaste has come back to the building.

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Good rebuttal ... not.

How is this for a blast from the paranoid past. Remember how these loons swore up and down that colored dots on road signs were secret instructions for the U N troops that were going to invade from Canada? They poroblay though that the dots cotained information about the NRA members in the area so they could be rounded up and their guns confiscated.

http://www.abovetopsecret.com/forum/thread8752/pg17

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[quote name='mnepats52' date='08 March 2010 - 11:08 AM' timestamp='1268060900' post='711639']Cut-and-Paste has come back to the building.

shorter putz: oh no.....not facts!!!

mnepats52

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