

Top U.S. Leadership Endorses Unified Security Budget

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In 2010 for the first time, the Secretaries of Defense and State and the Chair of the Joint Chiefs of Staff have all expressed support for a unified national security budget (USB). This endorses the recommendations of the Task Force on a Unified Security Budget, which releases its [yearly report](#) today.

The idea, Secretary Clinton explained, is that with such a unified budget “you can see the tradeoffs” between spending on military and non-military security tools. Also, she added, “You cannot look at a Defense budget, a State Department budget, and a USAID budget without Defense overwhelming the combined efforts of the other two.”

Since 2004 the Task Force has been reporting annually on this imbalance in security spending. The 2011 budget request did narrow the gap slightly. The FY 2010 budget allocated eight times the resources to military forces as to all other security spending put together. Increased spending on non-military foreign engagement in the FY 2011 budget narrowed the ratio to 7:1.

But “2010 should also be remembered as the year that the possibility, and the likelihood, and the necessity of restraining military spending turned into conventional wisdom,” said Miriam Pemberton, Research Fellow, Institute for Policy Studies, who co-chaired the task force that produced the report.

Largely because of concerns over the deficit, policymakers across the political spectrum have begun talking about cutting unnecessary weapons systems and reducing Pentagon waste.

This includes the Secretary of Defense, who announced this week his most concrete plans to date for budget savings. Yet Secretary Gates’ approach to restraint will neither reduce the deficit nor correct the security spending balance, since he plans to reapply any savings to the war efforts budget.

“The Secretary of State and the Secretary of Defense recognize that the U.S. government must increase its capacity for development and diplomacy,” commented Lawrence Korb, co-author of the report and a Senior Fellow at the Center for American Progress. “This latest edition of the Unified Security Budget demonstrates how this can be done without weakening the offensive component or adding to the massive federal deficit.”

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A complete copy of the report is available online [here](#).