

# POLITICO

## Gates aims to kill F-35 jet engine

By: [Jen DiMascio](#)

May 21, 2010 04:33 AM EDT

Defense Secretary Robert Gates hammered on with his plan to cut \$10 billion in overhead costs at the Pentagon Thursday and defended his move to cut an aircraft engine greatly beloved by Congress — and he now seems to have confidence that the White House will back him up.

Gates has warned Congress he will urge President Barack Obama to veto any defense bill that provides funding for the engine — made by General Electric and Rolls-Royce for the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter. But Wednesday, the House Armed Services Committee authorized \$485 million for the engine next year.

While the administration has not yet issued a statement about the bill, Gates said he had told the president of his plan to wield the veto threat, and Obama did not wave him off.

“I, obviously, did not issue the statement that I did in my testimony on the Hill without talking with the president first,” Gates said. “I try not to climb too far out on a limb without knowing nobody’s back there with a saw.”

During the Pentagon press briefing Thursday, Gates discussed again, in broad terms, his plan to weed out overhead costs in order to spare reducing the current size of the military — a plan he maintains would not involve any real reduction in the size of the Pentagon’s massive budget. The cuts are aimed at paring back the number of

senior officers and civilians and streamlining agencies, Gates has said. And in a statement that might send shivers through the defense industry, he added Thursday that further changes to weapons systems may also be considered.

“We in DOD must make tough choices and decisions to ensure that current and future military combat capabilities can be sustained in a time of budget stretches,” Gates said. “Further, we will strongly resist efforts to impose programs and changes on the department that the military does not want [and] cannot afford and that take dollars from programs the military services can and do need.”

This year’s top target is the General Electric engine, which Gates argues is leaching money away from the Pratt & Whitney engine chosen by Lockheed Martin to power its F-35 fifth-generation fighter jet.

GE and its supporters on Capitol Hill have argued that the Pentagon won’t lose money by investing in two engines and that with

Advertisement

**Own a new computer for just \$29.99\* per week!**

Call today to get the computer of your dreams, and improve your credit at the same time.



If you can afford a weekly payment of just \$29.99\* for just 12 months, then you're already approved for a brand new Dell™ or HP™ Computer, guaranteed.

**1-877-294-3988**

**GIVE US A CALL TODAY!**

\*Prices start at \$29.99 but may vary by model.

Print Powered By  FormatDynamics™

# POLITICO

two engines the military will have a hedge against any problems with a single engine. The company has also offered the Pentagon a fixed-price proposal, but Gates isn't buying it.

The "GE proposal assumes receiving a guaranteed buy of over half the JSF engines for three years in order to allow them to catch up," Gates said. "Only in Washington does a proposal where everybody wins get considered a competition — where everybody is guaranteed a piece of action at the end. Yeah, we're in favor of competition, but my idea of competition is winner takes all."

The cost of continuing pay raises is also taxing the military's ability to pay for all that it needs, said Adm. Michael Mullen, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, who appeared with Gates at the briefing. Looking out over 10 years, he said, a current pay raise will add \$5.2 billion a year to what the Pentagon will need to spend, and the budget hasn't increased to account for it.

Congress has been generous with pay raises and is reluctant to cut back on health benefits in the ways Gates discussed during a recent trip to Kansas, where he launched his latest crusade on military spending.

But Gates's current recommendations for targeted cuts to areas of the budget that could bring repeated savings in the future may seem mild in comparison with others that are slowly being put forth.

Top Democrats are beginning to generate ideas of their own for reining in defense

spending, which has skyrocketed since Sept. 11, 2001. Rep. Barney Frank (D-Mass.), who last year called for a \$25 billion reduction in defense spending, has created a Sustainable Defense Task Force to consider the issue.

One of its members is Christopher Preble, director of foreign policy studies at the Cato Institute, who said Gates has not gone far enough toward real change that would drive down the costs of the military.

"I think that if we were to revisit what we want our military to do, we could responsibly make substantial cuts," Preble said, adding that it may be time to rethink whether the U.S. should continue to be the world's policeman.

He added that while Gates is not proposing to reduce the size of the military, as the Army and the Marines withdraw from Iraq and draw down in Afghanistan, it might be time to consider the possibility.

For all the challenges ahead, Mullen said Gates will be a formidable opponent.

Advertisement



HEARTLAND QUALITY  
**OMAHA STEAKS**  
SINCE 1917

**SAVE**  
up to **64%**  
to

Plus, get  
**3 FREE Gifts**

Special Code: **45069ZWN**

To order: [www.OmahaSteaks.com/print71](http://www.OmahaSteaks.com/print71)  
or call 1-877-586-4455

Print Powered By  FormatDynamics™

# POLITICO

“I also wouldn’t underestimate his ability to do this,” Mullen told reporters. “Having watched him oversee and execute the many programs that are now no longer with us. ... Many people said that was not possible.”

Advertisement

**Print Advertisement**

## Identity Theft Protection

ENROLL TODAY AND GET:  
30 DAY RISK-FREE\* TRIAL

USE PROMO CODE:  
**ID**

CALL NOW: **1-888-896-1878**

\*At the end of the 30-day free period your card will be billed automatically (\$10.00 monthly/\$110.00 annually) unless you cancel within the 30-day period. You can cancel anytime without penalty by calling 1-800-LifeLock. Offer is for new LifeLock members only.

 **LifeLock.**  
#1 in Identity Theft Protection\*

Print Powered By  FormatDynamics™