

Debunking Myths about Defense Spending



Myth #1: “The defense budget has doubled since 9/11, so we can make more cuts.”

Fact: The defense base budget has not doubled, experiencing 35% inflation-adjusted growth over the last ten years. Even including supplemental funding, almost three-quarters of the growth in defense spending in that period has been for the Afghanistan and Iraq wars and the salaries and benefits for our soldiers. As a result, maintenance and modernization accounts were underfunded. As the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments recently concluded, “**The base budget now supports a force with essentially the same size, force structure, and capabilities as in FY 2001.**”

Myth #2: “The Pentagon is so inefficient that sizable cuts won’t affect fighting capability.”

Fact: **The military has already been cut by \$465 billion** as part of deficit reduction efforts on top of \$178 billion in efficiencies Secretary Gates made last year. In any organization the size of the Pentagon, there will be waste and inefficiency. But as Army Chief of Staff General Ray Odierno said recently, “**We’ve taken all the efficiencies we can take.**” Further reductions would cut directly into force structure and needed modernization.

Myth #3: “The Pentagon has too many expensive, unneeded weapon systems.”

Fact: Defense efficiencies initiatives and cuts enacted over the past two years have **already led to the cancellation of 50 major weapons programs.** As former Secretary Gates said before his retirement, “When it comes to our military modernization accounts, the proverbial ‘low-hanging fruit’ — those weapons and other programs considered most questionable — have not only been plucked, they have been stomped on and crushed. **What remains are much-needed capabilities.**”

Myth #4: “Defense cuts just slow the growth of spending, they’re not real cuts.”

Fact: Under the Budget Control Act, the defense budget has already taken a \$13 billion cut in constant dollars for FY12. Even without sequestration, **the defense budget will see no growth over the next ten years.**

Myth #5: “We spend much more than other countries, so cuts won’t make us vulnerable.”

Fact: America is not just some other country. We have truly global interests, and **our military is indispensable to the stability of the U.S. and global economies.** Comparisons of military spending are misleading because **they ignore vast differences in salary and procurement costs.** Low-cost China, for example, has 50 percent greater manpower than the United States and a fighter fleet 80 percent as large as ours and growing. In contrast, the UK ranks third in defense spending, but can’t maintain a single aircraft carrier.