

Department of Defense

Cut Non-Defense Programs from the Defense Budget

RECOMMENDATION

The Secretary of Defense should establish a team focused on improving the mission effectiveness of the Department of Defense (DOD). A small, high-caliber team should focus on reform as a means, not of saving money, but of improving how efficiently the DOD achieves its mission.¹ Priorities should be to identify excess infrastructure across DOD installations,² eliminate non-defense programs in the DOD budget, and focus funding on rebuilding U.S. military strength.³

RATIONALE

The size and strength of the U.S. military declined dramatically since the passage of the Budget Control Act of 2011 (BCA). In order to rebuild the military in a constrained fiscal environment, the Trump Administration should optimize spending decisions to minimize waste and ensure that limited funds are directed toward the DOD's highest priorities.

Military leaders have documented 22 percent excess infrastructure across DOD installations.⁴ Maintaining this excess costs billions of dollars per year. This is funding that could be directly applied to DOD priority needs, including training and procurement of weapon systems.⁵

Congress and previous Administrations have used DOD funding to sponsor programs unrelated to military capabilities. These programs, including non-defense medical research, "civil-military programs," the

Junior Reserve Officer's Training Corps, and Obama-era energy and environmental initiatives, do not benefit military service members, nor do they contribute to national security requirements.

The DOD should focus on providing a sufficiently large, modern, and combat-ready military force to protect the vital interests of the United States.⁶ Improving efficiencies and decreasing waste can put some money back in DOD pockets, and those savings should be shifted to higher priority defense programs to help achieve a stronger national defense. However, savings alone will not be enough to rebuild the military.⁷ In its review of executive branch departments and agencies, the Trump Administration should evaluate U.S. defense requirements, and submit a budget request that reflects those requirements.

ADDITIONAL READING

- Thomas Spoehr and Rachel Zissimos, "Preventing a Defense Crisis: The 2018 National Defense Authorization Act Must Begin to Restore U.S. Military Strength," Heritage Foundation *Backgrounder* No. 3205, March 29, 2017.

ENDNOTES

1. "Blueprint for a New Administration: Priorities for the President," The Heritage Foundation, November 1, 2016, <http://www.heritage.org/conservatism/report/blueprint-new-administration-priorities-the-president>.
2. Ibid.
3. Thomas Spoehr and Rachel Zissimos, "Preventing a Defense Crisis: The 2018 National Defense Authorization Act Must Begin to Restore U.S. Military Strength," Heritage Foundation *Backgrounder* No. 3205, March 29, 2017, <http://www.heritage.org/defense/report/preventing-defense-crisis-the-2018-national-defense-authorization-act-must-begin>.
4. U.S. Department of Defense, "Department of Defense Infrastructure Capacity," March 2016, <http://defensecommunities.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/2016-4-Interim-Capacity-Report-for-Printing.pdf> (accessed March 9, 2017).
5. Spoehr and Zissimos, "Preventing a Defense Crisis."
6. "Blueprint for a New Administration: Priorities for the President," The Heritage Foundation.
7. "A Blueprint for Balance: A Federal Budget for 2017," The Heritage Foundation, February 23, 2017, <http://www.heritage.org/budget-and-spending/report/blueprint-balance-federal-budget-2017>.