

Background

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Defense Budget Cuts Will Devastate America's Commitment to the Asia-Pacific

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Abstract: *The failure of the Congressional Joint Select Committee on Deficit Reduction ("Super Committee") to come to agreement on reducing the federal deficit raises the real prospect of \$1 trillion in additional cuts to the defense budget over the next decade. These cuts have been put forth with little consideration for their long-term impact: a dangerous degradation of America's capacity to deter, defend, and defeat her enemies. They will have a particularly negative impact on America's ability to stabilize and influence Asia, a critical component of U.S. national security. While the past century has seen America establish a strong role in Asia, these gains would be jeopardized by the proposed enormous pending cuts in defense capability.*

The Department of Defense is already preparing for more than \$400 billion in spending cuts over the next 10 years, and if the automatic reductions dictated by the 2011 Budget Control Act are not reversed, that number will increase by an additional \$500 billion–\$600 billion. These spending cuts will result in further reductions in the total number of U.S. aircraft carriers and/or carrier operations and maintenance—reductions that will affect America's ability to maintain combat-ready, forward-deployed units.

Given America's global commitments, such cuts will in turn hinder this nation's ability to deter potential opponents and reassure friends and allies in Asia. They will devastate America's military predominance and leadership in the Western Pacific at the very

Talking Points

- Sequestered defense spending cuts could be as high as \$500 billion–\$600 billion on top of already planned cuts of \$465 billion.
- President Obama vowed that future defense cuts "will not come at the expense of the Asia-Pacific," but the scope of defense reductions makes such a pledge unsustainable or risks gutting American capabilities in other theaters, including the Middle East.
- The current level of security cannot be attained with the cuts under consideration.
- The United States plays an essential role in preserving regional stability, which serves American as well as regional interests. Its partnerships with local allies and friends establish regional security at substantially reduced costs for both the U.S. and its allies.
- Any consideration of deep defense budget cuts must specify what missions and tasks would be ceded by the U.S. so that the decisions can be properly debated.

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moment the Administration is declaring this century “America’s Pacific Century.”

Rather than starting with U.S. national security interests—let alone the necessary defense capabilities to achieve those objectives—and then considering whether they can be sustained in the face of defense cuts, the debate over defense has focused on dollar amounts. This lack of strategic analysis means that spending cuts will be implemented with no sense of priority and no appreciation for the danger that such draconian cuts would create.

Nor does it appear that the budget cutters in the Obama Administration or Congress will be forthright enough to identify two major ramifications of these cuts: the missions the United States would be forced to abandon or the increased risk that hollowing out the U.S. military would pose to this country. Instead, it is likely that U.S. officials will continue to pledge that Washington will fulfill each of its missions even as the resources to do so shrink. Consequently, the United States will be sending its men and women in uniform into harm’s way without the necessary military means to achieve their objectives.

In reality, the provision of defense capabilities is much like the purchase of insurance: It is intended as a safeguard against a spectrum of catastrophic events. The amount of money spent on defense or insurance is directly related to the amount of risk one is willing to assume and the value of the objects to be insured. Too much insurance wastes resources, but too little can leave one in a disastrous position should the worst come to pass.

Nowhere is this analogy more evident than in Asia.

American Interests in East Asia

Asia has long been a vital U.S. interest. Even at the time of the founding of the American Republic, Asia was considered to be an important market. One of the first ships to fly the flag of the newly

founded United States of America was the merchant ship *Empress of China*, which set sail for Chinese markets in 1783.

Control of Asia by a hostile power would rattle the very foundations of American economic, technological, and military strength. Thus, preventing the Asian region from being dominated by any single power is even more pressing today than it was at the turn of the 19th century.

As Western links to Asia became more extensive, American interest in the region also increased. Throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, one of America’s major foreign policy goals was to prevent the region from being dominated by a single hegemonic power. Thus, to ensure access to its markets, the United States pursued the “Open Door” policy toward China,¹ opposed Imperial Japan’s attempts to control all of East Asia, and established a network of alliances to fend off Cold War Soviet encroachment.

In today’s world, Asia is much more than a market for American goods; it is a key economic partner. Asia is home to the world’s second and third largest economies, and Asian financing is a major part of America’s financial position, which includes purchases of American debt not only by China, but by Japan and Taiwan as well. Meanwhile, Asia as a whole files more patent applications than North America or Europe (although the United States is still the largest single filer of patents).² Asia is the centerpiece of global electronics production; most of the world’s computer chips are made in Asian foundries.

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1. The United States implemented the “Open Door” policy to promote equal and open access to China for international trade and commerce, seeking to avert steps by some nations to carve China into exclusive colonial enclaves. See U.S. Department of State, Office of the Historian, “Milestones: 1899–1913, Secretary of State John Hay and the Open Door in China, 1899–1900,” at <http://history.state.gov/milestones/1899-1913/HayandChina> (December 1, 2011).
 2. World Intellectual Property Organization, “International Patent Filings Recover in 2010,” February 9, 2011, at http://www.wipo.int/pressroom/en/articles/2011/article_0004.html (November 18, 2011).

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Even as it grows economically, Asia remains politically unstable. Whereas the collapse of the Soviet Union marked the end of the Cold War in Europe, this conflict continues on the Korean peninsula and in the Taiwan Strait. Moreover, while the Helsinki Accords codified the borders of the various European states, no such agreement has been reached in Asia.

Consequently, significant territorial disputes persist, including disputes between China and Japan (the Senkaku/Diaoyutai); Japan and Korea (Dokdo/Takeshima); and Thailand and Cambodia and among the various claimants to the South China Sea, including the People's Republic of China (PRC), Taiwan, Malaysia, the Philippines, Vietnam, and Brunei. The very fact that there is no agreement even on what to call the claimed territories and areas highlights the extent to which Asian borders remain in question.

These outstanding disputes, coupled with longstanding historical animosities, prevent the region from coalescing politically. They are a major reason why there is no regional architecture comparable to either NATO or the European Union, or even a region-wide free trade zone (such as the proposed Free Trade Area of the Asia Pacific). Indeed, there are not even many bilateral alliances between Asian states.

The Key to Regional Stability

The United States is the key to regional stability in Asia, a designation that serves America's own strategic interests while also benefiting the region. Asian states have little history of internal balancing of power: Khmers and Koreans, Vietnamese and Japanese never allied to balance the Han Dynasty or the Mongols and the Manchus. In sharp contrast to Europe, appeasement (under the rubric of suzerainty) and "bandwagoning" have long been the historic trends.³

The United States is the only nation with both the capabilities and the historical record needed to assume the role of regional balancer and "honest broker." Consequently, the United States is the hub of a "wagon wheel" of bilateral alliances that undergirds regional security. Where Japan and South Korea have only recently agreed to undertake staff talks with each other, both sides have long maintained channels of communication through their respective alliances with the United States and the attendant U.S. Forces Korea (USFK) and U.S. Forces Japan (USFJ). Even then, historic animosities continue to hinder the improvement of Korean-Japanese relations.

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This regional balancing is of such importance that many local states are subsidizing the American presence. Japan, for example, provides funding for virtually every aspect of the American military forces in Japan, from fuel expenditures to maintenance costs. Under the Host Nation Support agreement signed this past year, Japan will provide 188 billion yen per year over the next five years to offset the cost of stationing U.S. military forces in Japan. Under the Guam International agreement, Japan will also pay \$6.09 billion (a capped amount) of the overall \$10 billion infrastructure and development costs of the planned U.S. Marine Corps redeployment to Guam. Subsequent estimates of the Guam relocation project have risen to over \$20 billion.

South Korea also spends substantial sums of money on the USFK. Seoul annually pays \$800 million, or 47 percent, of U.S. non-personnel stationing costs. It also will pay \$10 billion of the \$12 billion cost of the Land Partnership Plan and Yong-san Relocation Plan for realigning U.S. military forc-

3. "Bandwagoning" is a term from international relations studies, which describes a state either aligning itself with a potential threat to avoid being attacked or else joining what is perceived to be the "winning side" to secure economic or other gains. Denny Roy, "Southeast Asia and China: Balancing or Bandwagoning?" *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, August 2005, at http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_hb6479/is_2_27/ai_n29212000/pg_10/?tag=content;coll (December 1, 2011).

es in South Korea.⁴ In addition, the infrastructure that has grown over the past six decades in many Asian states represents substantial value: U.S. bases on Okinawa or access to facilities in Thailand and Singapore would be unimaginably expensive if they had to be acquired today.

The American network of alliances is also indirectly supported by many local states. Such support is expressed primarily through shared military technology and training. For example, many Asian militaries are equipped with American weapons: F-15s and F-16s are flown by a number of local air forces, local surface combatants bristle with Harpoon anti-ship missiles, and an increasing number also mount AEGIS combat systems. Local forces also train with American forces. Sharing weapons and training facilitates interoperability while providing a signal of mutual support; it also means substantial orders for American factories and plants.

The U.S. and its local allies each contribute based on their own strengths, thereby reducing redundancy and overlap. For example, the U.S. often depends on local military to provide the bulk of ground forces for any contingency operations; whether on the Korean DMZ or in defense of Taiwan, any ground war will be fought largely by local forces. In the air and at sea, however, U.S. and allied forces will benefit from the comprehensive set of command, control, communications, computers, intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (C4ISR) assets that the United States brings to the fray. As a result, local and American forces will achieve far more together than either would alone.

This division of labor has also fulfilled other American objectives. For example, by being the main bulwark for security in the Asia-Pacific, the

U.S. has forestalled regional nuclear proliferation. In terms of human capital and technological sophistication, and increasingly financial wherewithal, many Asian states, such as Japan and South Korea, have the potential ability to develop their own nuclear deterrents. That they have not done so may be attributed in part to the American extended deterrence guarantee. Although often perceived as only a nuclear guarantee, the U.S. commitment to provide extended deterrence includes “the full range of military capabilities, to include the U.S. nuclear umbrella, conventional strike, and missile defense capabilities.”⁵

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Indeed, it is useful to recognize that both Taiwan and South Korea did engage in nuclear research in the 1970s when it appeared that the American commitment to their defense was wavering.⁶ Had these programs continued to fruition, the impact on regional stability, not to mention global non-proliferation efforts, would have been dire. Today, a reduction or hollowing out of the U.S. military in Asia, including conventional forces, would likewise be perceived as a severe degradation of U.S. deterrence and defense capabilities—and might generate similar consequences.

As it is, concerns about proliferation already abound in Asia. In defiance of U.N. resolutions and despite pressure from all of its neighbors, North Korea has tested nuclear weapons. Burma/Myanmar, meanwhile, appears to be developing nuclear tech-

4. Author interview with U.S. military official, June 2011, on file with author.

5. United States and Republic of Korea, “Joint Communiqué: The 42nd U.S.–ROK Security Consultative Meeting,” October 8, 2010, at <http://www.defense.gov/news/d20101008usrok.pdf> (November 21, 2011).

6. For further details, see Daniel Pinkston, “South Korea’s Nuclear Experiments,” Center for Nonproliferation Studies, November 9, 2004, at <http://cns.miis.edu/stories/041109.htm> (November 21, 2011), and William Burr, ed., “The Nuclear Vault: The United States and Taiwan’s Nuclear Program 1976–1980,” National Security Archive, *Electronic Briefing Book* No. 221, June 15, 2007, at <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/nukevault/ebb221/index.htm> (November 21, 2011).

nology with assistance from Pyongyang.⁷ Without the U.S. extended nuclear umbrella, such nuclear ambitions might well precipitate reactions from either country's neighbors.

Similarly, the American alliance network has obviated the need for member nations to acquire power projection platforms. In the absence of a regional security infrastructure and with no shared perception of pressing threats, many Asian states would likely have sought a range of capabilities that might be perceived as threatening by their neighbors—the so-called security dilemma problem.

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The American presence, however, negates the need to pursue such potentially threatening capabilities. For instance, there has been little impetus for the various East Asian states to develop full-deck aircraft carriers, nuclear-powered attack submarines, or forced-entry capabilities such as amphibious assault forces. Instead, Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, and Thailand have focused their capabilities on defense of their borders and territories. Given the persistent regional fears of Japan, as well as other historical animosities entangling most states in the region, America's presence has limited the potential for heightened regional suspicions and inadvertent arms races.

The United States has significant economic, strategic, and national security interests at stake in Asia. By providing certain key capabilities (extended nuclear deterrence, power projection, C4ISR), the United States has helped stabilize the region, reassuring friends while deterring opponents. The provision of security in turn has increased American

influence in the region beyond the purely military. All of these gains would be jeopardized, however, by the enormous cuts in defense capability being bandied about by some Members of Congress.

Threats to American Security in East Asia

The United States has significant interests in East Asia—interests that are, at the moment, being challenged by a number of real threats. And of those threats, North Korea is the most immediate. As the Cold War continues to simmer on the Korean peninsula, the potential for an inter-Korean conflict remains high. Such a conflict might be sparked by North Korean aggression against the South, or perhaps by the collapse of North Korea—a scenario that grows increasingly likely as current leader Kim Jong-il strives to effect a second dynastic succession to his son Kim Jong-eun.

North Korea is a multifaceted military threat to peace and stability in Asia as well as a global proliferation risk. Pyongyang has developed enough fissile material for six to eight plutonium-based nuclear weapons. North Korea conducted two nuclear tests in 2006 and 2009 and claims to have turned all of its fissile material into nuclear bombs. North Korean officials have repeatedly vowed that the regime has no intention of abandoning its nuclear arsenal.

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In November 2010, North Korea disclosed a uranium enrichment facility at Yongbyon containing 2,000 operational centrifuges consistent with a parallel uranium-based nuclear weapons program. A visiting U.S. scientist was stunned by the size and sophistication of the facility, which exceeded all predictions of North Korean progress on a uranium program. Furthermore, a South Korean nuclear scientist estimated that Pyongyang could produce one

7. Joby Warrick, "Report Says Burma Is Taking Steps Toward Nuclear Weapon Program," *The Washington Post*, June 4, 2010, at <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/06/03/AR2010060304859.html> (November 18, 2011).

to two uranium weapons per year using 2,000 centrifuges.⁸ This capability would be even greater if North Korea has other undetected uranium enrichment facilities.

The newly identified uranium facility at Yongbyon not only augments North Korea's capacity to increase its nuclear weapons arsenal; it also increases the risk of nuclear proliferation. For decades, North Korea has exported missiles to rogue regimes. A U.N. task force concluded that Pyongyang continues to provide missiles, components, and technology to Iran and Syria—despite the imposition of U.N. sanctions. In September 2007, Israel destroyed a Syrian nuclear reactor that was being constructed with covert North Korean assistance. North Korea is also believed to be assisting the regime in Myanmar/Burma in developing nuclear capabilities.

The North Korean threat is not restricted to East Asia or concerns over proliferation. In January 2011, Secretary of Defense Robert Gates warned that “North Korea is becoming a direct threat to the United States.”⁹ Gates's comments were sparked by revelations that within five years, North Korea will develop an intercontinental ballistic missile. Pyongyang has already deployed 600 SCUD missiles to target South Korea, 300 No Dong missiles that can reach all of Japan, and the Musudan missile, which is capable of hitting U.S. bases in Guam and Okinawa.

Pyongyang's unprovoked acts of war on a South Korean naval ship and a civilian-inhabited island in 2010 were chilling reminders that North Korean conventional forces remain a direct military threat to South Korea.¹⁰ Pyongyang's million-man army has 70 percent of its ground forces forward-deployed within 60 miles of South Korea. Weakening U.S. forces in the region will only encourage North Korea to conduct additional provocative acts in order to achieve foreign policy objectives.

The PRC poses another challenge to U.S. interests in Asia. Unlike Pyongyang, Beijing poses no immediate threat to the United States. Indeed, the U.S. and the PRC are each other's largest trading partners. But there are several fundamental flash points that could ignite a conflict between Beijing and Washington.

The most obvious such flash point is Taiwan. Beijing remains committed to uniting the two sides of the Taiwan Strait and has never renounced the possibility of using force to attain that end. The United States, meanwhile, remains committed to a peaceful resolution of the cross-Strait situation. Consequently, there is an omnipresent possibility of a crisis between Beijing and Taipei escalating to encompass Washington as well.

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For much of the 1990s and 2000s, such an escalation was a genuine concern. Since 2008, however, President Ma Ying-jeou of the Kuomintang (KMT) has focused on positive, constructive elements of the cross-Strait relationship, including the Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement (ECFA), which has led to lowered trade barriers between the two sides.

The 2012 presidential and legislative elections in Taiwan, however, may return the officially pro-independence Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) to power. While DPP presidential candidate Tsai Ing-wen has been cautious in her statements regarding the cross-Strait issue, whether Beijing will overreact to the election of a pro-independence party president remains to be seen. Rather than mark-

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8. Sam Kim and Lee Haye-ah, “S. Korea, U.S. Struggle to Cope with Disturbing Revelation in N. Korea's Nuclear Push,” Yonhap News Agency, November 22, 2010, at <http://english.yonhapnews.co.kr/national/2010/11/22/10/0301000000AEN2010122007000315FHTML> (November 18, 2011).
 9. Phil Stewart, “U.S. Sees North Korea Becoming Direct Threat, Eyes ICBMs,” Reuters, January 11, 2011, at <http://www.reuters.com/article/2011/01/11/us-usa-korea-gates-idUSTRE70A1XR20110111> (December 1, 2011).
 10. Bruce Klingner, “North Korea Pressures U.S. Through Provocations,” Heritage Foundation *WebMemo* No. 3066, November 24, 2010, at <http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2010/11/north-korea-pressures-us-through-provocations>.

ing a lower level of tension between the two sides, the past four years may have been the lull between storms.

The South China Sea is another source of growing tension between the U.S. and China. The PRC has laid a substantial claim to the South China Sea, arguing that it is historically Chinese waters and referencing a number of documents, including the so-called nine-dash map, to reinforce its claims to most of the region.¹¹ China claims support not only in the current international legal framework, including the U.N. Convention on the Law of the Sea, but also in the contention that the waters, as well as islands, have always been part of China.¹² From Beijing's perspective, the PRC has always had "indisputable sovereignty" over the islands and "adjacent" waters of the South China Sea region.¹³

Among the various claimants, only the PRC lays claims to the region, including the islands, the continental shelf, and the waters. From the Chinese perspective, foreign vessels have no right to operate in these waters without Chinese permission, and the Chinese have been increasingly assertive in enforcing these claims. Thus, China has repeatedly interfered with survey ships that were well within the 200-nautical-mile Vietnamese exclusive economic zone (EEZ).¹⁴ Meanwhile, the Chinese have violated the Philippine EEZ in a variety of ways, particularly over the course of 2011.

This pattern of behavior, coupled with the PRC's interference with U.S. vessels engaged in hydro-

graphic surveys in China's EEZ (the incidents involving the USNS *Impeccable*, the USNS *Victorious*, and the USS *John S. McCain III*), suggests that China's view of "freedom of navigation" is quite different from that of the U.S. as well as most other nations. From this mainstream perspective, national sovereignty extends only to the edge of a nation's territorial waters, or 12 nautical miles from the shore. Within its EEZ, a nation controls the exploitation of various resources (including fishing grounds and oil and natural gas reserves) but not the shipping that transits through it or the aircraft that fly over it. This "freedom of navigation" is essential for the routine conduct of international trade and airline travel. It is also what makes the South China Sea region essential, not only for the various claimants, but also for South Korea and Japan, much of whose energy and exports move along sea-lanes that transit the area.

By contrast, the PRC's position views the EEZ as more akin to territorial waters: States whose vessels are transiting those waters must have "due regard" for the concerns of the coastal state and are limited to peaceful use. According to China's line of argument:

"Freedom of navigation and over flight" in the EEZ should not include the freedom to conduct military and reconnaissance activities, to perform military deterrence or battlefield preparation, or intelligence gathering. China maintains these activities infringe on the

11. Li Jinming and Li Dexia, "The Dotted Line on the Chinese Map of the South China Sea: A Note," *Ocean Development & International Law*, Vol. 34 (2003), pp. 287–295, at <http://www.southchinasea.org/docs/Li%20and%20Li-The%20Dotted%20Line%20on%20the%20Map.pdf> (November 21, 2011).

12. *Ibid.*

13. For a review of the most recent Chinese statements reiterating this point, see Singapore Institute of International Affairs, "Timeline: Chinese Reiterations of 'Indisputable Sovereignty' Over South China Sea," September 15, 2011, at <http://www.siaaonline.org/?q=programmes/insights/timeline-chinese-reiterations-%E2%80%9CIndisputable-sovereignty%E2%80%9D-over-s-china-sea> (November 21, 2011).

14. BBC, "Vietnam Accuses China in Seas Dispute," May 30, 2011, at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-pacific-13592508> (November 21, 2011), and Bloomberg News, "Vietnam Says Chinese Boat Harassed Survey Ship: China Disputes," June 9, 2011, at <http://www.businessweek.com/news/2011-06-09/vietnam-says-chinese-boat-harassed-survey-ship-china-disputes.html> (November 21, 2011).

coastal state's national security interests and can be considered a use of force, or a threat to use force, against the state, particularly with the advanced technologies used by the vessels.¹⁵

For military vessels and aircraft, China's position is that their transit and activities, including hydrographic surveys and intelligence collection, can be undertaken only with permission from the coastal state—in this case, the PRC.

The American and Chinese positions are fundamentally at odds—a situation that is made more dangerous because it involves not only civilian and commercial vessels, but naval combatants and aircraft as well. The 2001 EP-3 incident, where a Chinese jet fighter and a U.S. turboprop reconnaissance aircraft collided, killing the Chinese pilot, highlights the potential for conflict in the U.S.–PRC relationship.¹⁶ Moreover, China's position raises the specter of efforts to assert control over some of the world's busiest shipping lanes. Northeast Asia's economies are dependent on the oil and resources that transit the South China Sea, while much of littoral Asia's trade passes through the area as well.

American Military Capabilities in the Pacific

To address the myriad array of challenges facing the United States in East Asia, the U.S. Pacific Command (PACOM) directly controls one-fifth of total U.S. military strength.¹⁷ Each of the service branches contribute to PACOM.

- The U.S. Pacific Fleet (PACFLT) commands about 180 ships, including six aircraft carrier

strike groups. One of these strike groups, the USS *George Washington* carrier group, is forward-deployed to the Seventh Fleet and home-ported in Yokosuka, Japan. PACFLT also controls 31 of America's 53 SSNs, or about 58 percent of the total U.S. attack submarine fleet.¹⁸

- Two of the three U.S. Marine Corps Marine Expeditionary Forces (each of which combines a Marine Air Wing with a Marine division) are under the control of Marine Corps Forces Pacific (MARFORPAC). They total some 85,000 personnel and are the largest field command in the U.S. Marine Corps.¹⁹
- Pacific Air Force (PACAF) controls four numbered air forces: 5th Air Force based in Japan, 7th Air Force based in South Korea, 11th Air Force in Alaska, and 13th Air Force in Hawaii. These units in turn control over 300 aircraft, including many of the U.S. Air Force's limited number of F-22s. Andersen Air Force base on Guam hosts B-2 and B-52 bombers.
- The Army component of PACOM, U.S. Army Pacific (USARPAC), has more than 60,000 personnel assigned, including five Stryker brigades. In addition, USARPAC controls more than 1,200 Special Operations personnel.

These forces are supported by the strategic deterrent elements of USSTRATCOM, including the nuclear bombers, missiles, and ballistic missile submarines based in the United States. In addition, various specialized assets, from unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) to space systems to electronic warfare and electronic surveillance systems, routinely deploy into the PACOM area of operations.

15. Li Jianwei and Ramses Amer, "China and US Views on Military Vessel Rights in the EEZ Is More than a Legal Matter?" *China-US Focus*, August 10, 2011, at <http://www.chinausfocus.com/peace-security/china-and-us-views-on-military-vessel-rights-in-the-eez-is-more-than-a-legal-matter/> (November 21, 2011).

16. For a full discussion of the 2001 EP-3 incident, see Shirley Kan *et al.*, "China–U.S. Aircraft Collision Incident of April 2001: Assessments and Policy Implications," Congressional Research Service *Report for Congress*, updated October 10, 2001, at <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RL30946.pdf> (December 1, 2011).

17. USPACOM, "USPACOM Facts," at http://www.pacom.mil/web/Site_Pages/USPACOM/Facts.shtml (November 21, 2011).

18. U.S. Navy, "COMSUBPAC Submarines," at http://www.csp.navy.mil/content/comsubpac_subsquadrans.shtml (December 1, 2011).

19. United States Marine Corps, "U.S. Marine Corps Forces, Pacific," at <http://www.marines.mil/unit/marforpac/Pages/about.aspx> (November 21, 2011).

Impact of Deep Budget Cuts

Given the critical role of the U.S. military, both in maintaining Asian regional stability and responding to ongoing threats and concerns in the western Pacific, major defense spending cuts would weaken the American position in the region. During his trip to Asia, Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta declared that the United States would maintain and even augment its military forces in Asia. While reassuring to U.S. allies, Panetta's pledge is unrealistic if the pending cuts in the American defense budget are not reversed.

The idea that these cuts can occur without affecting America's forward deployments in the Pacific is simply not credible. Furthermore, the Joint Chiefs of Staff testified in early November that an additional \$500 billion–\$600 billion in cuts resulting from the super committee's failure (sequestration) would have a devastating impact on U.S. national security—and, one could surmise, a corresponding effect on U.S. security commitments in the Pacific.

- Admiral Jonathan Greenert, Chief of Naval Operations: "Sequestration could have a severe and irreversible impact on the Navy's future.... [T]he size of these cuts would substantially impact our ability to resource the Combatant Commander's operational plans and maintain our forward presence around the globe."²⁰
- General Raymond Odierno, Chief of Staff, U.S. Army: "Cuts of this magnitude would be catastrophic to the military and—in the case of the Army—would significantly reduce our capability and capacity to assure our partners abroad, respond to crises, and deter our potential adversaries, while threatening the readiness of our All-Volunteer Force.... [I]t would require us to completely revamp our National Security Strategy and reassess our ability to shape the global environment in order to protect the United States.... [T]he Nation would incur an unacceptable level of strategic and operational risk."²¹
- General James Amos, Commandant of the Marine Corps: Such cuts might put the Marine Corps "below the end strength level that's necessary to support even one major contingency.... We will not be able to do the things the Nation needs us to do to mitigate risk.... We won't be there to reassure our potential friends, or to assure our allies. And we certainly won't be there to contain small crises before they become major conflagrations.... [It could] easily translate into increased loss of personnel and materiel, and ultimately places mission accomplishment at risk."²²
- General Norton Schwartz, Chief of Staff, United States Air Force: "Further spending reductions beyond the more than \$450 billion that are needed to comply with the Budget Control Act's first round of cuts cannot be done without damaging our core military capabilities and therefore our national security.... [They would result in] diminished capacity to execute concurrent missions across the spectrum of operations and over vast distances on the globe.... Ultimately, such a scenario gravely undermines our ability to protect the Nation."²³

20. Admiral Jonathan Greenert, "The Future of the Military Services and Consequences of Defense Sequestration," statement before the Committee on Armed Services, U.S. House of Representatives, November 2, 2011, at http://armedservices.house.gov/index.cfm/files/serve?File_id=57509469-d31e-48ac-9c95-0c4c2be42da0 (November 21, 2011).

21. General Raymond T. Odierno, "The Future of the Military Services and Consequences of Defense Sequestration," statement before the Committee on Armed Services, U.S. House of Representatives, November 2, 2011, at http://armedservices.house.gov/index.cfm/files/serve?File_id=124f067d-3a7e-47f4-bd6f-611270abc890 (November 21, 2011).

22. General James F. Amos, Commandant of the Marine Corps, "The Future of the Military Services and Consequences of Defense Sequestration," statement before the Committee on Armed Services, U.S. House of Representatives, November 2, 2011, at http://armedservices.house.gov/index.cfm/files/serve?File_id=08eaf78f-203b-4804-ad15-8593b91a86e2 (November 21, 2011).

23. General Norton A. Schwartz, "The Future of the Military Services and Consequences of Defense Sequestration," statement before the Committee on Armed Services, U.S. House of Representatives, November 2, 2011, at http://armedservices.house.gov/index.cfm/files/serve?File_id=18235368-5f93-4bf3-8a83-5b2d9e19336f (November 21, 2011).

Applied across the board to all parts of the military budget, such cuts would result in an 18 percent reduction in all aspects of defense outlays—acquisition, training, infrastructure construction, and personnel costs. If military pay and benefits were exempted, then the remaining parts of the defense budget would take a 24 percent cut in addition to that already required under previous cuts. The number of Navy combatants and Air Force fighters would fall by an additional 10 percent.²⁴ These cuts would produce a military unable to meet its global commitments; under such circumstances, “pivoting” America’s defense focus to Asia, as proposed by the Administration, is simply not credible.

Challenges Ahead

As the debate over defense cuts continues, the U.S. should take the following steps:

- **Fully fund U.S. defense requirements.** It is unrealistic to think that the United States can cut defense spending by an additional \$1 trillion over the next decade and still maintain its current level of commitment. Shortchanging U.S. defense spending may appear to provide short-term budgetary gains, but such gains will come at an unacceptable risk to America’s armed forces, allies, and national interests in the Asia–Pacific.
- **Be truthful with the American public.** Should the Administration and Congress refuse to fully fund this nation’s defense requirements, then it is their responsibility to explain the consequences of such spending cuts to the American people. Specifically, both the Administration and Congress will either have to drastically reduce U.S. military capabilities or degrade America’s ability to respond to Asia’s daunting security challenges. Although each option is equally undesirable, it is the responsibility of both the executive branch and the legislative branch to explain either which missions the U.S. will abandon or the nature of the heightened risks it will assume.

- **Enunciate U.S. strategy for Asia.** In light of pending defense budget cuts, the Administration and Congress should outline their strategy for Asia. Reducing U.S. military capabilities undercuts America’s ability to defend its allies, deter threats, and respond quickly to aggressive actions or natural disasters in Asia. Consequently, it is imperative—if the Administration and Congress are intent upon cutting defense spending—to explain how the U.S. will preserve its interests with its remaining forces.
- **Strengthen U.S. alliances.** Washington cannot meet all of the challenges presented by Asia on its own. America must rely on a comprehensive network of alliances and relationships with other Asian nations—countries that share common values of freedom, democracy, and free-market principles. The U.S. should urge the most capable of its alliance partners to augment their contributions to their defense and to aid in addressing international security challenges. At the same time, it should provide local states with better self-defense capacity so that America’s friends and allies can better defend themselves, contribute to common regional security, and alleviate demands on American forces.

Reduced Deterrence, Diminished Influence

Given the “tyranny of distance” of the vast expanse of the Pacific region, a drawdown in force structure such as further reductions in the total number of aircraft carriers, which would affect the ability to maintain forward-deployed units, or in training and operations and maintenance, which would affect the fighting ability of U.S. forces, would translate into a reduced ability to deter potential opponents and reassure friends and allies in Asia.

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24. House Armed Services Committee Republican Staff, “Assessment of Impacts of Budget Cuts,” memorandum to Chairman Howard P. “Buck” McKeon, September 22, 2011, at http://armedservices.house.gov/index.cfm/files/serve?File_id=052aad71-19cb-4f8e-a1b5-389689d542d7 (November 21, 2011).