

# WebMemo



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## Defense Cuts in FY 2011 Would Hurt Troops

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Right now, Congress is determining how to fund the government through the remainder of the fiscal year. One proposal on the table in the House of Representatives includes funding defense significantly below President Obama's requested levels for fiscal year (FY) 2011 by roughly \$13 billion. While it is easy to assume that in such a large budget there must be little impact on those in uniform with this type of reduction in planned spending, the reality is that these spending plans would have significant and immediate impact on the U.S. military.

Congress should fully fund defense for FY 2011 at the level requested by the President: \$548 billion. Matching the President's budget request for defense in FY 2011 provides the minimum basis required to provide adequate defense budgets in the future. Fully funding defense requirements this year demands vigilant efforts by policymakers to identify spending cuts elsewhere in the federal budget.

**Current Spending Plans Are Damaging.** Senior defense officials have been busy explaining the negative consequences of inadequately funding defense for 2011. If Congress does not support the President's budget request for 2011, the defense budget plans for FY 2012 will then be adversely affected. The military would be able to buy even less defense in the out years than it plans on the books today due to a readjusted lower baseline from which future spending is calculated.

A survey of recent pronouncements from military and defense officials highlights the real-world impact of Congress's messy spending plans for defense.

Army officials are currently lacking funds to purchase four new helicopters that are employed extensively in overseas operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. Under current spending constraints, the army is "unable to buy four new CH-47 Chinook helicopters for the Army's 13th Combat Aviation Brigade."<sup>1</sup> Additionally, the army's AH-64 Apache Longbow Block III program, "a major upgrade effort, was scheduled to move from low-rate initial production in 2010 into full-scale production in 2011. A year-long CR would short the program \$219 million and eight helicopters."<sup>2</sup> Under current spending plans, army leaders have said there "would be no money to refurbish Humvee utility vehicles, and officials could be forced to shut down production lines at the Red River Army depot in Texas and the Letterkenny Army depot in Pennsylvania."<sup>3</sup>

The massive reduction from requested levels for 2011 would increase the cost of programs the following year after suffering costly delays. This includes the "purchase of 24 hunter-killer Reaper drones used heavily in Afghanistan, the construction of a new *Virginia*-class submarine, a naval destroyer and an E-2D Hawkeye airborne command and control aircraft."<sup>4</sup> A yearlong continuing resolution (CR) would impact the navy's ability to grow the fleet and affect more than 20 air force

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acquisition programs that require immediate funding in order to execute plans this year.

The air force is considering the possibility of “grounding some of its F-15E fleet”<sup>5</sup> due to funding shortfalls. A delay in the purchase of Active Electronically Scanned Array radar for F-15Es “will increase the risk that we might have to ground a portion of our F-15E fleet because the existing radar system is dependent on parts that are obsolete and not available.... Without kicking off that modernization program this year, as originally scheduled, we are significantly increasing the risk that parts on those radar will fail and be irreplaceable. That has significant operational effect.”<sup>6</sup> Further, the air force’s 2011 budget request, “including war costs, sought funding to double the production of the MQ-9 Reaper from 24 to 48 aircraft. Under continuing resolution rules, the Air Force cannot sign contracts to execute that goal.”<sup>7</sup>

Air Force Major General Alfred Flowers has said that 36 military construction projects have been deferred, and that number could reach 129, for a total of \$1.1 billion, if funding is not restored. Navy leaders said in the same story the current spending plans for defense “have delayed and could jeopardize nearly 90 construction projects in 13 states, threatening up to 7,300 jobs. And it could force cancellation of major maintenance on ships, aircraft, and engines that would affect another 1,300 private sector jobs.”<sup>8</sup>

Marine Corps plans to field early the Small Tactical Unmanned Aerial System would be delayed if Congress does not pass a defense spending bill at requested levels.<sup>9</sup> Long overdue air force plans to buy a new tanker to replace a fleet nearly a half-century old would be halted under current spending plans. The army would most likely have to delay its ability to begin work on a new ground combat vehicle. Inadequate defense funding could also cut the number of the navy’s P-8A Poseidon maritime surveillance aircraft from seven to six and significantly slow the in-service date of these aircraft into an operational squadron.<sup>10</sup>

If Congress includes defense in a long-term CR that freezes spending at FY 2010 levels, “there would be insufficient funding for the military’s 1.4 percent pay raise approved in the fiscal 2011 defense authorization bill already signed into law, according to Stephen Daggett, a Congressional Research Service specialist on the defense budget. Nor would there be enough money to pay for required defense health-care costs that have increased over the amount allocated in 2010.”<sup>11</sup> Additionally, “new programs for military spouses and family support programs will not get started.”<sup>12</sup>

**Impact Is Already Hurting the Military.** The effects of the short-term CR are already wreaking havoc on defense plans for maintenance of equipment and readiness levels of U.S. forces. The navy is being forced to shorten the notification time for sail-

1. Kate Brannen, “U.S. Army Starts Making Hard Funding Choices,” *Defense News*, February 6, 2011.
2. *Ibid.*
3. Lolita C. Baldor, “Defense Leaders Warn of Big Budget Cuts Fallout,” *The Associated Press*, February 10, 2011.
4. *Ibid.*
5. Jason Sherman, “Air Force Considers Tapping Modernization Accounts to Pay \$5.8 Billion in FY-11 Bills,” *InsideDefense.com*, February 3, 2011.
6. *Ibid.*
7. *Ibid.*
8. *Ibid.*
9. Andrew Burt, “Continuing Resolution Could Delay Early Efforts to Field STUAS,” *InsideDefense.com*, February 4, 2011.
10. Dan Taylor, “Continuing Resolution Poses Risk to P-8A Poseidon’s 2013 IOC,” *InsideDefense.com*, January 25, 2011.
11. Walter Pincus, “Defense Officials Warn of Crisis Unless Congress Approves 2011 Funding Bill,” *The Washington Post*, February 12, 2011, at <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2011/02/12/AR2011021202850.html?sid=ST2011021007730> (February 14, 2011).
12. *Ibid.*

ors scheduled to change duty stations. Service officials have said that insufficient funding is the reason behind the disruption in normal lead time for sailors to receive what are called permanent change of station orders. Chief of Naval Personnel Vice Admiral Mark Ferguson wrote in recent correspondence with senior officials that “average lead times have reduced from 4-6 months to approximately 2 months or less.”<sup>13</sup> The navy is no longer “going to send sailors to Europe as planned, is slowing the pace of security clearances it issues and is beginning to neglect maintenance on the shore.”<sup>14</sup> James McCarthy, Assistant Deputy Chief of Naval Operations for Integration of Capabilities and Resources, said recently, “Manpower accounts are short about \$500 million under the continuing resolution, while operations and maintenance is light by about \$4.6 billion.”<sup>15</sup>

The navy is canceling upcoming shipyard repairs. Last week, the Chief of Naval Operations told an audience, “We are in the process now, regrettably, with having to cancel some maintenance availabilities because I can’t exceed the budget limits that have been placed on us because of the continuing resolution. We have to get out from underneath this in order to make the Navy the flexible force the nation expects.”<sup>16</sup>

Five ship availabilities planned for April and May have been canceled, 19 shore-side projects with February and March start dates are being deferred, and two availabilities that are underway are being scrapped.<sup>17</sup> Navy leadership is “already scaling back training for sailors and canceling shipyard repair work and is planning further shutdowns.... By mid-March, shipyards in Norfolk, Va.; Mayport,

Fla.; and San Diego will learn that five maintenance projects the Navy had planned won’t proceed.”<sup>18</sup>

This year, the navy has wanted to increase production of Littoral Combat Ships, *Virginia*-class submarines, and DDG-51 destroyers all from one to two. Each of these plans would be killed under a CR and most likely affected under current proposals by Congress to fund defense significantly below the President’s requested level.

The navy’s budget director recently said funding for the Mobile Landing Platform, an auxiliary support ship that received advanced procurement dollars in FY 2010, would be halted. The navy requires \$380 million to start building the ship this year. Additionally, the navy’s “plan to start work in FY11 on nuclear cores that will be used to refuel a submarine and aircraft carrier in fiscal years 2015 and 2016 could be stymied because the service makes these acquisitions in alternate years, and none was purchased in FY10.”<sup>19</sup> Navy plans to build two aircraft carriers are also on hold due to inadequate funding.

Two weeks ago, army leadership agreed to a temporary hiring freeze for its entire civilian workforce.<sup>20</sup> That freeze could be extended indefinitely if Congress does not provide funding at the President’s requested levels for FY 2011. The army may be forced to cut back on training overall and scale back the varied types of training that soldiers are receiving in areas beyond counterinsurgency. Recently, the army “conducted its first full-spectrum training exercise, reintroducing skills needed for major combat operations. It may be the last exercise like that for awhile.”<sup>21</sup>

13. Mark D. Faram, “Budget Problem Forces PCS Delays,” *Navy Times*, February 9, 2011.

14. Jen DiMascio, “Navy Chief Concerned About Budget,” *Politico*, February 6, 2011, at <http://www.politico.com/news/stories/0211/48944.html> (February 14, 2011).

15. Cid Standifer and Dan Taylor, “Shortfalls in Manpower, Operations: Navy Looks at Reprogramming Options Under Continuing Resolution,” *Inside the Navy*, January 17, 2011 (subscription required).

16. Sam Fellman, “Budget Impasse Delays Scheduled Ship Repairs,” *Navy Times*, February 11, 2011.

17. *Ibid.*

18. DiMascio, “Navy Chief Concerned About Budget.”

19. Jason Sherman, “Navy Modernization Due for Turmoil If Yearlong Continuing Resolution Is Passed,” *InsideDefense.com*, February 8, 2011.

20. Brannen, “U.S. Army Starts Making Hard Funding Choices.”

21. *Ibid.*

**Guaranteeing Cost Growth.** The impact of a short-term CR that froze defense spending at 2010 levels is already causing damage to the military. All of the services are facing a “bow wave” of deferred aircraft maintenance, facility maintenance and military health care costs” that are building up as the military “operates under constraints of the continuing resolution.”<sup>22</sup> Possible spending plans that would not fully fund President Obama’s requested level for defense in 2011 would continue to negatively impact those in uniform. Congress may ultimately end up wasting taxpayer money and spending more to restore programs upended by funding uncertainty and stringent rules about new starts and expansions.

In the words of one senior navy official, “The best case is: we’re going to be six months into the fiscal year and we don’t have a budget. It is not a good sit-

uation to be in. It forces you into stupid management decisions.”<sup>23</sup> By funding defense at the President’s requested and legitimately needed level, Congress would be saving itself from creating unnecessary longer-term costs. By forcing the military to postpone plans to buy needed items for those in uniform, Congress would not end up saving any money. Delaying defense programs virtually guarantees their cost growth not only this year and next but every year thereafter. Congress should pass a defense spending bill that fully funds the President’s budget request for FY 2011.

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22. Dave Majumdar, “Stalled Budget Leaves Air Force Short of Funds,” *Air Force Times*, February 4, 2011.

23. Kate Brannen and Christopher P. Cavas, “Lack of FY11 Budget Ties Up Pentagon,” *Defense News*, February 6, 2011.