



The budget-gutting policies of “sequestration” — an across-the-board cut of a \$55 billion a year for 10 years to our defense budget — pose a serious threat to our national security. They represent a haphazard and thoughtless approach to cutting the national budget that was designed to force action, not to be actual policy. These cuts come at a time when increasingly complex and dangerous global threats are on the rise and our ability to respond to them is already being diminished.

The size of the cuts is not as troubling as the reckless manner in which they are carried out. I have long been in favor of trimming the excesses of the defense budget, but in a way that is responsible, balanced, and that reflects the goals of our national strategy, unlike sequestration.

In testimony before the House Armed Services Committee in September of this year, senior leaders from the Department of Defense testified that every major account, except those used to pay our service members, would be reduced by 9.4 percent. This includes accounts used for repairing our damaged wartime equipment, providing training for troops preparing to deploy to Afghanistan, and for purchasing new and necessary technologies to ensure we field the best-equipped force on the battlefield.

On the other hand, there are areas that could stand to be reduced by greater than the 9.4 percent proposed but won't be, such as accounts that fund headquarters units bloated with redundant levels of senior leadership. This includes the surplus of generals and admirals and the inefficient relationships between the National Guard and Reserve branches. We could also find larger cuts to the funds that support excessive infrastructure and services for the more than 80,000 troops still permanently stationed in Europe 20 years after the end of the Cold War.

As a Marine Corps combat veteran, I know the tough choices our small unit leaders have to make when faced with limited resources. As a member of the House Armed Services Committee, I have seen the inability for senior DOD officials to make those same tough choices. Now is the time for creative and balanced problem-solving.

In the past I have proposed several alternative solutions. I have called for a reduction in the amount of generals and admirals in our military to bring it in line with historical levels. I was successful in building a bipartisan coalition to pass an amendment calling on the president to reduce the number of U.S. military personnel that are still stationed in Germany. And the Government Accountability Office has launched a study, commissioned at my request, to explore options to reduce redundancy and streamline operations in the National Guard and Reserve.

There are many places that the Department of Defense can cut costs. They should do so as part of a broader reduction in government spending. We must reduce the amount of waste in the budget in a way that results in a more lethal, flexible, and efficient force. But sequestration blindly attacks programs, without concern for their necessity or efficiency. We can be smarter.

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