



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on March 24, 2011

Libya Costs Will Undermine GOP's Savings

While Republicans have touted savings in the passage of continuing resolution after continuing resolution, it seems the military operations in Libya may eliminate any of the celebrated savings. Since the beginning of March, Republican leaders have boasted spending reductions amounting to almost \$300 million per day. Unfortunately, that victory may be short lived as President Obama has embarked on additional military operations in the Middle East.



The Hill [reports](#):

Defense analysts say the Pentagon could be burning through more than \$100 million per day in Libya, putting those budget savings at risk.

In separate briefings on Monday, the Defense Department and the White House said they do not yet have a projected price tag for the military action that began on Saturday. Defense officials said they are still 'collecting' and analyzing early costs.

It seems ironic for the United States to engage in further military operations in a region from which Americans had hoped to see the military withdraw, as per President Obama's campaign promises. Further adding to the irony is the increased cost of the new military endeavors as Congress has been working to rein in federal spending.

In fact, Congress appears concerned by the newly acquired costs, with the House Appropriations Committee inquiring from the Pentagon "what the expectations and needs may be."

According to the Center for a New American Security (CNAS), the Pentagon spent approximately \$81 million just on the 110 Tomahawk missiles used on the first day of the mission alone, though the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments (CSBA) asserts that the first day is likely to be the most expensive.

A Pentagon spokeswoman, Cheryl Irwin, sent an email on Monday responding, "We are working on cost estimates." She added, "[Pentagon officials are] cash-flowing the Libyan operations out of funding available under the [2011] continuing resolution," for now.

Republican Senator Dick Lugar, on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, has called for "a full congressional debate on the objectives and costs" on the operations in Libya.

In a statement issued by Lugar on Monday, he said, "Congress has been squabbling for months over a budget to run the federal government for a fiscal year that is almost over." He adds, "We argue over where to cut \$100 million here and there from programs many people like. So here comes an open-ended military action with no-end game envisioned."

Articulating similar sentiments is Democratic Representative Dennis Kucinich, who has called President



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Obama's actions in Libya "impeachable."

The Obama administration has used the criticism against the actions in Libya to further promote creating a strong international coalition that can help pay for the military operations.

Ben Rhodes, deputy national security adviser, explains, "It's important to have a model where the international community bears a cost...of these actions going forward, because the United States alone can't bear the burden of these costs over time." Rhodes asserts that as other nations begin to take the lead in enforcing the no-fly zone, the United States will witness a decrease in costs.

Gordon Adams, who formerly oversaw the defense budgeting at the Office of Management and Budget, claims the mission in Libya "could get to \$1 billion, or \$1.5 billion, if it goes one for a year."

CSBA claims that enforcing the no-fly zone in northern Libya alone will cost anywhere from \$30 million to \$100 million per week, but defense officials are unwilling to advance a figure, or ascertain from where the money will come.

Pentagon officials contend that it's too soon to consider an emergency Defense spending bill.

The Hill reports, "A senior Democratic aide on the House Appropriations Committee downplayed the possibility of a new supplemental spending bill. Citing the contingency funding already built into the Pentagon budget, the aide said the Libya operation 'does not seem likely to require a supplemental.'"

Meanwhile, the same Americans that helped to elect an allegedly fiscally conservative Congress in 2010 are now throwing their support behind the military operations in Libya.

A [March 24](#) Rasmussen Report poll shows that 45 percent of likely voters support Obama's military action in Libya, while 34 percent oppose it.

Those figures mark a transition from just [two days earlier](#), when 34 percent supported action in Libya and 48 percent opposed it.

Just [two weeks ago](#), 63 percent of Americans were opposed to military action in Libya.

Photo: Vice Adm. William E. Gortney, Director of the Joint Staff, gives a news conference at the Pentagon on Saturday, March 19, 2011.: AP

Images

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