



Written by [Kelly Holt](#) on January 25, 2011

Tea Partiers Push for Cuts in Defense Spending

New members in Congress may face tough choices as Tea Partiers say the defense budget shouldn't be exempt from budget cuts. According to MSNBC.com on Jan. 21, although the \$700 billion annual budget is one that few in Congress have been willing to tackle, Tea Party groups declare that if spending is to be cut, "the military's budget needs to be part of the mix."

[Tea Party Patriots](#) founder Mark Meckler observed:

The widely held sentiment among Tea Party Patriot members is that every item in the budget, including military spending and foreign aid, must be on the table. It is time to get serious about preserving the country for our posterity. The mentality that certain programs are "off the table" must be taken off the table.



Meckler was referring to the defense, Homeland Security and veterans' programs exemptions in "Pledge to America" made by House Republican leaders last fall. But new House Majority Leader Eric Cantor (R-Va.) reports that defense could now be up for cuts.

Along with most Tea Party groups, the Tea Party Patriots list as their core values fiscal responsibility, constitutionally-limited government, and free markets. Consequently, they believe that each spending bill should be based on specific constitutional authority. Because most spending bills have long not been so based, Tea Partiers and other fiscal conservatives made their displeasure known last November, and are now demanding reduced spending — including defense expenditures.

The entire Tea Party movement could face criticism in pushing for cuts in defense spending: opponents claim that proposed cuts would weaken national security post-September 11 and jeopardize jobs at a time of already high unemployment.

MSNBC continued,

Defense Secretary Robert Gates, in a recent pre-emptive move, proposed \$78 billion in spending cuts and an additional \$100 billion in cost-saving moves. While that amounts to \$13 billion less than the Pentagon wanted to spend in the coming year, it still stands as 3 percent growth after inflation is taken into account.

But freshman Representative Jon Runyan, (R-N.J.), Tea Party favorite and member of the House Armed Services Committee, expects the committee to fight over Gates' proposal.

And Pat Toomey, (R-Pa.) contends,



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We want to make sure men and women put in harm's way have the resources they need. That doesn't mean the entire defense budget has to be taken off the table.

In one of those quirky events that occur only in politics, polar opposite Congressmen Ron Paul (R-Texas) and Barney Frank (D-Mass.) have combined their efforts to press for substantial defense cuts, including closing some of America's over [1000 overseas military bases](#).

The Tea Party Express, founded in 2009 to support the Tea Party movement, favors defense budget cuts. Sal Russo, TPE's chief strategist, indicates that the organization expects lawmakers to "responsibly bring spending down."

Cutting defense spending means questioning the country's involvement on foreign soil, as Americans grow increasingly weary of undeclared wars in Iraq and now Afghanistan. A *CNN* opinion research poll conducted Dec. 17-19, 2010 showed 63 percent of [Americans are opposed to the war in Afghanistan](#).

However, with no evidence that these overseas interventionist conflicts will end any time soon, Tea Partiers and other constitutionalists are taking the approach of de-funding the wars, and eliminating a lot of excess spending while doing it.

Photo: Ramstein Air Base, Germany



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