



American Bridge

Trump Policy Brief: “Military Readiness”

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TRUMP'S "MILITARY READINESS" EXECUTIVE ACTION

Donald Trump signed an executive memorandum declaring that rebuilding the U.S. armed forces would be "the policy of the United States," and later called for increasing defense spending by \$54 billion while making an equal amount of cuts to other departments.

- ✓ In order to fund the increase in Defense spending, the Trump administration was expected to make across-the-board cuts of 10% to all other federal spending.
- ✓ Trump erroneously claimed that he would increase the size of the Navy to the largest it had ever been
- ✓ James Mattis and 120 retired U.S. Generals have cautioned against making cuts to the State Department budget, which would be subject to cuts under Trump's proposal.

Trump Signed A Memo Declaring That U.S. Policy Was "To Rebuild The U.S. Armed Forces," And Later Proposed A \$54 Billion Increase In Defense Spending At The Expense Of Other Departments

TRUMP ORDER INITIATED THE REVIEW OF READINESS CONDITIONS AND THE PREPARATION OF BUDGET PROPOSALS

Trump's Order Declared "It Shall Be The Policy Of The United States To Rebuild The U.S. Armed Forces." According to ABC News, "The memorandum also orders reviews that would modernize America's nuclear weapons systems and strengthen its missile defense capabilities. Trump often characterized the U.S. military during his presidential campaign as having been 'depleted' during the Obama administration. But the lower funding levels the U.S. military experienced in recent years were forced by the Budget Control Act of 2011 that mandated government spending cuts known as sequestration. [...] Addressed to the Defense secretary and director of the Office of Management and Budget, the memorandum states that 'it shall be the policy of the United States to rebuild the U.S. Armed Forces.'" [ABC News, [1/28/17](#)]

Trump's Memorandum Gave Defense Secretary Mattis 30 Days To Conduct A Review To Assess Readiness Conditions. According to ABC News, "Addressed to the Defense secretary and director of the Office of Management and Budget, the memorandum states that 'it shall be the policy of the United States to rebuild the U.S. Armed Forces.' It gives Defense Secretary James Mattis, a retired Marine general, 30 days to conduct a review to assess 'readiness conditions, including training, equipment maintenance, munitions, modernization, and infrastructure.' The review will guide what actions can be carried out in the current fiscal year 'that are necessary to improve readiness conditions,' as well as in the FY 2017 budget proposal that is still working its way through Congress a year after it was submitted." [ABC News, [1/28/17](#)]

Trump's Memorandum Gave Defense Secretary Mattis 60 Days To Submit A Plan Of Action To Achieve, Before FY 2019, The Levels Of Readiness Identified In His Readiness Review. According to ABC News, "Mattis will also have 60 days to submit a plan of action that by FY 2019 'shall address areas for improvement, including insufficient maintenance, delays in acquiring parts, access to training ranges, combatant command operational demands, funding needed for consumables (e.g., fuel, ammunition),

manpower shortfalls, depot maintenance capacity, and time needed to plan, coordinate, and execute readiness and training activities.” [ABC News, [1/28/17](#)]

Trump’s Memorandum Required The Defense Department To Submit A National Defense Strategy.

According to ABC News, “The Defense Department will be required to submit a National Defense Strategy ‘to give the President and the Secretary maximum strategic flexibility and to determine the force structure necessary to meet requirements.’” [ABC News, [1/28/17](#)]

Trump’s Memorandum Required Reviews Of The Nuclear Triad And Ballistic Missile Defense.

According to ABC News, “The Defense Department will be required to submit a National Defense Strategy ‘to give the President and the Secretary maximum strategic flexibility and to determine the force structure necessary to meet requirements.’ The memorandum also requires a review of the nuclear triad ‘to ensure that the United States nuclear deterrent is modern, robust, flexible, resilient, ready, and appropriately tailored to deter 21st-century threats and reassure our allies.’ It also calls for a new review of Ballistic Missile Defense ‘to identify ways of strengthening missile-defense capabilities, rebalancing homeland and theater defense priorities, and highlighting priority funding areas.’” [ABC News, [1/28/17](#)]

Trump’s Memorandum Called For The Defense Secretary To Develop Levels For The Department Of Defense's FY 2018 Budget In Conjunction With OMB. According to Defense News, “The full text of the executive order is as follows: [...] The Secretary shall work with the Director of OMB to develop levels for the Department of Defense's FY 2018 budget request that are necessary to improve readiness conditions and address risks to national security.” [Defense News, [1/27/17](#)]

FEBRUARY 27, 2017: THE TRUMP ADMINISTRATION PROPOSED A \$54 BILLION BUDGET INCREASE IN DEFENSE SPENDING

The Trump Administration Announced They Would Propose A Budget With A \$54 Billion Or 10% Increase In Defense Spending. According to the Washington Post, “President Trump will propose a federal budget that dramatically increases defense-related spending by \$54 billion while cutting other federal agencies by the same amount, according to an administration official. [...] According to the White House, the defense budget will increase by 10 percent.” [Washington Post, [2/27/17](#)]

Trump Claimed That He’d Increase The Size Of The U.S. Navy To The “Largest It’s Been.”

According to CBS News, “President Donald Trump painted an overly bleak picture of the condition of the armed forces as he made his case for military expansion. A look at some of his statements from the Gerald R. Ford, a \$12.9 billion aircraft carrier being built in Newport News, Virginia: [...] TRUMP: ‘Our Navy is now the smallest it’s been since, believe or not, World War I. Don’t worry. It’s going to soon be the largest it’s been.’” [CBS News, [3/3/17](#)]

- **The Record Size Of The U.S. Navy Fleet Was 6,768 Fighting Ships During World War II; As of March 2017 The Fleet Size Was 274.** According to CBS News, “The fleet indeed shrank to its smallest size since the decade after World War I - bottoming out at 271 in 2015 before rising to 274 this year, compared with 139 in 1930. [...] The fleet stood at a record high of 6,768 fighting ships during World War II, declined gradually in the 1950s and ‘60s and shrank significantly after the Vietnam War.” [CBS News, [3/3/17](#)]
- **The Number Of Navy Personnel Fell From More Than 725,000 In 1954 To Approximately 323,000 In 2017.** According to CBS News, “The number of Navy personnel has also fallen over time, from more than 725,000 in 1954 to about 323,000 now. It’s unlikely to grow anywhere near that higher level.” [CBS News, [3/3/17](#)]

- Former Navy Undersecretary Janine Davidson Said That A \$54 Billion Increase In The Defense Budget Wouldn't Be Enough To Expand The Navy's Fleet To Even 350 Ships.** According to Military.com, "But his plan to increase defense spending by \$54 billion over the next year, revealed by White House officials this week, falls short of the buildup many were hoping for. Senate and House Armed Services Committee Chairmen John McCain and Mac Thornberry have both called the figure too low, while former Navy Under Secretary Janine Davidson said at a Washington, D.C., event that the number would not even fund a Navy buildup to 350 ships." [Military.com, [3/2/17](#)]

Trump Said He'd Remove Budget Caps In Order To Cut Fleet Acquisition Costs. According to Military.com, "Trump has publicly advocated for a fleet of 350 ships, roughly in keeping with the Navy's current force structure assessment for how it needs to grow over the next 30 years. At its peak in World War II, however, the service had an astounding 6,768 active ships, far more than even ambitious projected fleet growth. The president also said he'd work to cut acquisition costs, in part by removing budget caps that minimize the Navy's certainty and ability to plan." [Military.com, [3/2/17](#)]

Trump Said He Wanted To Bring The Total Number Of Navy Aircraft Carriers To 12, From 10 As Of March 2017. According to Military.com, "President Donald Trump swapped his signature red 'Make America Great Again' ballcap for one bearing the seal of the soon-to-be commissioned carrier Gerald R. Ford as he promised to build the biggest Navy in American history in an address aboard the warship. [...] He reiterated his desire to return to a Navy of 12 aircraft carriers, up from the 10 currently in the fleet." [Military.com, [3/2/17](#)]

The Trump Administration Planned To Send A Final Description Of Its Defense Spending Requests In March 2017, Which A Complete Budget In May 2017

The Trump Administration Planned To Send A Final Description Of Its Defense Spending Requests To Congress In Mid-March 2017, And A More Complete Budget In Early May. According to RealClearPolitics, "The administration will send a final description of its spending requests to lawmakers in mid-March -- with details for each department -- and by early May a more complete budget showing revenue and tax details, entitlements, and economic projections." [RealClearPolitics, [3/3/17](#)]

To Account For The Massive Increase In Defense Spending, The Trump Administration Would Likely Institute 10% Across-The-Board Cuts To All Other Federal Spending

Washington Post: Since "Defense Spending Accounts For Almost The Same Proportion Of The Federal Budget As All Non-Discretionary Domestic Spending [...] The Trump Administration's Proposal Will Result In A Roughly 10 Percent Across-The-Board Cut In All Other Federal Spending Programs." According to the Washington Post, "Defense spending accounts for almost the same proportion of the federal budget as all non-discretionary domestic spending, meaning that the Trump administration's proposal will result in a roughly 10 percent across-the-board cut in all other federal spending programs." [Washington Post, [2/27/17](#)]

An Office Of Management And Budget Official Claimed Most Federal Agencies Would See "Substantial Reductions In Their Budgets." According to the Washington Post, "Most federal agencies would see substantial reductions in their budgets, said the Office of Management and Budget administration official, who spoke on the condition of anonymity on a call with reporters to discuss the proposal." [Washington Post, [2/27/17](#)]

- President Trump Was Expected To Announce Major Cuts To The Environmental Protection Agency At The Expense Of Defense.** According to the Hill, "President Trump is expected to

demand major cuts to the Environmental Protection Agency and Department of State to fund boosts to military spending in his first budget, according to multiple reports. Trump on Monday will instruct cabinet and agency officials to prepare budget requests, according to the New York Times and Axios. The administration is expected to release its first budget outline March 13, and Trump will ask for massive cuts to EPA climate change programs to help fund drastic increases in military spending.” [The Hill, [2/27/17](#)]

Trump Planned To Ask Congress To Cut Non-Defense Discretionary Spending By \$54 Billion For The Fiscal Year 2018. According to RealClearPolitics, “In the president’s first detailed budget proposal, to be sent to Capitol Hill in May, he will ask Congress to cut non-defense discretionary spending by \$54 billion in fiscal year 2018, which begins in October. Those savings, Trump argues, should be shifted to military spending as a one-for-one swap that would not enlarge the deficit.” [RealClearPolitics, [3/3/17](#)]

- **Trump Claimed That Military Spending Increases Would Be Directly Offset By Cuts To Non-Defense Spending In Order To Avoid Enlarging The Deficit.** According to RealClearPolitics, “In the president’s first detailed budget proposal, to be sent to Capitol Hill in May, he will ask Congress to cut non-defense discretionary spending by \$54 billion in fiscal year 2018, which begins in October. Those savings, Trump argues, should be shifted to military spending as a one-for-one swap that would not enlarge the deficit.” [RealClearPolitics, [3/3/17](#)]

Trump Budget Officials Asked Civilian Agencies To Proposed Way To Tighten Spending. According to Science Magazine, “The White House has not said exactly how it would reduce nondefense spending by \$54 billion to the targeted \$461 billion, but has promised to slash foreign aid, the Environmental Protection Agency, and programs that address climate change. Those details will emerge from negotiations between Trump budget officials and the civilian agencies, which have been asked to propose ways to tighten spending.” [Science Magazine, [2/27/17](#)]

House Appropriations Chair Rep. Mike Simpson Said A Bill With Nondefense Spending Cuts Upward Of \$50 Billion Would Not Pass In The House

House Appropriations Chair Rep. Mike Simpson Said That A Spending Bill Cutting Upward Of \$50 Billion In Nondefense Spending Would Not Pass In The House. According to The Washington Post, “Rep. Mike Simpson (Idaho), who chairs a House Appropriations subcommittee, said flatly that spending bills cutting upward of \$50 billion in nondefense spending could not pass the Republican House. ‘You can’t get there from here,’ he said, noting that increases are needed to implement GOP priorities in the departments of Veterans Affairs and Homeland Security. ‘There’s more to the government than defense.’” [Washington Post, [2/27/17](#)]

The Trump Administration Was Expected To Announce Major Cuts To The State Department, Something James Mattis And 120 Retired U.S. Generals And Admirals Have Cautioned Against

President Trump Was Expected To Announce Major Cuts To The Department Of State. According to the Hill, “President Trump is expected to demand major cuts to the Environmental Protection Agency and Department of State to fund boosts to military spending in his first budget, according to multiple reports.” [The Hill, [2/27/17](#)]

- **The Trump Administration Singled Out Foreign Aid For Significant Reductions.** According to the Washington Post, “According to the White House, the defense budget will increase by 10 percent. But without providing any specifics, the administration said that most other discretionary spending programs will be slashed to pay for it. Officials singled out foreign aid, one of the smallest

parts of the federal budget, saying it would see 'large reductions' in spending." [Washington Post, [2/27/17](#)]

General James Mattis: The Department Of State Budget Needs To Be Fully Funded Because The More We Put Into Diplomacy “The Less We Have To Put Into A Military Budget As We Deal With The Outcome Of An Apparent American Withdrawal From The International Scene.” According to Congressional testimony from General James Mattis, “Yes, sir, I would start with the Department of State budget and frankly, they need to be as fully funded as Congress believes appropriate because if you don't fund the State Department fully then I need to buy more ammunition, ultimately. So I think it's a cost-benefit ratio, the more we put into the State Department's diplomacy, hopefully the less we have to put into a military budget as we deal with the outcome of an apparent American withdrawal from the international scene.” [James Mattis – Senate Armed Services Committee Hearing, [3/5/13](#)]

Reuters: “More Than 120 Retired U.S. Generals And Admirals Are Urging Congress To Fully Fund U.S. Diplomacy And Foreign Aid.” According to Reuters, “More than 120 retired U.S. generals and admirals are urging Congress to fully fund U.S. diplomacy and foreign aid, areas expected to be targeted for cuts in Trump's first budget proposal.” [Reuters, [2/27/17](#)]

TRUMP’S OUTDATED PLANS DID NOT SERVE 21ST CENTURY MILITARY NEEDS

U.S. Military Strength & Spending Was Already Beyond Comparison

Trump: “As We Prepare Our Budget Request For Congress [...] Our Military Strength Will Be Questioned By No One.” According to The Hill, “As we prepare our budget request for Congress ... our military strength will be questioned by no one, but neither will our dedication to peace, we do want peace.’ The details of the order were not immediately clear, but it is believed to call on his newly minted Defense secretary James Mattis — who was sworn in by Trump at the Pentagon on Friday — to execute a national security strategy aimed at ‘Peace through Strength,’ a slogan he used during the campaign.” [The Hill, [1/27/17](#)]

The United States Spent More On The Military Than The Next Seven Countries Combined.

According to PolitiFact, “One set of international military spending figures comes from the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), a think tank. The institute maintains an online database of military expenditures since 1988 for more than 170 countries. By their calculation, the United States spends more than the next seven countries combined.” [PolitiFact, [1/13/16](#)]

The United States Had More Aircraft Carriers Than The Rest Of The World Combined. According to CNN, “But former military officials say comparisons between the Navy of 1917 and today's are an apples-to-oranges contrast. The modern Navy includes 10 aircraft carriers -- more than the rest of the world combined -- 90 surface warfare vessels and 72 submarines.” [CNN, [9/8/15](#)]

Military Strategy Journalist Gregg Easterbrook: “The U.S. Navy Is 10 Times Stronger Than All Of The Other World's Navies Combined.” According to CNN, “Gregg Easterbrook, a journalist who has tracked fiscal policy and military strategy for Reuters and The Atlantic, argued that the U.S. Navy's technological superiority makes it plenty big enough to maintain the dominance it has enjoyed for the last half-century ‘The U.S. Navy is 10 times stronger than all of the other world's navies combined,’ Easterbrook said. ‘To say that the Navy is weak because the numbers are going down is classic political nonsense.’ And Easterbrook said the fact that the U.S. has two Ford-class carriers -- the most advanced aircraft carriers ever built -- currently under construction is evidence that its Navy is still far more technologically advanced than that of any other nation, even if Russia and China have made advances. ‘No other country is even

contemplating building something like the Ford-class carrier,' Easterbrook said. 'We could cut the Navy in half in terms of ship numbers and still be far stronger than the rest of the world combined.'" [CNN, [9/8/15](#)]

Trump Claimed That The U.S. Would “Very Soon” Have The “Finest Equipment In The World,” Despite Assertions By Pentagon Leaders That The U.S. Already Had The World’s Best Military Equipment.

According to CBS News, “A look at some of his statements from the Gerald R. Ford, a \$12.9 billion aircraft carrier being built in Newport News, Virginia: TRUMP: ‘We are going to have very soon the finest equipment in the world.’ THE FACTS: Pentagon leaders have said for years that the U.S. already has the world’s best weaponry and military equipment.” [CBS News, [3/3/17](#)]

- **Trump Said He Wanted To Build Up The U.S. Military To “Project American Power In Distant Lands.”** According to Reuters, “President Donald Trump said on Thursday he wants a U.S. military buildup of more ships and planes to ‘project American power in distant lands,’ making his case for a proposed \$54 billion increase in defense spending that has U.S. lawmakers squabbling.” [Reuters, [3/3/17](#)]

Trump’s Orders Questioned The Ideas Of Cooperation And Democracy Which Had Facilitated America’s Unmatched Power

The Atlantic: The Order Called For “Peace Through Strength” But, Along With Other Trump Orders, Offered Nothing But Unilateralism And Militarization. According to The Atlantic, “With his barrage of executive orders, Trump is taking America back to the historical nightmares of the world before December 1941: closed borders, limited trade, intolerance to diversity, arms races, and a go-it-alone national race to the bottom. His executive order on ‘rebuilding the U.S. armed forces’ calls for ‘peace through strength,’ but this document and the others he signed offer nothing but unilateralism and militarization: more military spending, more nuclear weapons, more use of torture (which is illegal), and more promises to destroy ISIS and other terrorist threats. The executive orders promise to curtail American participation in international organizations, prohibit whole categories of foreigners from entering our country, and limit exchanges of ideas and goods. This is not a United States any president from Roosevelt to Reagan would recognize.” [The Atlantic, [1/27/17](#)]

The Atlantic: Though American Power Was Unmatched Because It Could Work Through Consensual Relations With Partners In Every Region, Trump’s Orders Questioned “The Very Ideas Of Cooperation And Democracy, Embodying An Aggressive Commitment To ‘America First’ Above All Else.” According to The Atlantic, “The latest drafts of executive orders, several of which the president will reportedly sign Friday at the Pentagon, are bold and breathtaking in their reach. They are strategic and transformative. They are also poised to destroy the foundations for the last 70 years of American-led peace and prosperity. The orders question the very ideas of cooperation and democracy, embodying an aggressive commitment to ‘America First’ above all else. So much for the ‘defense of the free world,’ and the ‘march of freedom’—obvious soft-headed ‘loser’ ideas for the new team of White House cynics. [...] American power is unmatched around the world because it can work through consensual relations with partners in every region. None of our rivals have as many friends, and none of our rivals can count on as much support abroad.” [The Atlantic, [1/27/17](#)]

The Navy’s Top Officer Said In January 2016 That The U.S. Would Not Be Able To “Buy” Its Way Out Of Military Challenges

The Navy’s Top Officer, Adm. John Richardson, Said In January 2016 That The U.S. Would “Not Be Able To ‘Buy’ Our Way Out Of The Challenges That We Face.” According to CBS News, “The Navy’s top officer, Adm. John Richardson, has said repeatedly that the Navy is the world’s finest. He also has said the Navy must adapt to a world of changing security threats. Richardson’s main focus has been on

sharpening and changing the way sailors think about the nature of war, rather than relying on bigger budgets. 'We will not be able to "buy" our way out of the challenges that we face,' he wrote in a January 2016 plan for maintaining U.S. naval superiority." [CBS News, [3/3/17](#)]