

The Administration's FY 2022 Defense Budget Outline

THE ISSUE

The Biden Administration's defense budget outline does not cover the inflationary rising costs of operating and maintaining the current force structure, much less make the necessary investments to continue to modernize the force. Unless remedied by Congress, the Pentagon will have to reduce its planned training, procurement, and research and development efforts to fund increases in personnel, health care, fuel, and other costs.

RELEVANT POINTS

- The Biden Administration's outline requests \$715 billion in fiscal year (FY) 2022 for the Department of Defense, a 1.41 percent increase over the enacted \$705 billion for FY 2021. In the overall defense budget, which includes the above-mentioned figure for the Defense Department plus funding for the nuclear arsenal, the Administration is requesting \$753 billion, a 1.68 percent growth over the previous enacted \$740.5 billion.
- The Department of Defense projects that it will face an average 2.2 percent inflation for the next five years. The past 20 years saw an average inflation of 1.8 percent.
- To account for inflation as well as the need for new capabilities, defense leaders, from former Secretary of Defense James Mattis to the bipartisan National Defense Strategy Commission, have emphasized the need to increase the defense budget by 3 percent to 5 percent above inflation for the next five years. A 3 percent real growth for FY 2022 would amount to a total of \$778 billion for the entire national defense account.

- In contrast to specifics provided for nearly every other element of the federal budget, the Biden Administration's defense budget outline contains ill-defined language about retiring legacy systems without defining them, and merely hinting at the case for their retirement. Congress should be engaged in the definition of legacy systems and understanding the possible capabilities gaps that their retirement will generate.
- The Biden Administration has also been consistently piling more tasks on the Department of Defense, from combating climate change, to promoting global LGBT rights, to a stand-down order related to "extremism." Regardless of their merits, these tasks demand resources that the Administration is demonstrably unwilling to allocate.
- Joint Statement by Republican Senate leaders: "President Biden recently said, 'If we don't get moving, [China] is going to eat our lunch.' Today's budget proposal signals to China that they [sic] should set the table. While President Biden has prioritized spending trillions on liberal wish list priorities here at home, funding for America's military is neglected."
- On the other side of the Hill, House Armed Services Committee Ranking Member Mike Rogers (R-AL) summarized the budget request well, stating that "[t]his budget will impact our readiness, dampen our efforts to modernize our strategic weapons, limit our naval and projection forces, and prevent the latest innovations and enhancements from getting to our warfighters."

- Money alone does not guarantee that the United States will be able to maintain and expand its military advantage over adversaries. However, forcing the Pentagon to reduce its capabilities and reduce its readiness to accommodate a declining purchasing power is a recipe for abandoning the playing field.
- The frugality displayed at the Department of Defense stands in complete opposition to this budget outline that allocates more resources to every other part of the federal government except Homeland Security with reckless abandon. It proposes a 16 percent increase to the non-defense portion of the federal budget.
- At a moment when America's competitors are pressing ahead, building and modernizing their militaries, and when China is increasing its budget by 6.8 percent, the Biden Administration is sending a message to the entire world that it is wavering on investing in maintaining the U.S. military advantage—and hence, this country's national security.

THE BOTTOM LINE

The defense budget topline proposed by the Biden Administration would force the Department of Defense to reduce muscle to fit all the added missions and the increased personnel costs under the limited budget. Thankfully, Congress plays a major role in resourcing national defense and can act to right the errors in this defense budget outline.