

WASHINGTON, DC – A bipartisan group of six Members of the House of Representatives today released a joint letter calling for a reduction in U.S. military spending by scaling back worldwide military commitments. The letter was signed by Congressman Barney Frank (D-MA), Congressman John Campbell (R-CA), Congressman Rush Holt (D-NJ), Congressman Walter Jones (R-NC), Congresswoman Gwen Moore (D-WI), and Congressman Ron Paul (R-TX).

The six Members will now circulate the letter in the House of Representatives, asking other Members to co-sign the letter before it is finalized and sent to the President as well as House and Senate leaders.

The letter, addressed to President Barack Obama, Speaker of the House John Boehner, Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, and to the Chairmen of the House and Senate Appropriations Committees, Congressman Hal Rogers and Senator Daniel Inouye, requests a thorough re-examination of national security needs in light of the fact that “more than 21 years after the fall of the Berlin Wall and 18 years after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, our military planning and appropriations process go on largely as it has since the 1950s.”

Members of the bipartisan group, who disagree on a wide range of other issues, express strong agreement that deficit reduction cannot be accomplished without substantial reductions in military spending.

Only a year ago, three of the House Members, Jones, Frank and Paul, along with Senator Ron Wyden, initiated an effort to cut U.S. military spending as part of deficit reduction. Despite the fact that for decades military spending had been considered a sacred cow, over the past year the idea that excessive military spending must be reduced as part of a long-term deficit-reduction plan has gained wider acceptance. The President’s National Commission on Fiscal Responsibility and Reform [recommended reductions](#) in the budget of the Department of Defense of \$100 billion by 2015. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates has committed to [significant cuts](#) in military spending and has stated that more cuts will require a re-evaluation of America’s military mission. On Tuesday, [The New York Times reported](#) that Congressman Walter Jones, once seen as a “pariah” in his party for supporting military spending cuts, and Congressman Ron Paul, have become leaders in a growing conservative movement calling for a reduction in America’s overseas military commitments.

Representatives Campbell, Holt and Moore have joined the bipartisan effort to scale back excessive military spending and their commitment marks another important milestone. The six Members will now expand their efforts by seeking the support of their colleagues in the House.

“America’s national debt represents the single, most dangerous threat to our future security, prosperity and hegemony in the world,” said **Congressman John Campbell**, who has offered amendments to eliminate waste in the 2011 and 2012 Department of Defense budgets and has called for an audit of the Pentagon. “As we engage in a debate this year about reducing spending, we must examine all areas of the federal government, including the Department of Defense, for responsible efficiencies and expense reductions through a reassessment of our national defense needs.”

“I firmly believe that the best way to protect America is by enacting a budget that invests in all dimensions of our national security,” said **Congressman Rush Holt**. “That means a budget that supports our conventional military forces, invests in our counter-terrorism efforts, and – just as importantly – protects our economic security by reining in needless or excessive spending.”

“We cannot be serious about reining in federal government spending if we take the military budget off the table,” said **Congressman Ron Paul**. “We must focus our resources on defending the United States rather than on building and maintaining an unsustainable trillion dollar empire overseas.”

“Our nation is on an unsustainable fiscal path,” said **Congressman Walter Jones**. “Every aspect of our government needs to be brought to the table and re-evaluated. We need to ensure that we have all the necessary tools to maintain our national security, but a serious look needs to be taken at the money we are spending on overseas military bases and the \$8 billion a month we are spending to rebuild Afghanistan.”

“It is very clear that a very serious debate on this issue has to take place,” said **Congressman Barney Frank**.

“It’s downright illogical,” said **Congresswoman Gwen Moore**. “The recession has driven more

families into poverty, and we're cutting holes in the safety net. Yet we're getting out of Iraq and scaling back in Afghanistan without significant cuts to the Defense budget. If we're scrutinizing Medicare and Medicaid because they are big expenditures, then we should take a strong look at Defense, which accounts for about the same spending every year."

TEXT OF LETTER:

Dear Gentlemen:

We write to ask for a review of our worldwide military commitments with the outcome of reduced expenditures. The signers of this letter disagree on a number of public policy issues, but we are in strong agreement on two very important points.

First, it is essential for our economic future that we adopt a binding plan for substantial deficit reduction over the next several years.

Second, we do not believe that this can be done in an acceptable manner if we do not include substantial reductions in the plans for military spending during that period, and this requires a reevaluation of the mismatch between our current national security structure and overseas commitments, and the genuine security needs of the American People.

At the close of World War II, when many democratic nations were devastated by the results of the war, and an aggressive and brutal Communist regime threatened freedom in much of the world, it was vital for America to take an assertive role in defending our allies all over the world. But things have changed substantially since then in a number of ways. What has not changed is the dependence we have allowed to grow on the American military budget by many of our strong, wealthy allies.

More than 21 years after the fall of the Berlin Wall and over 18 years after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, our military planning and appropriations process go on largely as it has since the 1950's. This has continued despite the fact that NATO and our allies in Asia have not only rebuilt their economies, but have done so largely at our expense. As during Cold War, we

largely provide for their defense, leaving them free to take funds that otherwise would have gone into their militaries and redirecting them towards growing their own economies – in many cases for state-subsidized industries that gave them an unfair competitive advantage over our own.

The role of America as the worldwide first responder was a necessary one sixty years ago. Today, our allies can – and should – bear the primary burden of defending their own nations and interests.

As the 9/11 attacks demonstrated, the kinds of threats we face today are very different than those of previous eras. We live in an age where a few determined individuals with minimal financing, good planning and training, and a willingness to die can inflict billions of dollars in damage and kill thousands in a matter of hours. None of the billions of dollars of Cold War-era weaponry in our arsenal on September 11, 2001 stopped Al-Qaeda.

Our defense budget should provide for our legitimate national defense needs, including a capacity in those few cases where it is necessary to be able to come to the aid of nations genuinely in need of our protections from outside forces, but in ways that are appropriate to the asymmetrical, distributed threats of today.

An example of our concern is the situation in Libya. One thing is very clear: despite the professed desire of President Obama for America to play a supportive as opposed to a leading role in this effort, and in spite of the fact that our European allies are much closer to Libya physically, America once again had to bear a disproportionate share of this activity in the early stages. And while our participation has subsequently been reduced, it has been widely reported in the press that England and France have been pressing the United States to resume its earlier role because they are unable to assume it themselves. The explanation of this is that only America had the capacity to respond. But that is precisely our point. We have allowed a situation to grow in the world in which an overdependence on America's military – and America's tax dollars – results in the expenditure of American money – and lives – far beyond what is an appropriate share of our global responsibility. We support an American military budget that is the largest in the world, but not one that is so much larger than our fair share of global security responsibility.

Achieving the consequential deficit reduction necessary to ensure our nation's fiscal health requires bold thinking and action. We therefore call on those with major responsibilities in the

budgeting area to begin an immediate reexamination of our self-imposed worldwide military commitments, and to take subsequent action to ensure we have a defense force that is both affordable and necessary to meet our legitimate security needs.

BARNEY FRANK

WALTER JONES

Member of Congress

Member of Congress

RON PAUL

JOHN CAMPBELL

Member of Congress

Member of Congress

RUSH HOLT

GWEN MOORE

Member of Congress

Member of Congress