



President Trump seeks big jump in defense spending

By Ken Bredemeier February 27, 2017

U.S. President Donald Trump called Monday for a \$54 billion annual increase in defense spending, describing the 10 percent jump as a "landmark event," a message aimed at assuring the world of "American strength, security and resolve."

Speaking to U.S. governors at the White House, Trump said, "We must ensure that our courageous servicemen and women have the tools they need to deter war and when called upon to fight in our name, only do one thing, win."

The new president said the United States has to "start winning wars again," recalling that in his youth in the years after World War II, Americans boasted that the country "never lost a war."

"And now we never win a war, we never win," Trump said. "And we don't fight to win; we don't fight to win. So we're either going to win, or don't fight it at all."

Trump said he would outline his spending priorities in greater detail in an address to Congress late Tuesday, but said the bigger Pentagon budget would "rebuild the depleted military of the United States of America at a time we most need it."

At the same time, however, he said his new administration would continue to look for defense savings, saying how he had cut \$725 million from the cost of the development of new F-35 fighter jets.

Budget officials told reporters that with the big jump in defense spending, there would be corresponding cuts in domestic programs and foreign aid to other countries. The Trump administration plans to lay out proposed spending levels for a raft of government agencies in a submission to Congress next month, with proposals for tax cuts coming later.

Trump said the government's budget figures are complicated by Congress first having to deal with his call for the repeal and replacement of national



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health care reforms enacted under former President Barack Obama, to determine how much the government will be spending on health care in the fiscal year starting October 1.

"Obamacare is a failed disaster," Trump said of his predecessor's chief legislative achievement. He said Republicans could "let it implode," a politically "great" strategy, "but not fair" to the millions who would lose health insurance coverage to help pay their medical bills.

Repeal and replacement of the law is complicated and its fate in Congress is uncertain. Trump did not spell out details of how he wants to change the law.

While boosting defense spending, Trump is expected to trim funding at the State Department and other agencies, including the Environmental Protection Agency.

Administration officials say the White House is detailing its vision for federal spending in a memo to government agencies on Monday. The Office of Management and Budget says a more complete budget outline is expected to be released in mid-March.

Budget officials say they will not seek cuts in spending for two programs benefiting older Americans, Social Security pensions and the Medicare health program that pays 80 percent of seniors' bills for doctors' visits and hospital care.

Whatever the president proposes to agencies Monday will surely not be the final budget for the 2018 fiscal year.

Each agency will respond with arguments for what it thinks should be its budget, and ultimately it is up to Congress to vote on federal spending.