CONGRESSIONAL TESTIMONY

Perspectives on the President's Fiscal Year 2013 Budget Request for the U.S. Department of Defense

Lieutenant General David W. Barno, USA (Ret.)

Tuesday, March 6, 2012

Testimony before the Senate Budget Committee

Prepared Statement of Lieutenant General David W. Barno, USA (Ret.)
Senior Advisor and Senior Fellow, Center for a New American Security

Mr. Chairman, ranking member Senator Sessions, members of the committee, thanks for allowing me to share some perspectives this morning on the Defense Department's FY13 budget. In some ways, today's discussion is really about the broader question for the people of the United States: when evaluating our national defense, how much is enough?

This morning we have the opportunity to comment on one of the most important national security decision points the United States has confronted in the last fifty years. These "Hard Choices" as we put it in our Center for a New American Security report last October, will shape not only the future of U.S. defense for decades to come – but in many ways will potentially reshape and redefine the role of the United States in the rapidly changing world of the 21st Century.

The current debate that has seized our nation and our political leadership has to do not only with putting Americans back to work, about reducing exploding debt and annual deficits, about entitlements and taxes, about living, as a nation, within our means – but it also fundamentally has to do with where the United States is going to fit in this new world.

Despite today's focus on the defense budget, many of us believe that the fiscal crisis facing the United States requires the Congress of the United States to address the deep structural problems of revenue and entitlement reforms that are central to balancing America's budget. To date, our fiscal liabilities have seemingly been both too large and too politically contentious to achieve bipartisan consensus on how best to address them. But these hard realities are going to re-shape the U.S. Department of Defense, either by choice or by default. Our discussion today will address just how they are going to impact national defense in the near term.

As we look around the world, we see prospects for a slow but inexorable *relative* decline in U.S. global economic power over the coming decades. Yet at the same time, we Americans actually will continue to *choose* our military position in the world. Today, there is substantial risk that if we make ill-informed choices in defense spending over the next decade, we will electively choose to *diminish* our military capabilities – at the very same time when we are involuntarily facing a decline in our global economic primacy.

To emphasize: we alone as a people decide our military investments and strength. And we as a nation have always been willing to pay whatever it takes to secure our people and our freedoms. Yet today, driven in large measure by fiscal worries, we must ask: how much must the United States government spend on defense to secure our people, and how much risk are we willing to tolerate?

Since we published our October 2011 "Hard Choices" report, which I have submitted today for the record, the Administration has published new strategic guidance in January, and submitted its FY13 budget last

month. Both of these documents, in my judgment, are fundamentally sound. Each reflects the realities of our difficult fiscal position while acknowledging the necessity of maintaining America's preeminence as a military power. Notably, both documents make choices and set priorities for focusing finite U.S. power and military investments.

Looking ahead, I would be very confident in the ability of the United States to maintain both our long-term highly successful global engagement strategy and our pre-eminent military position with this budget supporting the newly refined strategy.

The debate now focuses in a sense upon the "trade space" between left limit of $487 billion in defense cuts over ten years reflected in the FY13 POM, and the right limit of $1 trillion in cuts mandated by the sequestration provisions of the Budget Control Act. Whereas I support the planning and strategy reflected in the $487 billion in cuts, I judge the sequestration outcome in both size and arbitrary application as an unacceptable cut that in my opinion would place our ability to defend U.S. vital interests around the world at very high risk. I fully agree with Secretary Panetta in this regard, and urge a speedy effort to re-visit this looming problem.

Is there room for deeper cuts in defense beyond the $487 billion reflected in the FY13 POM? That question cannot be answered simply by assessing the financial costs and benefits of different budget options. Instead, it is a fundamentally strategic question about the level of risk we are willing to accept. We must clearly understand what further cuts could actually mean to U.S. military capabilities, to a successful 65-year strategy of global engagement, and to our ability to respond to unanticipated national security threats. This is not simply a numbers game, and any sound assessment will ultimately involve a combination of both art and science, subjective judgment and objective analysis. I look forward to joining in that conversation.

Finally, it is important to close with some thoughts about the people who will bear the primary burden of these impending changes in U.S. defense. Hundreds of thousands of young American men and women have borne the brunt of the ten years of war that continues today. Tens of thousands have been wounded and over 6,000 killed. They will continue to fight at our behest as a nation for many years to come, going into battle literally every single day in miserable conditions around the world, separated from their friends, their families, their homes. Hundreds will not come back alive.

Any changes to the defense budget must keep faith with them -- with their courage, their sacrifices and their valor. They have carried the nation's water while the other 99.5% of us back here at home have gone about our daily lives unmarked and largely unaffected by these wars. Any defense drawdown must respect those who have served and continue to serve, and both shield and honor the deep sacrifices these warriors have made. We as a nation owe them at least that much gratitude. They have more than earned it.

Thank you very much for giving me an opportunity to share some thoughts on these difficult choices with you today. I look forward to your questions.

CONGRESSIONAL TESTIMONY

Perspectives on the President's Fiscal Year 2013 Budget Request for the U.S. Department of Defense

Lieutenant General David W. Barno, USA (Ret.)

Center for a New American Security
Fifth Anniversary

Biography

Lieutenant General David W. Barno, USA (Ret.)
Senior Advisor and Senior Fellow, Center for a New American Security

General Barno, a highly decorated military officer with over 30 years of service, has served in a variety of command and staff positions in the United States and around the world, to include command at every level. He served many of his early years in special operations forces with Army Ranger battalions, to include combat in both the Grenada and Panama invasions. In 2003, he was selected to establish a new three-star operational headquarters in Afghanistan and take command of the 20,000 U.S. and Coalition Forces in Operation Enduring Freedom. For 19 months in this position, he was responsible for the overall military leadership of this complex political-military mission, devising a highly innovative counterinsurgency strategy in close partnership with the U.S. embassy and coalition allies. His responsibilities included regional military efforts with neighboring nations and involved close coordination with the Government of Afghanistan, the United Nations, NATO International Security Assistance Force, the U.S. Department of State and USAID, and the senior military leaders of many surrounding nations and numerous allies.

From 2006-2010, General Barno served as the Director of the Near East South Asia Center for Strategic Studies at the National Defense University. Concurrently, he was the Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom Veterans and Families from 2007-2009. He frequently serves as an expert consultant on counterinsurgency and irregular warfare, professional military education and the changing character of conflict, supporting a wide-range of government and other organizations. General Barno is widely published and has testified before Congress numerous times. He is also a member of the Council on Foreign Relations and the International Institute of Strategic Studies.

A 1976 graduate of the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, General Barno also earned his master's degree in National Security Studies from Georgetown University. He is a graduate of the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, and the U.S. Army War College. General Barno has received numerous awards for his military and public service.