

## **Military Leaders Detail Risks of Shifting Base Defense Costs to Off-Budget War Account**

*In testimonies and responses to direct questions from Congress, U.S. Secretary of Defense Ash Carter and uniformed leaders of our Armed Forces have made clear the risks of relying on Overseas Contingency Operations (OCO) to fund core and enduring defense costs. This approach would create a massive \$38 billion hole in next year's budget and destabilize critical long-term planning. Additionally, it would have a negative impact on domestic priorities critical to military families and all hardworking Americans.*

### **U.S. Secretary of Defense Ash Carter (5/6/2015):**

"The one-year OCO approach does nothing to reduce the deficit. It risks undermining support for a mechanism... to fund incremental costs of overseas conflicts in Afghanistan, Iraq, and elsewhere. Most importantly, because it doesn't provide a stable, multi-year budget horizon, this one-year approach is managerially unsound, and unfairly dispiriting to our force. Our military personnel and their families deserve to know their future more than just one year at a time. As a nation, we need to base our defense budgeting on long-term military strategy, and that's not a one-year project.

"This funding approach also reflects a narrow way of looking at our national security – one that ignores the vital contributions made by the State, Justice, Treasury, and Homeland Security Departments, and disregards the enduring long-term connection between our nation's security and many other factors: factors like scientific R&D to keep our technological edge, education of a future all-volunteer military force, and the general economic strength of our country.

"Finally, I'm also concerned that how we deal with the budget is being watched by the rest of the world – by our friends and potential foes alike. It could give a misleadingly diminished picture of America's great strength and resolve."

### **General Martin E. Dempsey, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (5/6/2015):**

"...our men and women in uniform are performing around the globe with extraordinary courage, character and professionalism. It seems to me that we owe them and their families clarity and importantly predictability on everything from policy to compensation, health care, equipment, training and readiness."

### **General Mark A. Welsh III, Chief of Staff of the U.S. Air Force (3/17/2015)**

"...the real issue for us, because we are really in a dire place as far as needing the recapitalize and modernize the Air Force...the problem with OCO funding is that you can't count on it over time for a long-term investment in modernization, which is one of the problems we have..."

### **General Daniel B. Allyn, Vice Chief of Staff of the U.S. Army (3/26/2015)**

"...what we're doing is increasing that through funding base requirements through OCO funding. And this is a year-to-year drill and we need predictable, consistent funding to get at the readiness that we're talking about here today..."

**General John M. Paxton, Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps (3/26/2015)**

“...the OCO dollars help in the short term. I continue to worry about the long term, our modernization, our training and our exercises. We want to fight and win tonight and tomorrow, but we also want to make sure we don't do that at the expense of not being able to do it the day after tomorrow.”

**General Larry O. Spencer, Vice Chief of Staff of the U.S. Air Force (3/26/2015)**

“OCO to base has been touched on. That's something we are all worried about. If we wake up one day and OCO is gone, what do we do? And you know, in the Air Force's case, we've got several bases in the Middle East that were stood up and are paid for today with OCO funding that we're told will probably endure, will probably stay for the long- term. That's fine. But -- but then we'll have to figure out where does that money come from that's now in OCO that we'll have to put into the base. As my colleagues already mentioned, that's now exacerbating this sort of OCO to base transfer, at some point. It just further mixes and blurs the lines between the base and the -- and emergency contingency, essentially.”