



SOUNDING THE ALARM: Reckless Spending Is Putting Our National Security at Risk

One dire consequence of out-of-control Washington spending: funding for our national security is at risk. If we don't sound the alarm and change course, our ability to defend our country will be jeopardized, as highlighted today in a new blog from the [Cato Institute](#).

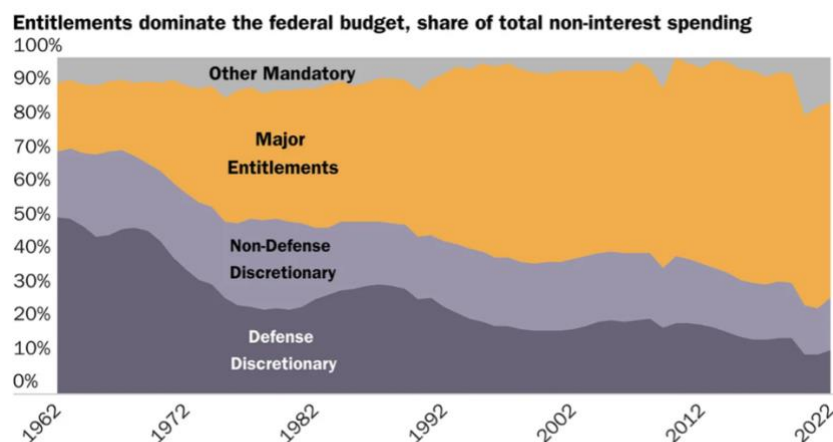
Key Points:

Despite rhetoric from the Left that we need to rein-in defense spending if we want to get our national debt under control, data shows that overall defense spending as a percent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) has fallen over the last 50 years.

Not only are we spending less on our national security now than at almost any point in our nation's history, but the amount we are spending on other non-defense programs is growing at such a fast pace that the defense budget will soon be entirely crowded out.

Spending on Entitlements is Devouring Defense Spending. Entitlement program spending, including spending on Social Security and Medicare, has grown “four times larger as a share of GDP” since the 1960s. In fact, these programs now “consume more than **half** of the federal budget,” Cato finds.

Meanwhile, defense spending as a percent of GDP has *fallen* “from 9 percent...to 3 percent” in this same time period, per Cato. As more and more Baby Boomers retire, projections on entitlement spending is only set to increase.



Source: Congressional Budget Office (2023); Author Calculations, July 14, 2023.

Note: Major entitlements include Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, and income security programs like food stamps.



Defense Cuts Have Been Used as a Negotiating Tactic for Far Too Long. Meanwhile, in the 14 times where major deficit-reduction negotiations took place on Capitol Hill since 1980, “more than any other category, legislators tend to reduce defense spending during fiscal consolidation periods,” Cato says.

As Cato points out, “cuts to defense discretionary spending produced the largest savings in four of six deficit-reduction deals”—even though entitlements and other mandatory spending programs were the driving cause behind growing deficits, not defense spending.

Interest Payments Will Soon Exceed Entire Defense Budget. With soaring debt comes crippling interest payments. By 2028, it is projected that payments on interest alone (\$1 trillion) will exceed our entire defense budget (\$975 billion). We soon will be spending more money on interest payments than we are on keeping our country safe.

The Bottom Line: Cato writes: “National defense is a core responsibility of the federal government. To maximize Americans’ safety and prosperity, prudence should guide both strategy and the budget. A dire fiscal crisis would erode the economic foundation of America’s strength, limiting U.S. capacity to defend its vital interests at home and abroad.”

