



Obama's Budget: Where's the Peace Dividend?

We now know that President Obama has already backed off his campaign pledge to end the war in 16 months. His new timetable for drawing down forces in Iraq is [19 months after taking office](#), and even after that time he would leave up to 50,000 "support" (i.e., combat) troops as well as federally funded private contractors for months thereafter.



For those opposed to the Iraq War, the backsliding is bad news. But for deficit hawks, that should be good news. Right? After all, a reduction from the 140,000 troops now in Iraq to 50,000 should mean lower costs and less stress on the federal budget, which is already sinking under a sea of red ink. However, President Obama is *increasing* the total military budget over even the post-"surge" levels of the current year. His [budget proposal](#) states:

The 2010 Budget for the Department of Defense (DOD) requests \$533.7 billion, or an increase of four percent from the 2009 enacted level of \$513.3 billion (excluding funding from the American recovery and reinvestment Act of 2009). This funding increase allows DOD to address its highest priorities, such as the President's commitment to meet the military's goal to increase the size of the Army and Marine Corps, to continue to improve the medical treatment of wounded servicemembers, and to reform the acquisition process.

Overall military spending — which includes the cost of "contingency operations" in Iraq and Afghanistan — would increase by \$9 billion to \$663.7 billion.

So where's the "peace dividend"?

The [Obama budget](#) requests \$130 billion for Iraq and Afghanistan in fiscal 2010, which is less than the [\\$186.1 billion level](#) that it took for the "surge" in Iraq (plus Afghanistan) in fiscal 2008. But it's also more than the amount the [Congressional Research Service estimates](#) would be needed for the draw-down Obama campaign promised. It's even more than would be needed for the kind of drawdown he's proposed.

Barack Obama's [budget](#) seems to indicate that he will be increasing U.S. military involvement abroad, rather than the decrease he promised as a candidate. After all, if we're reducing our deployments abroad, why would we need more people in the armed services? Clearly, the United States is not headed toward a draw-down of our commitments abroad.

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