

**Donald Trump****Trump calls for \$54bn increase in military spending**

Funding rise of 10% to be offset by cuts in non-defence budgets



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YESTERDAY by: **Barney Jopson** and Sam Fleming in Washington

**Donald Trump** (<http://next.ft.com/content/7bb991e4-fc38-11e6-96f8-3700c5664d30>) is calling for the biggest increase in US military spending since the height of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, seeking to add \$54bn to the Pentagon's budget to combat what he views as threats from a "dangerous world".

The White House said it planned to ask Congress for extra defence funding equivalent to nearly 10 per cent of the military's annual outlays as the president prepared to unveil a budget focused on "public safety and national security".

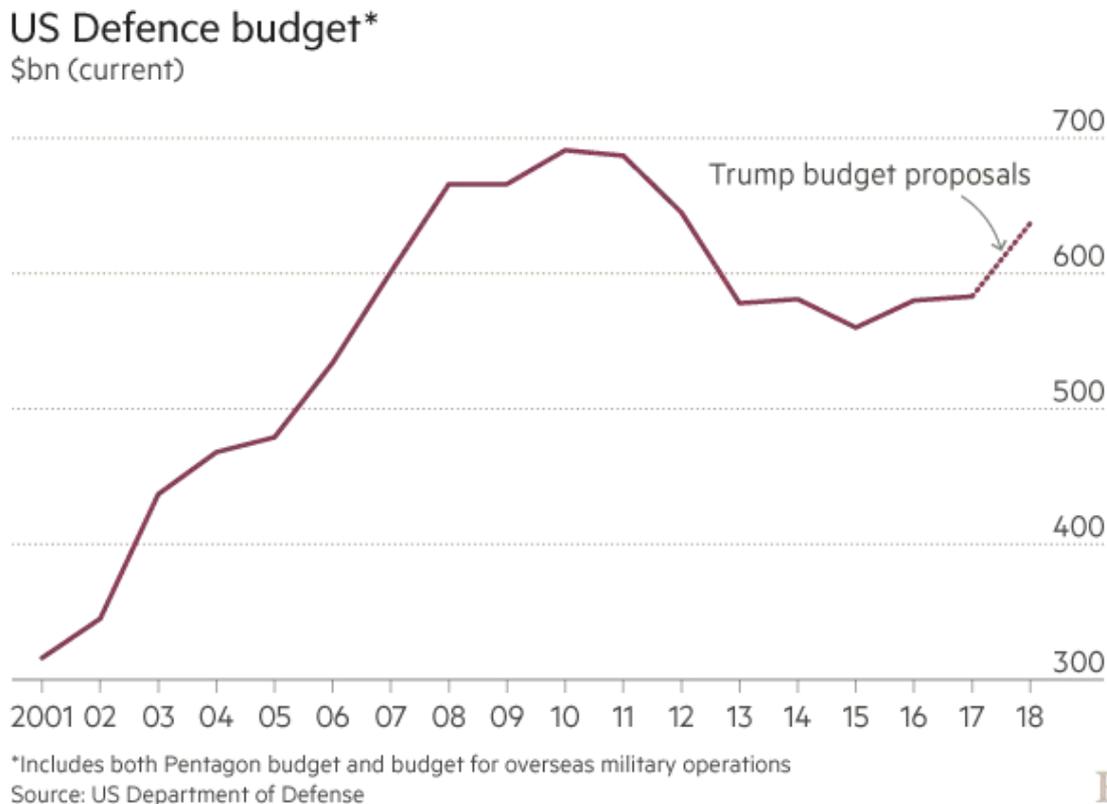
Ahead of his first [speech to Congress](http://next.ft.com/content/81051512-f9b1-11e6-bd4e-68d53499ed71) (<http://next.ft.com/content/81051512-f9b1-11e6-bd4e-68d53499ed71>) on Tuesday, the president tried to put his campaign themes of security and strength back into the centre of the Washington debate following weeks of turmoil centred on his administration's ties to the Kremlin and bitter sniping with the White House press corps.

"This is a landmark event and a message to the world in these dangerous times of American strength, security and resolve," Mr 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,” he added. “We have to win.”

If Mr Trump’s request is approved, it would be the biggest increase in defence spending since a 10 per cent jump in 2008 and a 12 per cent increase in 2007, according to the Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget, a Washington-based watchdog group.

Both budgets were passed during George W Bush’s surge in Iraq, when the president ordered 20,000 additional troops into the country as an insurgency threatened to overwhelm the US-led effort.



A White House official detailed the \$54bn spending request, which still must be approved by Congress, on a call with reporters as Mr Trump said his spending would include increases for local law enforcement and the border patrol service that polices the US-Mexico frontier.

In a briefing, Mick Mulvaney, the White House budget director, said the budget would reflect the priorities that Mr Trump laid out during the campaign. “We are taking his words and turning them into policies and dollars,” he said.

The White House said it would pay for the increase by simultaneously seeking to cut non-defence spending by the same amount. Administration officials did not single out which government programmes it would cut, but Mr Trump promised “greater savings and efficiencies across the federal government”.

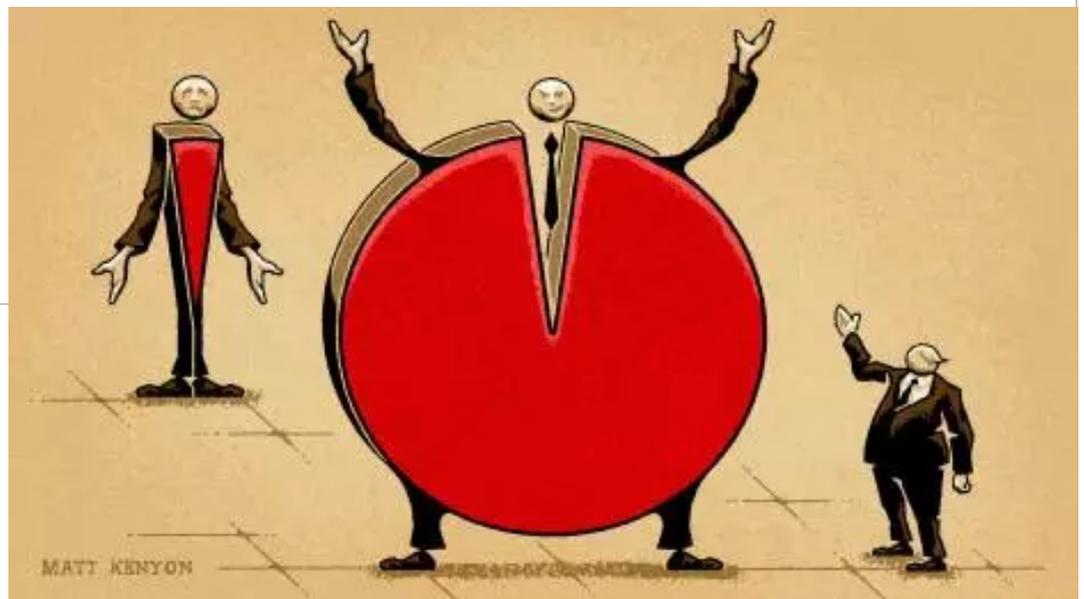
The administration's figures were, however, only aspirational, and it is likely to face an uphill struggle to secure the funding it wants, even within its own party. Although Republicans have traditionally supported higher defence budgets, a core group of House Republicans budget hawks are likely to balk at such a large increase.

Stan Collender, a budget expert and former congressional official, said the president probably had only a 50:50 chance of success.

### Edward Luce

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Mr Collender said there were three ways for the White House to get \$54bn: tap a contingency fund that is meant for wars; persuade Congress to lift existing defence spending caps in the face of conservative opposition; or flagrantly violate the caps.

“At this particular point they are only trying to announce a policy, as opposed to implementing it,” said Mr Collender, now at Qorvis Communications. “This administration does not have a background in governing and I’m not sure they really care.”

Without getting into specifics or mentioning Isis, which he has vowed to destroy, Mr Trump pointed to the Middle East as a US priority. “We have a hornet’s nest. It’s a mess like you’ve never seen before,” he said. “We’re going to straighten it out.”

Previewing a budget of “great rationality”, the president also boasted of his own skills as a cost-cutting negotiator, recalling his intervention in a government order for Lockheed

Martin's F-35 fighter jet and other contracts.

"We cut the hell out of the price," he said. "The generals that were involved, they said they'd never seen anything like it before."

The Trump administration has said it wants to shield from cuts some of the most expensive and politically sensitive government programmes, such as the Medicare and social security systems for retired people.

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