

# President Trump's 2020 Budget

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Hello, this is Darrell Castle with today's Castle Report. Today I will talk about a few items in the President's budget proposal delivered to Congress last Monday. A letter of explanation accompanied the budget proposal.



## President calls for love and loyalty – from those who hate him

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In his letter the President reviewed many of the things he considers to be accomplishments during his first term, and he closed with a call for unity; “We must work together to renew the bonds of love and loyalty that link us to one another—as friends, as citizens, as neighbors, as patriots, and as Americans.” Nancy Pelosi and the other Democrats in Congress probably got a good laugh out of his call for love and loyalty.

I can't remember a time in my life when there was less love between those in politics, or between those who follow politics, than now. The term *hatred* is often overused and sometimes is applied to anyone who disagrees with us. But in this case, it is very applicable. Today's politicians really do seem to hate each other, in and out of the limelight.

## The budget does not cut; it slows the growth

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This budget proposal calls for spending approximately 4.8 trillion in this fiscal year. That represents about 1.1 trillion more than revenue, so despite the accusations, nothing much has been cut. What the Democrats refer to as cuts that will hurt our elderly are proposals to slow the rate of increase. In his 2016 campaign, the President said the budget would be balanced by the end of his second term, but this proposal calls for spending in deficit for 15 more years. If both sides accepted this budget and followed it faithfully and no recessionary disaster happened, we would continue to borrow large sums for 15 more years.

## Dems promise to reject a budget that does not cut

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The budget proposes what the President calls “spending cuts”, but it leaves Social Security and Medicare intact. The Democrats have promised to reject the proposal out of hand. The rate of increase in Medicaid would slow by \$700 billion over a decade, but Nancy Pelosi will have none of that. As a result, the fiscal problems that have led to huge deficits, despite a booming economy and record revenues from taxes, will continue. Today’s Democrats will simply not work with today’s Republicans no matter what the proposal, and therefore the debt continues to grow.

There is so much vitriol between them that nothing can happen with a Republican president and Democrat Congress. The attitude seems to be let’s get him out of office by any means necessary. Then we can do what we want to do.

## The bigger budget problem: Republican weakness...

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The swamp has absorbed the Republicans just as it will this budget. They will talk for a few months, threaten each other, and threaten to shut down the government. But eventually the Republicans will capitulate. Because they always respond to Democrat attacks with only equal or lesser force, not overwhelming force that would bring victory. Their goal seems to be just a messy tie rather than victory. The Republicans, other than President Trump, seek approval, and as a result they appear as corrupt as the Democrats.

## ...and a Democratic identity philosophy

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The Democrats, on the other hand, do have a philosophy and that philosophy is primarily identity politics, and if you don’t share their views you are a Nazi. The Democrats don’t seek Republican approval, they seek victory.

## Democrats want the conflict and rely on the demos

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If the Democrats really had the best interests of the American people at heart, they would turn down the volume of all the hate rhetoric and the juvenile pranks, such as tearing up the President’s speech, and work with the Republicans. They would get much more of what they want that way because the Republicans, seeking approval, will compromise. I suppose its more important for the Democrats to have constant conflict and division because they know that demographics will eventually give them the victory, and if there’s nothing left but rubble, they will rule the rubble.

Those are just a few reasons why this budget won’t pass as is, but now let’s look at a few items that will be included in any budget that is passed.

## Budget item number one: the department of defense

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I want to spend a few minutes talking about one specific item in the budget. That is what the President calls "Preserving Peace Through Strength", but what is really the Department of Defense. In his letter to Congress he said, "A strong military, fully integrated with our allies and all our instruments of power, enables our Nation to deter war, preserve peace, and if necessary, defeat aggression against United States interests." Notice that he did not say defeat aggression against the United States; but instead he said against United States "interests".

## What are the interests?

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These "interests" are what, I suppose, is keeping us in Iraq, Syria, and Afghanistan. What are they, you ask? Well, that's a good question. He also mentions that our military is to be fully integrated with our allies. I suppose that's how we ended up in a joint effort with other nations to build our new 5<sup>th</sup> generation fighter, the F-35 Lightning II. The F-35 is only a small part of the \$750 billion allocated for defense. This does not include approximately \$300 billion for security and intelligence. They get a 5% increase of \$34 billion over last year.

## Having the best fighter helps win battles

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First, let me tell you that having the best fighter aircraft in any war is very important if you set out to win battles. It's very difficult to win without control of the air over the battlefield. The United States has had air superiority since the spring of 1944. In that year it finally destroyed the last remnants of the Luftwaffe. Air superiority means having the superior fighter aircraft, which can control the battle in the air and on the ground. What I'm about to describe for you then is either Super Plane or boondoggle. But it is here and it will be paid for. The military industrial complex will be satisfied no matter what.

## History of the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter

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In the early 1990's, the United States began the concept of a fighter developed by Lockheed Martin but integrating allied nations ideas. The F-35 Joint Strike Fighter was the result and it is finally coming online with the United States and allied militaries. The concept was to create one fighter which could fulfill the missions of the Air Force, Navy, and Marine Corps. The fighter would have to incorporate the latest stealth technology, as well as vertical take off and landing capability, carrier operations, internal armament bays, with missiles and guns. So, all that was to be incorporated into one aircraft instead of making three different versions.

## A large budget for one weapon

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The F-35 is being deployed now on carriers at sea, and by the Air Force and Marines, as well as by other countries. It is estimated to cost \$1.5 trillion over the life of the weapon system. That makes it the most expensive weapon ever built. It starts out at \$80 to \$120 million per aircraft but by delivery is more than \$400 million per copy. Lockheed Martin is to receive \$2 billion per year for maintenance with service to cost \$31,000 per hour and operating cost or cost of flying to be \$30,000 per hour. If you send it on a 3-hour mission, you've spent about \$100,000 plus maintenance.

## Spreading the perks

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The defense department had a novel way to keep Congress from screaming about the cost of the F-35 and to make sure it didn't get canceled. Parts of the aircraft are made in all fifty states and even in foreign countries, so everyone gets their slice of the pie. No Congressman or Senator wants to be responsible for taking the jobs from his state.

There have been many complaints about the F-35, and the department of defense has identified nine that Lockheed Martin says it will fix before delivery. Supposedly none of the nine problems threaten the pilot's lives. Those nine are:

## A litany of complaints

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1. Supersonic flight issues. When it goes through the sound barrier, the shockwave can damage the tail. Then the stealth coating starts to melt.
2. Something is making it difficult to control at certain angles in a dogfight with opposing fighters.
3. Problems with pressurization have occasionally caused excruciating pain to pilots.
4. 883 software issues have been identified, and these glitches affect virtually every system.
5. Problems with the heads-up display at night. This has affected the pilot's night vision and his ability to see and successfully land especially on carrier decks.
6. The computer systems have proven especially vulnerable to hacking.
7. The battery has a known failure problem in cold weather operations, such as Alaska.
8. Blown tires on landing can sometimes damage the hydraulic system.
9. There have been problems with the aim of the 20 mm cannon. These have caused pilots to complain that they can't hit anything.

## A budget item too big to kill

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So much has gone into this project that it is now "too big to kill". The planes are out in the world with our military, as well as the allies. Japan just ordered 167 of them and Denmark placed an order as well. The cost for those countries started at \$300 million. But that cost will rise to \$460 million per plane at time of delivery.

## Too many features

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I have personally talked to pilots who have flown the F-35 and they seem satisfied with it. The one complaint I hear quite often is that they tried to put too much into one airplane. As a Marine Corps officer a long time ago I worked in proximity with aircraft especially in close air support. There are things and features on the F-35 that do not make sense to me for that role. The vertical take-off and landing capability is supposedly a Marine Corps feature but I don't understand why. Why would you need what is basically helicopter capability in a single seat fighter? It's not like he's going to evacuate casualties, so he lands in the middle of a jungle. I suppose I can see the need for the F-35 to land on the small LPH ships that normally transport Marines and their helicopters.

## The F-22 Raptor

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My other question involves the F-22 Raptor stealth fighter. This has just completed production and is now online and is supposedly superior to anything else in the air. To this point we have not agreed to share it with other nations, for fear of reverse engineering, I suppose. My question, though is, why can't our allies develop their own aerospace industry and build their own aircraft? Wait, I know the answer; if they did Lockheed Martin couldn't make as much money.

## Do foreign interests drive the budget?

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Those are some thoughts about one aspect of the budget proposal that is now before Congress. It helps explain why the defense portion gets an increase while domestic programs are slowing to save money on "waste and fraud." It's funny though that no one ever talks about waste and fraud within the defense budget. Nor do they question whether we really need a weapon like the F-35, since we just developed the F-22.

We always want our military to have the very best. So we should always be searching, looking and developing. But perhaps we could review our foreign policy at the same time. What and where are all those threats to American interests that the President talked about? Is it possible that if we were not in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria we would have fewer interests to protect? It seems that protection of interests is one of the leading causes of war.

## Democrats like to work without a budget

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Well, that's my take on the F-35 and the President's budget proposal. The Democrats usually prefer to operate without a budget, I suppose on the premise that it's not real money anyway. If that's the case why not indulge yourself and your voters. The Republicans will cave though; they always do. They don't seem to believe in anything worth defending.

## Easy to win a power auction without principles

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Finally, folks; if I had no principles, if I had nothing worth going to the wall for, it would be easy to out bid the Democrats in the power auction. If they want a federally mandated minimum wage at \$15 per hour just bid it up to \$20, as Tom Steyer recently did. If Andrew Yang wants everyone to have \$1000 per month, just make it \$1500. If someone proposes free education, why not pay them to go to college? If I'm going to buy power, why use my own money as Michel Bloomberg is doing. Why not use your money and the money of future generations, because that way has no limits.

At least that's the way I see it.

Until next time folks,

This is Darrell Castle.