

To: Members of the U.S. House and Senate

From: Bobby Kogan, Senior Director, Federal Budget Policy; Damian Murphy, Senior Vice President, National Security and International Policy

Re: Supplemental appropriation for Iran War

Date: March 9, 2026

Lawmakers in Congress have the upper hand both morally and politically in opposing the war in Iran. The public does not want to be drawn into another forever war that threatens American lives, kills children, destabilizes the Middle East, and whose costs could easily balloon to hundreds of billions or even trillions of dollars, particularly as the war's effects spill over into [energy](#) and [fertilizer](#) markets. With a majority of Americans against the war (only 38 percent of Americans approve of the war, based on an [aggregate of polling data](#)), even in its earliest days, members should stand strong against providing additional funding for conducting war.

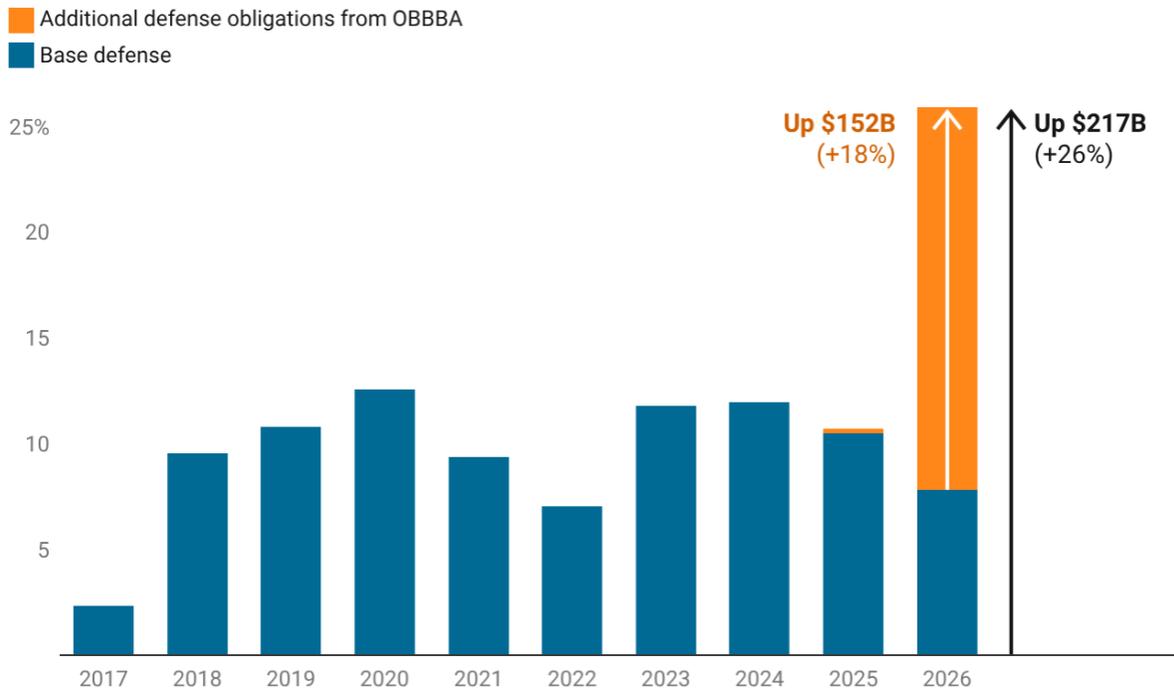
The Trump administration may argue that supplemental funding is needed to replenish stockpiles, including of defensive weapons like missile interceptors. But the need for additional funding is hard to justify. The "Big Beautiful Bill" provided an additional \$153 billion for defense just eight months ago, on top of the annual defense budget of around \$900 billion. The annual defense appropriations bill, also approved only a few months ago, grants the White House the legal authority and flexibility to move around billions of dollars within the Department of Defense to achieve their goals, known as transfer authority. While the Trump administration has not yet presented its supplemental request, the White House will likely request funds to replenish stockpiles for which it already has sufficient funding through a mixture OBBBA (an enormous amount of which still remains unobligated) and through its general transfer authority inside the annual defense budget. In other words, the White House seems poised to request more money for weapons for which they already have tens of billions of unused dollars.

Congress should not provide even more money when a) the White House has the ability to reprogram a significant amount of funds, and b) this \$153 billion from OBBBA serves much of the same purpose as what we expect to see requested and still remains significantly unused. In fact, when Congressional Democrats were considering enacting Build Back Better, the fact that significant portions of the American Rescue Plan had not yet been fully used was one of the major Congressional Republican arguments against it, despite Build Back Better seeking to fund different activities and programs than the American Rescue Plan.

These funds have also contributed to a Defense Department whose budget keeps growing without increased accountability (in December, the Pentagon [failed](#) its eighth financial audit in a row). Even before the funds from OBBBA, defense funding this year sits meaningfully above the levels when President Obama left office. With them, under the administration's spending plan, the defense budget this year sits 26 percent above what it was when Obama left office, after adjusting for inflation. In dollar terms, even before accounting for the supplemental request, that means the fiscal year 2026 defense budget (including funds provided under OBBBA) will be \$217 billion more than when Obama left office, after adjusting for inflation. From fiscal year 2017 through 2026, these base defense boosts have totaled \$939 billion, after adjusting for inflation.

The annual defense budget is \$217 billion higher than when President Obama left office

Percentage change above fiscal year 2016 inflation-adjusted funding, 2017–2026



Note: Figures have been deflated using CPI-U and are in FY 2026 dollars. OBBBA figures reflect expected obligations rather than budget authority, based on the administration's FY 2027 spend plan.

Source: Center for American Progress calculations using data from Congressional Budget Office, "The Budget and Economic Outlook: 2026 to 2036" (Washington: 2026); Tony Bertuca, "Pentagon reveals budget reconciliation spending plans," Inside Defense, February 23, 2026; Congressional Budget Office, on file with author.

Chart: Center for American Progress

The best way to keep American servicemembers and civilians in the region safe is to stand united to end Trump's unnecessary war. Rather than authorize more funding and risk emboldening Trump to continue using precious military assets for further adventurism, rather than critical defense needs, Congress should insist that Trump seek an immediate end to hostilities.