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Commander: not the time to shortchange DoD

This week’s ISIS air strikes, and the continuing need for ground forces, illustrate that defense cuts and troop reductions are unwise in a time of war.

WASHINGTON (Sept. 25, 2014) -- American Legion National Commander Michael D. Helm said U.S.-led air strikes against ISIS militants in Syria this week amplify our nation’s need to protect the Department of Defense from drastic budget cuts and force reductions.

“The air-strike strategy is certainly an effective way to kill the enemy and destroy its war-fighting capabilities, at least in the short term,” Helm said. “But the large-scale use of high-tech missiles is expensive. Launching 1,000 Tomahawks is going to cost DoD about $1.5 billion, and the Pentagon has already said this week’s air strikes are only the beginning. Also, lasting security and protection against resurgence of this army of terrorists can only be attained through complete military superiority, including ground forces.”

Costs of the air campaign in Syria are currently being covered by the Overseas Contingency Operations fund, which has about $85 billion through fiscal 2014.

“But if these air strikes continue for months or years – and with more budget cuts kicking in from sequestration – then funding this war is going to be a serious issue,” Helm said.

“The American Legion wants Congress to avoid any further cuts to the defense budget and to properly fund combat operations against ISIS, Khorasan and other militant Islamic groups, by air, sea and land. These threats must be annihilated, and now is not the time to shortchange DoD on funding necessary to conduct critical military operations in the ongoing war on terrorism.”

The first air strike by U.S. and Arab allies happened in the early hours of Sept. 23, Syria time. Two days later, Pentagon spokesman Navy Rear Adm. John Kirby commented to CNN about fighting the Islamic militants. “I think we are in this for a matter of years. We are steeling ourselves for that period of time.”

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