

Trump's \$1.5 Trillion Defense Plan Draws Rare Republican Pushback

Apr 28, 2026, 7:00 PM EDT; Updated: Apr 29, 2026, 5:30 AM EDT

Summary by Bloomberg AI AI Generated



- Key congressional Republicans are poised to break with Donald Trump on his proposed 44% raise for the Pentagon, a rare act of defiance that signals the president's weakening grip on Washington.
- Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth will head to Congress to defend Trump's \$1.5 trillion defense budget, which is facing pushback from members of both political parties.
- Republicans are trying to sharpen their economic message and appeal to voters concerned about the cost of living, and a defense spending spike risks cuts to domestic programs popular with many Americans.

Key congressional Republicans are poised to break with Donald Trump on his proposed 44% raise for the Pentagon, a rare act of defiance that signals the president's weakening grip on Washington as the midterm elections near and he quickly approaches the back half of his second term.

Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth will head to Congress Wednesday and Thursday to defend Trump's hoped-for \$1.5 trillion defense budget, a number that's already facing pushback from members of both political parties.

With just six months until the midterms, Republicans are **trying to sharpen** their economic message and appeal to voters predominantly concerned about the cost of living. A defense spending spike — coming alongside the unpopular Iran war — risks cuts to domestic programs popular with many Americans.

While defense hawks within the party generally support Trump's military plan, other Republicans say they aren't even clear yet how the president wants to spend the extra money. The \$440 billion boost would be reminiscent of spending spikes during the height of manpower-intensive wars in Iraq and Afghanistan — and the extra money, Trump has said, wouldn't even include funding for Iran, which he wants to handle separately.

Trump has yet to articulate a comprehensive new direction for the military that would require heavy new investments. The Pentagon is seeking to rebuild its weapons stockpiles and speed up production for key munitions, but that accounts for only part of the increase.

"It looks like they don't have a complete plan for what they're going to do with an enormous sum of money if it was actually appropriated," said Todd Harrison, a budget expert at the right-leaning American Enterprise Institute.

The Pentagon, for instance, **wants to spend \$54.6 billion** on the Defense Autonomous Warfare Group as part of its push to buy more drones and technology to counter them. That's nearly 250 times the group's \$225.9 million budget this year. The Pentagon provided scant justification for the massive increase.

Read More: [Budget Fears Weigh on Defense Stocks Ahead of Hegseth Testimony](#)

A significantly larger check for the Defense Department — particularly one without clear plans and priorities — creates new opportunities for waste and abuse. Pentagon history is checkered with stories of squandered dollars, from pricey toilet sets to excessive overruns on premier weaponry.

"We are being ripped off by our military industrial complex," Senator **Ron Johnson**, a Trump ally, said this week. "The key part of the debate over \$1.5 trillion will be what we are spending it on."

Democrats consider Trump's budget request a nonstarter, leaving Republicans with only one avenue to push it through: a party-line process that requires near unanimity within a fractured GOP. Such a bill would be a grab bag, the last chance

for the GOP to pass changes to the tax code and other policies before the midterms.

Trump used that approach, called reconciliation, to push through his **“One Big Beautiful Bill”** last summer, threatening to back primary opponents for anyone who voted against his tax law. He won’t have that stick this summer, however, as many Republicans have opted to retire and most primary deadlines have passed for those running for reelection.

Senate Appropriations Chair **Susan Collins**, who is in a **tight race** in Maine, said she can’t say now whether she will back Trump’s request until she reviews its details. She’s previously supported hefty defense increases, particularly on shipbuilding projects that benefit her home state. But she said she sees no way for Republicans to push through a significant defense hike this summer.

Investors in defense companies seem to share Collins’ pessimism. Major defense suppliers, Lockheed Martin Corp. and Northrop Grumman Corp., have **erased nearly a fourth** of their market value since hitting a high on March 2, while shares of RTX Corp. have lost almost a fifth. The S&P 500 Index has climbed about 3.6% over the same time.

House Armed Services Committee Chair Mike Rogers is planning to laud the budget request when Hegseth testifies in front of his committee, emphasizing the proposal would allow the US military to adequately fund current programs, while also investing in new additions for the future.

“For the first time in 40 years, we’ve been presented a budget that accounts for the true cost of American deterrence. This budget fully funds both sustainment and modernization,” according to Rogers’ prepared remarks.

House Budget Chair **Jodey Arrington** is more optimistic that Republicans will do something, but he signaled anything Congress passes may fall short of Trump’s proposal. “Whether it is the entire increase they are requesting, I don’t know,” the Texas Republican said.

Arrington and other fiscal conservatives like Representative Chip Roy want any defense increase to be offset with cuts elsewhere in the federal budget. They acknowledge their push will face resistance from swing district moderates in the party.

The best shot for a defense boost could be narrow and targeted — potentially \$50 billion for the Iran war, some lawmakers suggest. The White House, however, has yet to send Congress a request to replenish munitions and cover the costs of the ongoing war.

Underscoring the extent of congressional dissatisfaction, Senator [Mitch McConnell](#) accused the Pentagon of holding up funding for Ukraine and put the blame with Undersecretary Elbridge Colby.

“Meantime, the Pentagon still won’t tell us why it hasn’t obligated and executed modest Ukraine investments,” he wrote in an [opinion piece](#) in the *Washington Post* published Tuesday. Hegseth is expected to testify before a Senate committee on Thursday.

With assistance from Arvelisse Bonilla Ramos.

(Updates to add Mike Rogers statement.)

To contact the reporters on this story:

Courtney McBride in Washington at cmcbride47@bloomberg.net;

Erik Wasson in Washington at ewasson@bloomberg.net

To contact the editors responsible for this story:

Nick Wadhams at nwadhams@bloomberg.net;

Megan Scully at mscully32@bloomberg.net

Romy Varghese