

U.S. Representative Mike Quigley (IL-05) offers an amendment to cut defense funding for the V-22 Osprey, calling it "dangerous pork with wings." After rebuttal, remarks continue.

Chairman: The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Illinois.

Rep. Mike Quigley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise to offer an amendment with my friend from Illinois, Mr. Gutierrez, to cut funding for the V-22 Osprey and put the savings toward deficit reduction.

As many know, the Osprey as had a long and troubled past.

According to a 2009 GAO [Government Accountability Office] report, the Osprey was not suited to fly safely in extreme heat, excessive sand, or under enemy fire.

The GAO also found that Osprey was 186 percent over budget, costing over \$100 million per

unit to produce, or 5 times more than the Sea Knight helicopter it was designed to replace. More recently, the Pentagon testing office found that the readiness rate of the V-22 was well below that of traditional aircraft, noting its “average mission capable rate was 53 percent from June 2007 to May 2010, well below the required rate of 82 percent.”

Sadly, due to these severe shortcomings; the V-22 has taken the lives of 36 individuals, including 31 service members. Just last month two marines lost their lives when an Osprey crashed in Morocco. Now I understand that since the 2009 report a number of improvements have been made. Costs are being reduced and safety is being improved.

I also understand the unique benefits the V-22 can provide to our service members, especially for rescue operations. But those operations can be completed with less expensive helicopters.

But here's the bottom line: We are emerging from a recession. We have had a deficit topping \$1 trillion dollars for 4 straight years. And we have limited resources, which means we have to make choices. As we look to reduce our deficit, we have to put everything on the table - including defense.

Defense spending comprises close to 20 percent of our budget, and yet this defense authorization completely exempts ANY cuts from defense. In fact, it actually *increases* spending by \$4 billion over the President's request.

We have to take a hard look at what we are spending and ask ourselves: Is this essential?

Given its continued cost overruns, poor safety record, and the fact that it can be replaced with less expensive helicopters, I think it is clear the V-22 is not essential. At best it's suboptimal – it certainly not essential.

And I am not alone.

President George H.W. Bush tried to zero out funding for the V-22, but Congress wouldn't let him. Former Defense Secretary Dick Cheney tried to zero out funding for the V-22, but Congress wouldn't let him. And now the President's Bipartisan Fiscal Commission, the Bipartisan Policy Commission and the Sustainable Defense Task Force, have all recommended cutting the V-22, and replacing it with the less expensive MH-60 helicopters.

But the reality is Congress continues to block cuts to the V-22 because 2,000 companies supply parts for the Osprey from 40 states. I get it; the Department of Defense has become a jobs program. If all we're worried about is job creation, we'd be better off building bridges and transit programs.

Because in the end, we have to remember the big picture.

Choosing to fund this over-budget, dangerous, nonessential plane means making cuts in other vital areas such as education, infrastructure, and healthcare.

I encourage my colleagues to join me in scrutinizing this budget, setting priorities, and cutting programs that aren't essential in order to protect ones that are. This defense authorization bill includes a long list of non-essential programs all of which should be cut, but a vote for my amendment to cut the over-budget, underperforming V-22 Osprey is a step in the right direction.

I reserve.

[Continues After Rebuttal]

MQ: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Chairman: The gentleman is recognized for one minute.

MQ: The fact remains, studies still show this is a dangerous vehicle; studies still show it is suboptimal; studies still show it is wildly over cost. I want to help the Marines; I want to save Marine lives and that's why this amendment is appropriate. It is, in the end, still dangerous pork with wings.

Thank you.

