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Christmas for the Pentagon Is Early This Year Statement by Maya MacGuineas President, Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget May 17, 2016

The defense authorization bill reported by the House Armed Services Committee would funnel \$23 billion of war funds to the Pentagon for basic expenses, counting on a future supplemental appropriations bill to cover the difference.

House Republicans propose to spend \$18 billion more than the President's \$5 billion request on basic defense spending funded through the unlimited Overseas Contingency Operations account. Use of this gimmick began as part of last year's budget deal but has escalated.

OCO spending is not subject to discretionary spending caps, so this move effectively calls for circumventing the limit on defense spending by \$23 billion without offsets.

This sleight-of-hand relies on a cynical expectation that the \$18 billion in needed war spending will be restored next year through an emergency supplemental appropriations bill. Supplementals are meant to address unanticipated needs, not to cover intentionally underfunded requirements.

By taking funds from our fighting troops today in the hope they will be restored tomorrow, Congress is threatening our national security as well as our fiscal integrity.

This move means that next spring, Christmas will come early and Members of Congress will surely try to decorate the tree with costly pet projects that wouldn't pass muster under the normal rules.

It's time for the budget games to stop. Congress should stick to its own rules and fund non-war spending through the regular process.

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