

House Republicans held a press conference in the Capitol Saturday to denounce what they called dangerous cuts to defense spending in Senator Harry Reid's debt limit bill. Buck McKeon (R, Calif.), chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, warned that Reid's bill would cut defense by more than \$400 billion beyond Boehner's plan over 10 years. "If Senator Reid's plan passes--if we stand idly by while this administration spends down its domestic spending spree with the blood and sweat of our troops--our military will break," McKeon said. "The Army and Marines are stretched dangerously thin, separated from their families, and using hardware that has been chewed up by a decade of fighting."

Rep. Randy Forbes (R, Va.) said that Reid's bill would result in a dangerous reduction in both hardware and military personnel. "If we look at the Marine Corps they've said specifically they cannot meet the needs of the combatant commanders now," Forbes said. "If they have to make these cuts it'll have to come out of personnel, and they'll have to reduce their force structure, and they'll have to have a new strategy for how they defend the United States of America."

The most powerful rebuke of Reid's plan came from Lt. Colonel Allen West (R, Fla.). The Tea Partier and Iraq war veteran said he's not opposed to all defense cuts and even chastised the president for wasting tax dollars on Libya. But he called the Reid bill's cuts "incredible" and "unconscionable."

"There are places where we can cut the defense budget, but it's not about wholesale cuts," he said. We need to identify wasteful programs "instead of these across the board major cuts."

West spoke of a recent visit with troops who had returned from Afghanistan and are now feeling the budget cuts the military has already endured.

"I heard some things that really sent a chill down my spine," said West. "When commanders told me that we're starting to have to budget toilet paper into the barracks ... that reminded me of the times when I was at Fort Bragg, North Carolina ... and I had to do the exact same time."

"It reminded me of the times when we had to identify either a vehicle or a Howitzer or a piece of equipment that we had to basically rape to make sure we kept other piece of equipment

equipped because we did not have the spare parts necessary.

"It reminded me of the time that we did not have the artillery ammunition so that we could go off and properly train our crews.

"It reminded me of the time that friends of mine who are in armor units said they had to park their tanks and they had to use golf carts to do tank tactics.

"It reminded me of a time when I deployed to Iraq in 2003 and we did not have enough body armor so I had to lend my body armor to my driver. Thank God when he got shot in the chest he had the right type of body armor that ricocheted that bullet off into his arm."

"I am not going to turn my back on the men and women" in uniform today, said West.

By JOHN MCCORMACK