Client: The Stimson Center  
Name of Project: Achieving National Security in Time of Austerity  
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Client

The Stimson Center's Budgeting for Foreign Affairs and Defense program vision is to improve American national security at a lower cost to the American people. They seek to strengthen the capacity and capability of the U.S. government to frame, resource, and execute foreign and national security policies and programs.

Topic

The United States will reduce defense spending by at least $480 billion over the next ten years. Under these new fiscal constraints, the U.S. military must draw down troops and rescale operations. In addition, the government released its defense priorities for the 21st century, outlining a strategic shift from the Middle East to the Pacific. In light of these changes and restrictions, our team will evaluate how the U.S. should prioritize its needs and force structure to meet current obligations and future security challenges.

Methodology

To gather preliminary background information, we reviewed defense spending literature, official government reports, and historical congressional budgets.

To gain a better understanding of the logistics of a U.S. military drawdown, we are studying the 1990s as a historical example. Similar to the United States’ current security climate, the 90s marked a period when the U.S. had just come out of the Gulf
War in the Middle East and was preparing for future threats. We are evaluating how the Department of Defense prioritized spending; which programs were cut; and what effect, if any, this had on subsequent U.S. military operations. We will use this information to make recommendations on how the U.S. can best meet its 21st century security objectives despite spending cuts.