

SASC Chair Reed: Defense Budget Turmoil Fault 'Not in Our Stars, But in Ourselves'



Sen. Jack Reed (D-Rhode Island), chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee during a hearing in review of the fiscal 2023 defense authorization request on March 8. *DOD / U.S. Air Force Tech. Sgt. Jack Sanders*

WASHINGTON – The chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee quoted Shakespeare to lay the blame on Congress itself for the defense budget legislative turmoil over the last two decades of multiple continuing resolutions, and said budget delays are especially dangerous in the world's current geo-political climate.

"We've gotten into a very bad habit over the last several years, but I hope we can get it done," said Sen. Jack Reed (D-Rhode Island), when asked by *Seapower* if he foresaw a return to the regular defense budget legislative process in Congress. Reed spoke March 23 in a webinar with reporters of the Defense Writers Group.

Reed noted the fiscal 2022 budget was received late from the Defense Department, which pushed back deliberations. The 2023 president's budget proposal is scheduled to be delivered to Congress March 28, almost two months later than the normal plan.

Reed said getting the defense budget out on time is "extremely helpful to the services. Most services don't – regrettably – plan to do anything in the first quarter of the new fiscal year because they assume they won't have a budget and, in some cases, even authorization acts. That's a whole quarter of just standing around tapping your feet, and in this world, with these adversaries, and the speed of technology, that's wasted

time.”

Reed noted the services had to wait nearly six months before the 2022 defense budget finally was appropriated.

“It’s not an efficient way to spend money,” he said.

“The problem is, as Shakespeare said, is not in our stars but in ourselves,” Reed said. “In Congress we have been, for many reasons, distracted. It’s a complicated political environment and I hope we can refocus.”

Reed said he, ranking member Sen. James Inhofe (R-Oklahoma) and the Senate Appropriations Committee leaders would like to get their defense bills done on time.

“Sometimes we become hostage to other issues, unfortunately,” Reed said. “But our goal is very clearly to get it done and get it done on time.”

Reed also took the opportunity to say in the current world climate, the United States has to “reimagine how we fight. We have to develop new warfighting concepts. We have new equipment. We have new areas of space and cyber that have been around by every day are much more critical for what we have to do.”

Reed said tough choices have to be made about legacy systems, and that the U.S. has to look to its allies as a “major source of strength.”