Opinion



Volunteers sort relief goods Sept. 8 at Holy Family Parish in Wharton, Texas, in the aftermath of Tropical Storm Harvey. The parish is in the Diocese of Victoria. (CNS/Bob Roller)



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Ninety House Republicans voted against the final emergency aid bill for survivors of Hurricane Harvey. They voted no because the bill included raising the debt ceiling for three months and also because there was no budget offset to the emergency spending. They would have liked to see deep cuts in Medicaid, an end to Head Start and college aid, or limits on drug recovery programs, etc.

But Congress, Democrats and Republicans alike, never look to cuts in the military budget when this sort of emergency spending bill comes up. Yes, our national debt is about $20 trillion. And Congress is poised to purchase a trillion and a half dollars' worth of F-35 fighter planes. I'd tell you how many that is, but the number keeps falling as the price rises.

We don't need the F-35. We have excellent fighters — except that we keep selling them to potential enemies or friends of potential enemies. Further, there just never will be up-in-the-sky dogfights like there were during World War II. Times have changed and methods of warfare have changed. Besides all that, the F-35 still can't meet its specifications.

We do use fighters as nuclear delivery systems. But that raises another entire budget item. We don't need 7,000 nuclear warheads, much less the planes and cruise missiles and missile silos to deliver them. Really, 100 would be quite sufficient to end the world. Some researchers say 14 or so would do it.

There will be another short-term bill to cover emergency costs for Hurricane Irma survivors. And then there will be a much bigger bill for infrastructure and housing repair and protection from future storms and floods. If Congress wants to offset these costs, I say turn to the Pentagon. And I haven't even mentioned waste, fraud and abuse. Close the generals' golf courses and reduce their staffs. Heck, reduce the number of generals. There's real money out there.

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