



Obama Fact Checked On His Debate Sequestration Claims

On Sequestration, Obama Says One Thing To Voters, Another To Washington

OBAMA CAN'T DENY RESPONSIBILITY FOR PROPOSING THE DEVASTATING SEQUESTRATION CUTS TO THE DEFENSE DEPARTMENT

Obama: "First of all, the sequester is not something that I proposed. It's something that Congress has proposed. It will not happen." (President Barack Obama, 2012 Presidential Debate, Lynn University, Boca Raton, FL, 10/22/12)

Fact Checkers Confirmed That The Original Idea For Sequestration Came From Obama's White House

The Wall Street Journal: "By Far The Biggest Gaffe—Or Deliberate Evasion—Of The Evening Was Made By Mr. Obama When He Denied Paternity For The Sequester Defense Cuts Now Set For 2013 And Said They 'Will Not Happen.'" "By far the biggest gaffe—or deliberate evasion—of the evening was made by Mr. Obama when he denied paternity for the sequester defense cuts now set for 2013 and said they 'will not happen.' Mr. Obama's aides rushed out after the debate to say he meant to say the cuts 'should not happen.' But the truth is that Mr. Obama has been using the fear of huge defense cuts as a political strategy to force Republicans to accept a tax increase. As Bob Woodward describes in his recent book, Mr. Obama and the White House helped to devise the defense sequester strategy—no matter the actual risk to defense." (Editorial, "Commanders In Chief," [The Wall Street Journal](#), 10/23/12)

Politico Fact Check: "In Fact, The Idea May Have Come In Part From Obama's Current Chief Of Staff, Jack Lew." "In fact, the idea may have come in part from Obama's current chief of staff, Jack Lew. The Washington Post's Bob Woodward reported in his book 'The Price of Politics' that Lew, then-Office of Management and Budget director, and White House Legislative Affairs Director Rob Nabors broached the idea of a defense sequester as a threat to Republicans during negotiations over raising the debt ceiling." (Josh Gerstein and Darren Samuelsohn, "Fact-Checking The Third Presidential Debate," [Politico](#), 10/22/12)

- **White House:** "We Have An Idea For The Trigger. ... Sequestration." "At 2:30 p.m. Lew and Nabors went to the Senate to meet with Reid and his chief of staff, David Krone. 'We have an idea for the trigger,' Lew said. 'What's the idea?' Reid asked skeptically. 'Sequestration.' Reid bent down and put his head between his knees, almost as if he were going to throw up or was having a heart

attack. He sat back up and looked at the ceiling. 'A couple of weeks ago,' he said, 'my staff said to me that there is one more possible' enforcement mechanism: sequestration. He said he told them, 'Get the hell out of here. That's insane. The White House surely will come up with a plan that will save the day. And you come to me with sequestration?' Well, it could work, Lew and Nabors explained. What would the impact be? They would design it so that half the threatened cuts would be from the Defense Department. 'I like that,' Reid said. 'That's good. It doesn't touch Medicaid or Medicare, does it?' It actually does touch Medicare, they replied. 'How does it touch Medicare?' It depends, they said. There's versions with 2 percent cuts, and there's versions with 4 percent cuts." (Bob Woodward, *The Price Of Politics*, 2012, pp. 326)

- **The Obama Administration Proposed That Half Of The Cuts In The Sequestration Trigger Should Come From The Defense Budget.** "Lew, Nabors, Sperling and Bruce Reed, Biden's chief of staff, had initially decided to propose using language from the 1985 Gramm-Rudman-Hollings deficit reduction law as the model for the trigger. It seemed tough enough to apply to the current situation. It would require a sequester with half the cuts from Defense, and the other half from domestic programs. There would be no chance the Republicans would want to pull the trigger and allow the sequester to force massive cuts to Defense." (Bob Woodward, *The Price Of Politics*, 2012, p. 341)

PolitiFact Rated Obama's Claim "Mostly False," Because "It Was Obama's Negotiating Team That Came Up With The Idea For Defense Cuts In 2011." "Obama said that the sequester -- and the defense cuts that would result from it -- was not his proposition. 'It is something that Congress has proposed,' he said in the debate. But it was Obama's negotiating team that came up with the idea for defense cuts in 2011, though they were intended to prod Congress to come up with a better deal for reining in the deficit, not as an effort to make those cuts reality. Meanwhile, members of both parties in Congress voted for the legislation that set up the possibility of sequestration. Obama's position is that Congress should now act to avoid those across-the-board cuts. Obama can't rightly say the sequester isn't his, but he did need cooperation from Congress to get to this point. We rate the statement Mostly False." (Molly Moorhead, "Barack Obama Says Congress Owns Sequestration Cuts," [PolitiFact](#), 10/24/12)

"Bob Woodward Says The President Got His Facts Wrong On Sequester At Monday Night's Debate." "Bob Woodward says the president got his facts wrong on sequester at Monday night's debate. Woodward's book, 'The Price of Politics,' has been the go-to fact check source for Obama's answer, in which he claimed the idea of using deep, automatic, across-the-board domestic and defense spending cuts to force Congress to address the nation's burgeoning federal deficit originated from Congress, not from the White House." (Leigh Munsil, "Woodward: Obama 'Mistaken' On Sequester," [Politico](#), 10/23/12)

- **Bob Woodward: "He's Mistaken. And It's Refuted By The People Who Work For Him."** "What the president said is not correct,' Woodward told POLITICO Tuesday. 'He's mistaken. And it's refuted by the people who work for him.'" (Leigh Munsil, "Woodward: Obama 'Mistaken' On Sequester," [Politico](#), 10/23/12)

Roll Call's Steve Dennis: "A Lot Of Folks Were Shaking Their Heads Wondering What He Was Saying Because The Reality Is The President Was Involved." GWEN IFILL: "Steve Dennis, how did we get to this path? The president said it was really Congress that did this and some people said no the White House had a role. How did we get to this?" STEVE DENNIS: "I think a lot of folks were shaking their heads wondering what he was saying because the reality is the president was involved. He helped craft this deal." (PBS' "NewsHour," 10/23/12)

AFTER OBAMA TOLD VOTERS SEQUESTRATION WOULD NOT HAPPEN, OBAMA AIDES REASSURED WASHINGTON HE DIDN'T REALLY MEAN IT

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Obama Will Continue To Use The Threat Of The Sequestered Defense Cuts To Push His Budget Plan On Congress

Obama “Startled Washington During Monday Night’s Foreign Policy Debate When He Said Billions In Automatic Pentagon Cuts ‘Will Not Happen.’” “President Barack Obama startled Washington during Monday night’s foreign policy debate when he said billions in automatic Pentagon cuts ‘will not happen’ — a line that could weaken his bargaining power during an epic spending and tax fight expected when Congress returns.” (Phillip Ewing, “D.C. Caught Off Guard By Obama Sequester Vow,” [Politico](#), 10/23/12)

- **Obama Has Repeatedly Used Sequestration As A “Bargaining Chip” In Deficit Reduction Negotiations.** “Obama was responding to criticism from Republican rival Mitt Romney that American national security is at risk if the defense cuts are triggered in early January. ‘First of all, the sequester is not something I proposed, it’s something that Congress proposed,’ Obama said. ‘It will not happen.’ The remark stakes new ground for the president, who has said he wants to avert the sequester cuts by taking a ‘balanced’ approach to solving the budget debacle — meaning he will not sign off on a deal that cuts spending, but doesn’t increase revenues. His strongest bargaining chip: the sequester cuts, which he may have just taken off the table.” (Phillip Ewing, “D.C. Caught Off Guard By Obama Sequester Vow,” [Politico](#), 10/23/12)

Immediately After The Debate, Obama’s Advisers Worked To Tone Down Obama’s Remarks. “After the debate, White House senior adviser David Plouffe toned down the president’s remarks, saying that ‘everyone in Washington agrees that sequester ‘should not happen.’” And Obama’s senior campaign adviser David Axelrod also took a less firm stance on sequester, telling CNN that a balanced deal is widely appealing: “There are plenty of people on both sides who want to get that done, and will get that done.” (Phillip Ewing, “D.C. Caught Off Guard By Obama Sequester Vow,” [Politico](#), 10/23/12)

- **White House Senior Adviser David Plouffe “Softened The Obama Administration’s Language On The Sequester After President Obama Insisted That It Would Not Happen.”** “White House senior adviser and 2008 campaign manager David Plouffe softened the Obama administration’s language on the sequester after President Obama insisted that it would not happen. ‘No one wants it to happen,’ Plouffe told reporters after the third and final debate on Monday. Reporters pointed out to him that Obama had vowed during the debate that the sequester would not happen — a much stronger statement. ‘Listen, you talk to Republicans and Democrats on Capitol Hill. No one thinks it should happen. It was designed so what the parties have to do,’ Plouffe said.” (Reid Epstein, “Plouffe Softens Sequester Language,” [Politico](#), 10/22/12)

After Obama Promised Voters He Wouldn’t Slash The Defense Budget, Obama Aides Worked to “Stabilize The Policy Blowback” In Washington By Claiming Obama Didn’t Really Mean What He Said. “A smart political move on the campaign trail is often a misstep on the legislative playing field - unless you pull the kind of two-step that President Barack Obama did on defense cuts. Step One: Grab the political moment by telling a national debate audience that you won’t actually slash defense, assuaging voters in swing states with a lot of military employment. Step Two: Stabilize the policy blowback inside the Beltway by sending out your aides to reassure Washington that you didn’t quite mean what you said.” (Jonathan Allen and Scott Wong, “Obama’s Big Sequester Gamble,” [Politico](#), 10/23/12)

- **“In The End, There’s No Change In The President’s Stance Toward Capitol Hill - He’ll Still Try To Use Defense Cuts As Leverage To Raise Taxes - But He Left Voters With The Impression That He Won’t Put The Pentagon On The Chopping Block Under Any Circumstances.”** “Intentionally or not, the mixed messages left Obama communicating one thing to voters and another to Congress on one of the most vexing and urgent issues facing Washington

in the next few months. In the end, there's no change in the president's stance toward Capitol Hill - he'll still try to use defense cuts as leverage to raise taxes - but he left voters with the impression that he won't put the Pentagon on the chopping block under any circumstances." (Jonathan Allen and Scott Wong, "Obama's Big Sequester Gamble," [Politico](#), 10/23/12)

Fox News' Bret Baier: "So, Apparently 'Will Not Happen' Has Become 'Should Not Happen.'" FOX NEWS' BRET BAIER: "Megyn you mentioned the sequester earlier, the massive cut to the Defense Department, the Pentagon, that's coming up on January 2. The president said tonight that the sequester will not happen. That was a key moment. And it did make news. Well now, the White House, the campaign is back-peddling. David Plouffe saying in the Spin Room just behind you, pressed on this, he said repeatedly to reporters, everyone in Washington agrees the sequester quote should not happen. And asked again, and he said it should not happen. So apparently 'will not happen' has become 'should not happen.' We'll see what happens with that." (Fox News' ["On The Record"](#), 10/22/12)

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