

WASHINGTON — Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton warned Monday that Republican-proposed cuts in foreign aid to be considered by the House this week would harm the nation's security interests and standing across the globe.

In a letter to the House Appropriations Committee and in a visit to Capitol Hill for a private meeting with the House speaker, John A. Boehner, Mrs. Clinton sounded the alarm about reductions that she said amounted to a 16 percent decrease for the State Department from current spending and a 41 percent cut in money available for humanitarian programs.

“Cuts of this magnitude will be devastating to our national security, will render us unable to respond to unanticipated disasters and will damage our leadership around the world,” Mrs. Clinton said in a letter to Representative Harold Rogers, Republican of Kentucky and chairman of the Appropriations Committee.

Heading into three days of debate over their proposed cuts, Republicans acknowledged that some of them would be unpopular. But they said that they were prepared to defend them as necessary because of the mounting national debt and that they would pursue even deeper cuts on the House floor.

“We will begin for the first time in a long time to actually reduce spending instead of just to talk about how much it’s going to grow,” said Representative John Campbell, Republican of California. “We have to act and we have to reduce spending, and there is plenty of spending to reduce.”

The cuts would come from federal agencies this fiscal year and are separate from the new budget requests that the Obama administration submitted Monday for the 2012 fiscal year, which begins Oct. 1.

The House Republican plan will meet strong opposition in the Senate, which Democrats control, and from the White House. But with Democrats calling for spending cuts as well, some programs would lose funding if the two parties were able to reach a compromise.

Under their plan, the Republicans would reduce spending in virtually every federal agency, taking particular aim at environmental regulations, energy programs, labor initiatives, education aid, health care and transportation programs.

While the cuts would total \$100 billion from the president's budget for this fiscal year, they actually amount to about \$61 billion in real dollars since President Obama's plan was never enacted and many of his proposed increases did not take effect.

Representative Eric Cantor, Republican of Virginia and the majority leader, did not try to play down the scope of the Republican proposal.

"It is big, and it is real, and it can impact people's lives," Mr. Cantor said Monday.

However, he said attempts to characterize the cuts as catastrophic were overblown, declaring that House Republicans were just trying to roll back spending to 2008 levels — before the enactment of the federal stimulus law and other economic recovery plans.

"The sun rose and set in 2008," Mr. Cantor said.

Foreign aid programs are a traditional target when Congress looks for cuts, and Republicans noted that State Department operations received a very significant increase in 2010. But Mrs. Clinton called the cuts particularly ill timed, saying that developments in Egypt and elsewhere demonstrated the need for a global diplomatic presence.

"To be successful at these vital tasks, we need the resources to do the job, otherwise we will pay a higher price later in crises that are allowed to simmer and boil over into conflicts," she said after her meeting with Mr. Boehner.