

“A nation that continues year after year to spend more money on military defense than on programs of social uplift is approaching spiritual death.”— Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Military Spending vs. Real Security

Despite the global economic crisis, global military spending – money for killing – is rising at an alarming rate, at the expense of addressing urgent human needs. Arms races in many parts of the world are escalating. More military bases are being built, outer space is being used for war, and nuclear arsenals are being modernized. U.S. military spending has doubled during the same period that its economy has shrunk from 32 to 23 percent of global output.

The Stockholm Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) estimates that total global military spending in 2009 rose to \$1531 Billion – an increase of 49% in real terms since 2000. In 2009, the 10 largest military spenders accounted for 75% of world military spending, with the U.S. alone (at over \$700 Billion) accounting for 43% -- more than 9 times larger than the military budget of China, the second largest spender.

Noting that the global economic crisis has had little impact on world military spending, SIPRI reports that rapidly rising revenues from oil and other natural resources appear to be a significant driver of military expenditure in many developing countries. Describing how growing competition for natural resources may fuel a vicious cycle of arms racing, they warn: “This may lead to increased military spending as a means of protecting resources from internal or external threats, while resource revenues are often a source of funding for arms purchases.”

The National Priorities Project reports that the cost of U.S. wars since 2001 is well over \$1 Trillion. The war in Iraq is approaching \$800 Billion, and the Afghanistan war tops \$300 Billion. The human cost of these wars is incalculable: nearly 5700 U.S. troops killed, over 50,000 wounded, and more than 1 million civilians killed in Iraq and Afghanistan.

His nuclear disarmament rhetoric notwithstanding, a plan submitted to Congress by President Obama earlier this year projects an investment of \$180 Billion by 2020 to maintain and modernize U.S. nuclear weapons systems.

These staggering amounts of money are nearly impossible for the human mind to comprehend. A Billion dollar bills laid end to end would circle the globe at the equator four times. A Trillion dollar bills laid end to end would stretch from the Earth to the Sun.

“The budget is the skeleton of the state stripped of all misleading ideologies.” – Joseph Schumpeter

A study by the Brookings Institution found, as a conservative estimate, that the U.S. spent \$5.5 Trillion dollars on nuclear weapons from 1940–1996 (in constant 1996 dollars). Nuclear weapons spending during this period exceeded the combined total federal spending for education; training, employment, and social services; agriculture; natural resources and the environment; general science, space, and technology; community and regional development, including disaster relief; law enforcement; and energy production and regulation.



As calculated by the National Priorities Project, taxpayers in California will pay \$21.6 Billion for proposed total Iraq and Afghanistan war spending in FY2011. For the same amount of money:

- 6,418,584 people could receive low-income healthcare for one year, **or**
- 231,434 Police or Sheriff's Patrol Officers could be paid for one year, **or**
- 280,546 Elementary School Teachers could be paid for one year.

Taxpayers in Detroit will pay \$31.7 million for proposed nuclear weapons programs FY2011. For the same amount of money:

- 26,415 households could be provided with renewable electricity-wind power for one year, **or**
- 4,459 children could be funded for Head Start for one year, **or**
- 4,133 military veterans could receive VA medical care for one year.

Bringing it down to the individual level, a person paying \$5,000 in federal income taxes in 2009 contributed \$1,325 to the military – plus \$270 for military debt, but only \$100 to education and \$65 to transportation.

The United States Conference of Mayors has demonstrated how cities can take leadership in making the transition from militarism to human security. In June, it unanimously adopted a resolution which directly challenges the military budget. Noting that *“cities have been hard hit by the recent recession which has left them with rapidly rising unemployment and declining revenues, forcing them to make severe cuts in critical public services such as police officers, fire fighters, teachers, medical and emergency workers and bus drivers,”* the resolution declares: *“The U.S. Conference of Mayors calls on the U.S. Congress to terminate funding for modernization of the nuclear weapons complex and nuclear weapons systems, to reduce spending on nuclear weapons programs well below Cold War levels, and to redirect funds to meet the urgent needs of cities.”*

All of this military spending is justified in the name of “national security,” yet as jobs, housing, healthcare, education and even food become more precarious, are you and your family more secure?

Ordinary people in the United States and around the world have the same basic needs, and have more in common with each other, than with the corrupt institutions and elites that benefit from the “national security” war system. Real human security cannot be brought about through military might. It can only be ensured through the equitable distribution of adequate food, shelter, clean water and air, health care, and education.

Real security requires an environmentally sustainable, socially equitable world, empowering the majority to live a healthy, dignified, and productive life. As an added benefit, if funding was shifted from armaments to fulfilling basic human needs, some of the root causes of violence would at the same time be addressed, thus reducing the excuses for military actions around the world.

BEYOND WAR, A NEW ECONOMY IS POSSIBLE • CUT MILITARY SPENDING, INVEST IN REAL SECURITY!

“It is irrefutably clear to us that if we do not make substantial cuts in the projected levels of Pentagon spending, we will do substantial damage to our economy and dramatically reduce our quality of life.... the notion that American taxpayers get some benefit from extending our military might worldwide is deeply flawed. And the idea that as a superpower it is our duty to maintain stability by intervening in civil disorders virtually anywhere in the world often generates anger directed at us and may in the end do more harm than good.” -- Representatives Barney Frank (Dem.) and Ron Paul (Rep.)

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