

# **U.S. MILITARY SPENDING: Hundreds of Billions for Foreign Wars, How Much for National Defense?**

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(This is an update of an article written in 1999. Since then, Ms. Forsberg has passed away. This updating, which was done after her death, maintains the same methodology as the original. The updating was done by Alex Carlin, with help from the World Security Institute, and Global Action to Prevent War.)

*"There's a big debate right now about where 3000 marines in Okinawa should go. My suggestion is Nebraska." Congressman Barney Frank*

## **INTRODUCTION**

For years, the debate about military spending has divided those who assert the need for "a strong defense" from those who argue that military spending is excessive. Put this way, the debate never gets to the heart of the issue.

The truth is that a shockingly small part of the US military budget is earmarked for defense, that is, for the actual protection of US territory. While "homeland security" expenditures have increased in recent years in response to the new, "terror" focused security environment, military forces and security maintained specifically for the defense of US territory still take up only a small portion of the total amount of US military spending, and almost none of the budget for the Department of Defense (DoD), which is projected to reach a staggering \$739 billion dollars in Fiscal Year 2011.

Where does this \$739 billion go? Nearly all of it goes to forces intended for use in foreign wars, and for projecting power and influence outside US borders. Therefore, when we raise or lower funding for the Department of Defense, rather than addressing national security threats directly, we are actually impacting these and other foreign policy issues: To what extent should the United States prosecute or intervene in foreign conflicts? To what extent should the United States continue to spend vast sums to project power globally? To what extent should the territory of other countries be our concern? And, what role should all members of the international community, including the United States, play together to prevent and minimize armed conflict around the world?

This paper identifies funds that actually go to national territorial defense, and distinguishes those allocations from funds that go to forces for other purposes overseas.

And then, when the categories of military spending are finally clarified, and the defensive expenditures are made distinct from the non-defensive expenditures, we believe that the shocking results can be a catalyst to transform the policy debate.

Most of the figures and terminology come directly from unclassified sources published annually by the US Department of Defense, the Department of Energy, and the Department of Homeland Security. World Security Institute (formerly Center for Defense

Information) contributed research.

## **MILITARY SPENDING AS IT IS TODAY**

### **I. PROTECTION OF U.S. TERRITORY**

#### **Deterrence**

The 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center and other US targets notwithstanding, the only weapons in the world capable of broadly destructive military attacks on U.S. territory are the hundreds of long-range ballistic missiles with nuclear warheads – mostly in land silos and on submarines – held by Russia and to a lesser extent China. (France and the UK also have this capability, but are not considered a threat.)

Despite advances in technology, there is still no effective defense against a massive attack by long-range ballistic missiles.

The only protection offered by policymakers against large scale nuclear attacks is the policy of “deterrence.” US nuclear missiles are intended to deter Russian, Chinese and other leaders from launching a missile attack by posing a threat of retaliation in kind. Nuclear deterrence is actually a form of psychological warfare - since neither the United States nor its potential nuclear adversaries can effectively (completely) stop the other side's incoming missiles, the “defensive” role of the missiles on each side is to strike fear in the hearts of the opposing leaders such that they are never tempted to launch their missiles in the first place.

Development and on-going maintenance of nuclear warheads, along with associated command and control and non-proliferation activities, is conducted by the Department of Energy and its National Nuclear Security Administration. The FY 2011 request for this appropriation is **\$11.2 billion**. This includes over \$2 billion in funds to support the current administration’s stepped-up efforts on nuclear non-proliferation. It also supports stockpile management and what are called “major infrastructure improvements.”

The nuclear-weapon delivery systems, such as missiles, planes and submarines, are developed, produced, manned, maintained and protected by their respective DoD services. Estimating these costs within a given fiscal year is extraordinarily difficult given that many such systems and personnel perform duties relating to both non-nuclear and nuclear weapon operations. The DoD does not specifically break-out all of these costs. The most extensive analysis of this cost (Steven I. Schwartz, Atomic Audit, p. 111 - for FY2008) estimates DoD nuclear force & operational support costs of **\$22.5 billion** and this likely remains the best current cost approximation (“Nuclear Security Spending,” Stephen I. Schwartz with Deepti Choubey, 2009).

**The FY 2011 request for “Deterrence”, that is, the US nuclear force (including all the above mentioned related costs) is approximately \$33.7 billion.**

## Ballistic Missile Defense (BMD)

Ballistic missile defenses, or “Star Wars” type systems (renamed as the “Missile Defense Agency” in 2002) exist in various stages of development.

There are systems designed to defend against large scale attacks from Russia and China, and also against small scale “limited” ballistic missile attacks including regional missile threats to US forces (and even targets in “space”). The “attackers” may include North Korea, non-state actors, and possible future entrants such as Iran.

In theory, this can be defined as a genuinely defensive military system, and therefore we include this spending in our “protection of US territory” category. However, we acknowledge 2 problems with this:

- 1) BMD is viewed by many as an offensive weapon because it makes a “first strike” more viable by reducing effective retaliation – reducing deterrence.
- 2) It has long been recognized that any BMD can be overwhelmed by an expansion of the opponent's forces, provoking an endless arms race. As a result, any large scale BMD would be immensely costly, if it ever succeeds technically - which it has not yet shown any sign of doing. Therefore, to say that BMD is actually protecting US territory is a highly problematic statement.

**The FY 2011 appropriation request for all BMD is \$9.9 billion.**

## Air Defense and Tracking

In FY2011, 1,010 Air National Guard, 134 Active Air Force, and 214 Air Force Reserve personnel will comprise Air Sovereignty Alert operations to man the now 18 alert bases responsible for U.S. territorial defense (16 of the bases are ANG, 2 are AF). These FY2011 personnel, operations and maintenance costs are **\$256 million**.

Command and control of this domestic air defense system is performed by the same personnel (including the Joint Air Defense Operations Center for NORAD and US NORTH COM) that track space objects and provide early warning of missile attack. This warning would give US military leaders about 15 minutes to decide whether or not to launch U.S. nuclear missiles, and if so, at which targets. These FY2011 personnel, operations and maintenance costs are **\$92 million**.

**The FY 2011 request for the Air Defense and Tracking appropriation is \$348 million.**

## Civil Defense

Army and Air National Guard support 55 “Civil Support Teams” and 17 “Enhanced Response Force Packages.” The FY2011 Operations and Maintenance for these units and their transport is **\$362 million**. The “Teams” are 22-person units, and the “Packages” are 170-person units. Hence, over 4,000 persons are likely in, or supporting, the units. We estimate the personnel costs at **\$360 million**.

**The FY 2011 request for the Civil Defense appropriation is \$722 million.**

## **The Department of Homeland Security**

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) was forged largely in the aftermath of 9/11. DHS includes functions and agencies as diverse as US Customs and Border Patrol (the largest DHS budget item), the Federal Emergency Management Agency, the US Coast Guard, the Secret Service, and the Domestic Nuclear Detection Office (which is in part a National Guard function), airport screeners and other security-related capacities.

In their own words, the mission of DHS is as follows:

- *Preventing Terrorism and Enhancing Security*— Guarding against terrorism was the founding mission of DHS and remains our top priority today.
- *Securing and Managing the Nation's Borders*— DHS monitors our air, land and sea borders to prevent illegal trafficking that threatens our country, while facilitating lawful travel and trade.
- *Smart and Effective Enforcement of Immigration Laws*—DHS is responsible for enforcing the nation's immigration laws while streamlining and facilitating the legal immigration process.
- *Safeguarding and Securing Cyberspace*—The Department defends against, and responds to, attacks on cyber networks – analyzing threats and vulnerabilities, coordinating the response to cyber incidents and working with the private sector and our state, local, international and private sector partners to ensure that our computers, networks and cyber systems remain safe.
- *Preparing for, Responding to, and Recovering from Disasters*—The Department provides the coordinated, comprehensive federal response in the event of a terrorist attack, natural disaster or other large-scale emergencies while working with federal, state, local and private sector partners to ensure a swift and effective recovery effort.

**The FY 2011 request (completely separate from DoD) for the Homeland Security appropriation is just over \$56 billion.**

## **Defense against Conventional Attack**

*No country has the naval or air forces or the logistical support needed to launch a conventional military attack on U.S. territory.* Because of this situation, it is understandable that the United States does not currently allocate any funds specifically to defend against a military attack by another country's conventional (non-nuclear) ground, air, or naval forces. Rather, our large conventional armed forces which are perceived by many to exist for the purpose of defending the US against a conventional attack are currently geared for other purposes, such as foreign wars.

## II. FORCES FOR USE OVERSEAS

### The Defense Department Budget

The DoD budget is broken down into two categories: The Base Budget and Overseas Contingency Operations (OCO).

#### The Base Budget

Nearly all of the Base Budget is dedicated to support forces that are available for various roles overseas: to prosecute foreign wars, to help defend certain nations from external attack, to intimidate certain nations, to conduct other forms of unilateral and multilateral intervention, and, in theory, to conduct humanitarian interventions within other nations.

Primary Categories in the FY 2011 Base Budget Request (in billions) are as follows:

Military Personnel	\$138.5
Operation and Maintenance	\$200.2
Procurement	\$112.9
Research, Development, Test and Evaluation	\$ 76.1
Military Construction	\$ 16.9
Discretionary (Revolving)	\$ 2.4
Family Housing	\$ 1.8

Broken down by service category, the figures look like this:

Army	\$143.4
Navy (Marines)	\$160.6
Air Force	\$150.0
Defense-Wide	\$ 94.9

The Army and the Marines are organized into divisions and brigades of ground troops with tanks, helicopters, artillery, and non-nuclear anti-tank and anti-aircraft guns and missiles.

The Navy has two main force components, called 'Power Projection' and 'Sea Control' forces. The Power Projection forces are centered on aircraft carriers and amphibious assault ships - floating bases for Naval air forces and Marine ground troops, which can launch an assault from offshore in any part of the world where the United States does not have access to secure land bases. Carrier and amphibious battle groups include a covey of other ships for their own protection and support: cruisers, destroyers, and frigates equipped with anti-aircraft and anti-submarine armament; 'hunter-killer' submarines, designed to identify and destroy other submarines; and unarmed support ships dedicated to the continual re-supply of fuel, ammunition, food, and so on. Sea Control naval forces have the job of keeping the sea lanes open for commercial traffic and for sea transport of military forces and supplies. (In the past, this meant being able to find and destroy Soviet ships and submarines equipped with anti-ship cruise missiles)

and torpedoes.)

The Air Force has two main components: Tactical Air power, comprising fighter and attack aircraft, which are organized in squadrons and wings; and Airlift, comprising large transport aircraft for moving ground forces and their equipment, as well as supplies for the Tactical combat aircraft.

**The Base Budget request is \$549 billion.**

**Almost none of this \$549 billion is directed to territorial defense.**

One significant exception is the above mentioned \$22.5 Billion for delivery systems and personnel involved in nuclear weapon “deterrence”. The other exceptions for air defense, tracking, and civil defense add up to slightly more than \$1 billion.

**The FY2011 Base Budget request for use overseas is approximately \$525 billion.**

## **The Overseas Contingency Operations Budget (OCO)**

OCO mostly funds the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, plus select counter-insurgency operations in Pakistan.

\$43.4 billion is requested for Operation Iraqi Freedom (Iraq), \$110.3 billion requested for Operation Enduring Freedom (Afghanistan), and about 5 billion for Pakistan.

**The FY2011 OCO Budget request is \$159 billion**

## **SUMMARY OF MILITARY SPENDING AS IT IS TODAY**

### **I. PROTECTION OF U.S. TERRITORY**

Deterrence	33.7	billion
Ballistic Missile Defense	9.9	billion
Air Defense and Tracking	0.3	billion
Civil Defense	0.7	billion
Department of Homeland Security	56.0	billion

**TOTAL 100.6 billion**

### **II. FORCES FOR USE OVERSEAS**

From the Base Budget 525 billion

Overseas Contingency Operations Budget 159 billion

**TOTAL 784 billion**

# MILITARY SPENDING AS IT COULD AND SHOULD BE

## I. DETERRENCE

Regarding our nuclear forces maintained for deterrence, cutting back our current force of several thousand nuclear warheads to a “minimum deterrent force” of a few hundred warheads would create a more secure environment, in two ways. First, if we retire the land-based intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) and B-1 and B-2 bomber aircraft, leaving only the nuclear missiles based on submarines, we will go a long way towards ending fears of hair-trigger alerts and pre-emptive, disarming strikes. Second, if we replace the multiple nuclear warheads on the submarine-based missiles with single nuclear warheads - reducing the force from many thousand nuclear bombs to a few hundred - the world will see that the United States has abandoned its decades-old “nuclear-warfighting” strategy (being prepared to escalate to a nuclear attack on hundreds or thousands of military targets in an effort to support U.S. troops overseas), and is limiting its remaining nuclear weapons to the more narrowly defensive role of protecting U.S. territory from threats of nuclear attack (“Deterrence”). This will help stop the proliferation of nuclear weapons to more and more countries, and promote steps toward global nuclear disarmament.

Moreover, this cutback in the size and scope of U.S. strategic nuclear forces would make it possible to shut down most of the nuclear-weapon activities of the Department of Energy. A small team should be retained for know-how, along with a somewhat larger team assigned to the safe dismantling and disposal of the tens of thousands of nuclear weapons and fissile material that remain in storage today.

With current spending on deterrence standing at about \$33.7 billion, and taking into account the above mentioned cutbacks in such forces, **we recommend a budget for deterrence of \$15 billion.**

## II. HOMELAND SECURITY

The budget of the Department of Homeland Security should remain close to its current level. This Department at least has as its goal the legitimate defense of the US territory. Small scale threats can be handled by this department, but considering the difficulties of defending against threats such as weapons of mass destruction crossing borders in suitcases, container ships or commercial airplanes, a robust budget will be required.

Current Homeland Security functions and programs can be improved. We plan to fully address these further important reforms and restructuring in future updates of this article.

**We recommend a budget for the Department of Homeland Security of \$50 billion.**

## III. AIR DEFENSE, TRACKING, AND CIVIL DEFENSE

**We recommend a budget for Air Defense, Tracking, and Civil Defense similar to what is currently budgeted, that is, about \$1 billion.**

## **SUBTOTAL OF PROPOSED NATIONAL DEFENSE SPENDING**

In sum, our proposed budget for National Defense narrowly defined - that is, the protection of U.S. territory against current threats, is as follows:

Deterrence:	\$15 billion
Homeland Security Department	\$50 billion
Air Defense, Tracking, and Civil Defense	\$ 1 billion
<b>Subtotal:</b>	<b>\$66 billion</b>

## **IV. Defense against Conventional Attack**

Today, no country has the naval or air forces or the logistical support needed to launch a conventional (non-nuclear) military attack on U.S. territory, and so, accordingly, no spending is required to meet any current conventional threat. However, this situation could change over time. Therefore, we propose additional spending to handle any future threat of a military attack by another country's conventional ground, air, or naval forces. This spending is discussed in the next section below.

## **V. DEFENSE AND PEACE IN THE GLOBAL CONTEXT**

In addition to retaining a minimum nuclear deterrent and keeping a watchful eye on military-related developments around the world, the United States, as the world's wealthiest nation, can and should take the lead in international efforts to promote peace and democracy throughout the world. But this need not and should not mean U.S. leaders' assuming the right to decide if and when the "international community" should intervene militarily in a foreign war, and if so, conducting the mission alone or under their own authority.

The current unilateral U.S. approach to war and peace around the world leads to the current predicament where taxpayers pay over \$700 billion per year to finance a military establishment that is geared neither to defend U.S. territory nor to help people working for peace in war-torn countries. For if U.S. forces were geared for national defense, then certainly more than a small fraction of military spending would go to actual territorial defense. And if U.S. forces were designed in any meaningful way to help people working for peace, then why don't we see massive deployments of peacekeepers in the Congo, Israel/Palestine, Sudan, Chechnya, and countless other places?

We propose an alternative approach, in which rights, responsibilities, risks, and costs are genuinely shared by the international community. This would be a far more effective means of preventing and ending war than the current unilateral approach. Arrogating to ourselves the roles of “jury, judge, and executioner” can impede the spread of peace and democracy. This new system would be far more likely to succeed, and would cost U.S. taxpayers far less.

A detailed guide to such an approach is offered in the program of a new international movement called Global Action to Prevent War (GAPW) (see [www.globalactionpw.org](http://www.globalactionpw.org)). This includes plans for the gradual transition to an international collective defense system that covers all scenarios of threats to national security. Step by step, regional and global security systems are built up while national militaries shed their offensive, border crossing capabilities. And as we trade in our “go it alone” approach, each step of the way US citizens gain, rather than lose, security, as wars become less and less likely to occur.

GAPW includes useful systems for conflict resolution. For example, an oppressed group in Uganda, needing help in ending human rights abuses, could petition the Organization for African Unity or the International Court of Justice. If the problems continue, or escalate in violence, they could appeal to a new Conflict Prevention Committee of the UN General Assembly or to the UN Secretary-General. The General Assembly could put pressure on the offending government while the Secretary-General would have the authority to dispatch specially trained Emergency Peace Service ([www.globalactionpw.org/?page\\_id=60](http://www.globalactionpw.org/?page_id=60)) personnel, including police and mediators, and, if necessary, armed soldiers, to undertake appropriate actions. This would be much more likely to prevent atrocities and avert escalations into greater conflicts and wars than the current option of waiting and hoping for Washington or some other major capital to take action, or waiting for the UN to cobble together sufficient peacekeepers using current systems and procedures.

We recommend **\$100 billion** to be spent on forces to prevent and end cross-border attacks, including those against the USA, in cooperation with like-minded nations. This amount would be greater than the military budget of any other nation today and, together with the spending of other countries, should be more than enough to preserve or restore peace around the world in the event of cross-border aggression or even internal genocide.

Since presently no country has the naval or air forces or the logistical support needed to launch a conventional (non-nuclear) military attack on U.S. territory, this level of spending is enough to keep the US territory safe from any current conventional ground, air, or naval threat. And because the current level of conventional threat is so low, we will have plenty of lead time to increase this spending if emerging threats are detected and require more spending.

Globally, this \$100 billion is a large enough US contribution today to keep the peace in the world’s most contentious hotspots, including the Middle East and Korea. But to be prudent, such hotspots should be reassessed frequently to determine what the world needs to do collectively to keep the peace, and how much the US may have to increase its contribution.

Adding this \$100 billion to the \$66 billion allocated for national defense narrowly defined, we arrive at a total military spending package of **\$166 billion**. Compared with the FY 2011 budget of \$739 billion for the Defense Department plus the nuclear-weapon related activities of the Energy Department, this represents a savings of well over \$500 billion *every year*. In addition to supporting a military posture more likely to foster peace and democracy around the world, redirecting funds of this magnitude to constructive human ends would change the United States and the world in previously unthinkable, immensely positive ways.

## **CONVERSION, DISMANTLING, DISPOSAL, BASE CLOSINGS**

Some of the redirected \$500 billion annual savings should fund "economic conversion" programs to wean some communities off dependence on high military spending. This should include funds to help with the problems associated with base closings, and the dismantling, disposal and clean up of military hardware as it is retired.

## **RELATIVE SPENDING**

As noted by Glenn Greenwald in *Common Dreams* (2010), the facts about America's bloated, excessive, always-increasing military spending are now well-known. "The U.S. spends almost as much on military spending as the entire rest of the world combined, and spends roughly six times more than the second-largest spender, China. Even as the U.S. sunk under increasingly crippling levels of debt over the last decade, defense spending rose steadily, sometimes precipitously. That explosion occurred even as overall military spending in the rest of the world decreased, thus expanding the already-vast gap between our expenditures and the world's."

## **CIA, DIA, VETERANS AFFAIRS and the STATE DEPARTMENT**

These agencies also have large budgets, and their activities are closely related to the issues discussed in this article. However, in the interests of clarity, our scope is limited to the budgets of departments such as DoD and Energy which are more directly connected to military spending.

## **THE NATIONAL GUARD**

Within the FY 2011 DoD request, allocations for the Army National Guard are \$15.06 Billion, and for the Air National Guard \$9.22 Billion – a total of about \$24 Billion.

Within this \$24 billion, the DoD budget request breaks down figures for the use of National Guard forces in Overseas Contingency Operations: \$1.37 Billion for the Army National Guard and \$370 Million for the Air National Guard are specifically included in the above mentioned \$159 Billion OCO budget. It is difficult to track the remaining funding, but it is important to note that while these units were formerly restricted to domestic tasks such as disaster relief, now they are currently being used on a large scale to supplement 'regular' Army and Air Force units fighting in Iraq and Afghanistan.

*Nearly 28% of total US forces in Iraq and Afghanistan at the end of 2007 consisted of*

*mobilized personnel of the National Guard and other Reserve components (according to the Associated Press 2/12/08).*

National Guard funding dedicated to guarding the nation is not currently apparent, other than a reduced amount for disaster relief.

## **WASTE**

The famous \$1,000 coffee pots and other scandals of waste are clearly the smaller part of the problem. The truly gigantic waste lies in the funding of monstrously expensive, unneeded weapons programs, and the maintenance of excess forces that are not necessary for territorial defense.

## **POSITIVE FEEDBACK LOOPS**

International peacekeeping offers big benefits to defensively-oriented military policies, and vice versa. A well-developed international peacekeeping system would make large national defense budgets unnecessary. And nations with small, defensive military budgets are likely to support international peacekeeping efforts because they cannot afford to go it alone. And then, as the peacekeeping systems become more successful, nations will feel safer and spend less on their militaries, which in turn makes international peacekeeping even more successful, further encouraging nations to reduce their offensive capabilities.

## **MINDSET**

The 'Overview' of the 2011 US Department of Defense Budget submitted for Congressional approval provides a rationale for its vast request for military expenditures:

*"America's interests and role in the world require armed forces with unmatched capabilities and a willingness on the part of the nation to employ them in defense of our interests and the common good. The United States remains the only nation able to protect and sustain large-scale operations over extended distances."*

Unfortunately, the "large-scale operations" referred to here are ruinously expensive, and will leave our nation financially unable to solve our most important problems, including climate change, crumbling infrastructures, budget deficits, etc. Fortunately, as this paper shows, these "operations" are not necessary for our national security, and we have better alternatives that will keep our nation secure both militarily and financially.

## **MORE THAN TINKERING**

The policy habits embedded in our latest military budget request can be broken; the addiction to bloated military budgets can be cured. To achieve such a big change in policy we will need a massive public demand. First, the public needs to see just where their hard earned dollars are currently going, and then see clearly the better alternative,

including a new more collective role for the USA to play in the world.

The rewards are great, including over 500 billion dollars in savings every year. But it will take more than tinkering. It will require more than canceling a few aircraft orders, re-deploying a few battalions and closing a few bases. The changes we need are vast and wide ranging. We must first wipe the slate completely clean and ask the key question: “what does defense spending look like when it is limited to the defense of US territory?”

At the same time we must make a commitment to global collaborative security as we build up international institutions of conflict resolution. Then we can look to a future where we project the power of international law more than the power of weapons.

### **OUR RECOMMENDATION FOR US MILITARY SPENDING IN FY2011:**

<b>Defense of US Territory</b>	<b>\$ 66 Billion</b>
<b>Contribution to the Global Security System</b>	<b>\$100 Billion</b>
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<b>Total</b>	<b>\$166 Billion</b>