

Redefining Security

for Strong Communities and a Safer World

Former Republican President and Five-Star General Dwight D. Eisenhower once said, “Every gun that is made, every warship launched, every rocket fired signifies, in the final sense, a theft from those who hunger and are not fed, those who are cold and not clothed.”

He understood fully the challenges of balancing priorities and the need for our country to focus on taking care of people instead of building a bigger war chest or achieving unending global military superiority. Yet despite his call for change, military spending has only continued to rise.

The US spends 42 percent of all world military expenditures—more than \$690 billion in 2010¹—including the military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. Surprisingly, military spending is expected to increase,² even as our nation faces a five-year freeze or cap on what has been called non-security discretionary spending.³ Where will military spending funds come

“Every **gun** that is made, every **warship** launched, every **rocket** fired signifies in the final sense a **theft** from those who **hunger** and are not fed, those who are **cold** and not clothed.”

➤ Former Republican President and Five-Star General
Dwight D. Eisenhower

⋮ Greg Speeter
⋮ National Priorities Project

National Archives Photo No. p013329

from and how will we adequately fund our schools, infrastructure and communities, especially in the face of a freeze? Even in a weak economy, in 2011 we will spend twice as much on the military as we will spend on education, science, the environment, housing and transportation combined.⁴

A national mandate for a broadened definition of security calls for decent jobs, strong communities, a strong economy and an end to war. To achieve that security will mean a paradigm shift in spending priorities, away from the military and toward our communities.

In fact, President Obama, Secretary of Defense Robert Gates and others have noted that the nature of the security threats to the US and the world have changed significantly in recent years, requiring non-military approaches and international cooperation.⁵ Yet 87 percent of what we spend on “national security” goes to the military, with just 8 percent going to homeland security

A national mandate for a broadened definition of security calls for decent jobs, strong communities and a strong economy, and an end to war.

and 5 percent to such preventive measures as peace-keeping, diplomacy, non-proliferation, development assistance, alternative energy and methods to address global climate change.⁶

Funding the Right Priorities

The federal government used to prioritize ongoing public investments, and the results paid off. The Federal Housing Act and the GI bill after World War II increased home ownership and made college available to millions of people. The War on Poverty in the 1960s helped reduce poverty by 40 percent.⁷ Federal environmental policies have substantially cleaned up the water, the air and toxic wastes. Despite some of these past successes, the threats to our communities and our international competitiveness are still overwhelming. For example:

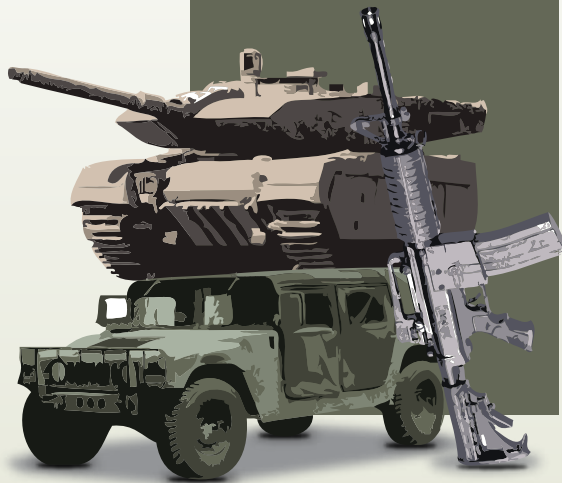
ACCORDING TO THE
2011
U.S. BUDGET:

we will spend twice
as much on the
MILITARY

as we will spend on:

+ **EDUCATION**
+ **SCIENCE**
+ **ENVIRONMENT**
+ **HOUSING**
+ **TRANSPORTATION**

COMBINED



In the last decade military spending has soared from \$300 billion to nearly \$700 billion, according to the White House’s Office of Management and Budget.



The US ranks poorly in many critical categories of human security:

20th in percent of students graduating from college



29th in infant mortality



31st in life expectancy



72nd in the gap between the rich and the poor



73rd in use of alternative energy



Child poverty:

We have the highest child poverty rates in the industrialized world. More than 15.4 million children—20.7 percent—live in poverty.⁸ Nearly 60 of our major and mid-sized cities have child poverty rates of one-third or more.⁹ Economists calculate child poverty costs the economy \$500 billion a year in added healthcare costs, loss of productivity, earnings and taxation.¹⁰

Education:

Today children in the US are less likely to graduate from high school than their parents.¹¹ A major reason for this is that schools in low-income areas, especially in our largest cities, have fewer teachers, larger class size and are more overcrowded and in need of repair.¹²

Infrastructure:

The American Society of Civil Engineers ranked most of our infrastructure a D, noting one-third of our roads, one-quarter of our bridges and water systems affecting 10 percent of the population are in serious need of

repair.¹³ The American Federation of Teachers estimates it will cost \$234 billion to repair our deteriorating public schools.¹⁴

The environment:

With less than 5 percent of the world's population, the US consumes 25 percent of the world's oil and produces 20 percent of the world's CO2 emissions.¹⁵ Eighty-seven percent of our energy comes from fossil fuels; only 7 percent from alternatives.¹⁶

A global context:

While we are by leaps and bounds number one in military spending, we rank poorly in many critical categories of human security. For example, the US ranks:¹⁷

- 29th in infant mortality
- 31st in life expectancy
- 20th in percent of students graduating from college
- 72nd in the gap between the rich and the poor
- 73rd in use of alternative energy

Other countries with modern militaries, such as Japan, Australia, France and Canada, spend far less on their militaries (both in dollars and as a percentage of GNP)¹⁸ and rank higher in categories of human development.¹⁹

With adequate funding, many people believe that the nation's social, environmental, and economic problems can be solved.

TWO WAYS to cut billions of dollars a year in Pentagon spending:

Saving Billions to Invest in Our Communities

With adequate funding, many believe that the nation's social, environmental and economic problems can be solved. But doing so will require new money and different spending priorities. Much of that money could come from responsible cuts in unneeded military spending. Here are just two ways to cut trillions of dollars a year in unnecessary Pentagon spending that could be invested in our communities:

Safely cut unneeded Cold War weapons and reduce waste and inefficiency. Savings: \$75 billion this year.

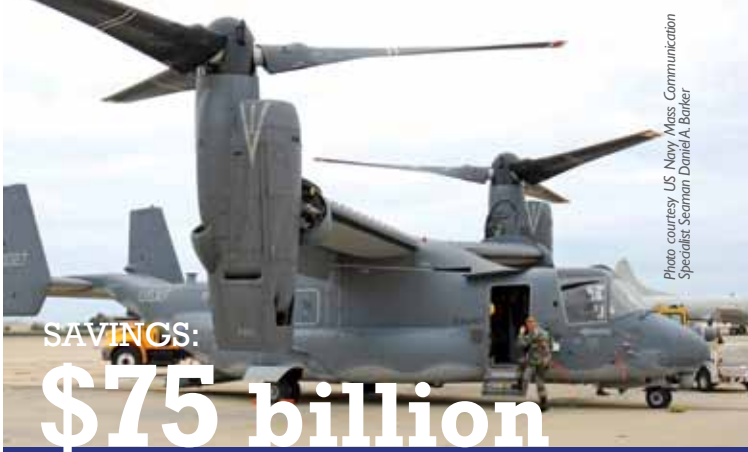
The Unified Security Budget Task Force, a group of national security experts, has identified \$75 billion that could be saved in the current federal budget through cuts in nuclear forces, cuts in Cold War-era conventional or poorly performing weapons systems, reductions in non-essential force structure and reducing waste and inefficiency in the Pentagon.²⁰

That \$75 billion saved could be used to rebuild one-third of our deteriorated schools;²¹ or more than double our federal commitment to elementary, secondary and higher education;²² or provide 85 percent of college students in the US with Pell grants for one year.²³

Make military operations a last resort. Savings: trillions.

While our military slowly withdraws some troops from Iraq and plans to do the same in Afghanistan, it is now increasingly leading military interventions on a global scale. What we need to do is end the existing operations and in the future turn to military force only as a last resort after all peaceful alternatives have been exhausted. Between 2001 and 2010, the US spent more than \$1 trillion on military operations for the occupation of Iraq and Afghanistan.²⁴ The \$169.4 billion we spent in 2010 in Iraq and Afghanistan is 2.6 times what

1 Safely cut unneeded Cold War weapons; reduce waste & inefficiency



WHAT COULD THIS MONEY DO?

- Rebuild one-third of our deteriorated schools
- More than double our commitment to all levels of education
- Provide 85% of college students in the US with Pell grants for one year

2 Make military operations a last resort.



SAVINGS: Trillions





Representative Barney Frank and his 16-member task force are working to garner the support of other members of Congress to include military spending cuts in any national deficit reduction plan.

Representative **Barney Frank** along with others who are working on financial regulation reforms assembled **a bipartisan task force** that identified nearly **\$1 trillion in savings** that could be **extracted** from the Pentagon budget through 2020.

we spent on all preventive measures—peacekeeping, international aid, alternative energy and non-proliferation combined!²⁵

We have to remember too that the cost of war is greater than dollars and cents. More than 7,000 soldiers lost their lives in the Iraq and Afghanistan wars²⁶ and the number of civilian casualties is estimated to be over 150,000.²⁷

Signs of Promise

Representative Barney Frank, along with others who are working on financial regulation reforms, assembled a bipartisan task force that identified nearly \$1 trillion in savings that could be extracted from the Pentagon budget through 2020. The 16-member task force produced a detailed report that outlines explicit cuts to military spending including reductions to the US

nuclear arsenal, shrinking the number of naval ships, spending less on research and cutbacks to big weapons programs.²⁸

Building a Movement for New Priorities

We can substantially change our national priorities by cutting unnecessary military spending and investing in our communities. Here's how a movement might begin:

Bring social spending and peace advocates together around a long-term campaign to cut specific weapons and policies and invest in our communities.

For years social spending advocates have struggled with each other for smaller and smaller slices of the federal budget pie. A collaboration with the peace community and national security experts around efforts

to cut military spending would lead to a downward military spending trend and more funds available to “grow” the domestic spending pieces of the pie.

Challenge Congress with an alternative, common-sense budget.

During the late 1970s, Congressman Ron Dellums of California offered a transfer amendment in Congress that called for cutting funds for specific weapons and putting that money into social programs. While the amendment didn't pass, it did generate substantial discussion about what was wrong with our military policies and how to rationally address critical social needs. It's time to revisit that discussion in Congress.

Show the local impacts of current priorities and create accountability campaigns around the country.

Organizers know the importance of making issues local and real to people. For 28 years, National Priorities Project (NPP) has made complex federal spending information more accessible by helping people understand the local impact of national priorities. In fact, in

late 2010 the New Priorities Network, along with over 30 of the nation's major peace and justice organizations and local organizations throughout the country, began a multi-year campaign to produce state and local resolutions to cut military spending to fund local jobs and services.

In his farewell address to the nation, President Eisenhower called for an “alert and knowledgeable citizenry” to determine the proper combination of “military machinery...with our peaceful methods and goals.”²⁹ The current combination of these priorities—embodied in our annual federal budget—has the US continuing to police the world while our communities suffer and we lose our competitive edge. This is not the dream of this nation. A budget priorities movement led by economic justice, environmental, peace and progressive national security experts could change that combination, so instead our nation would work with the rest of the world to address terrorism and its causes, rid the Pentagon of unneeded weapons and policies and invest the savings in our communities and our environment.

.....

Building a Movement for New Priorities

- ① **Bring social spending and peace advocates together around a long-term campaign to cut specific weapons and policies and invest in our communities.**
- ② **Challenge Congress with an alternative, common-sense budget.**
- ③ **Show the local impacts of current priorities and create accountability campaigns across the country.**

We can substantially change our national priorities by cutting unnecessary military spending and investing in our communities.

Greg Speeter founded the National Priorities Project (www.nationalpriorities.org) in 1983 as a way for the general public to better understand and participate in the federal budget process, especially by realizing how it impacts one's local community. He has written and spoken extensively on federal, social, military and tax policies. In 2008, he stepped down as executive director to focus on training and networking NPP information. Speeter began his professional life in 1966 as a community organizer and has also written books on community organizing and public access to the political process.

