

WIN ★ WITHOUT ★ WAR

Trump's Budget Plan is a National Security Travesty

On the deck of the USS Gerald Ford aircraft carrier yesterday, Donald Trump promised a “great rebuilding” of the U.S. military, saying he will increase Pentagon spending by \$30 billion this year, and by \$50 billion in next year's budget.

The proposal will reportedly come at the expense of the State Department, USAID, and a host of domestic agencies including the Environmental Protection Agency. This backwards budget will make America less safe by bloating a Pentagon budget already \$100 billion above the Cold War average while defunding vital investments like diplomacy and international engagement that are far better at increasing international security by resolving and preventing conflicts.

Even worse, this budget ignores the security threats of the future - global pandemics, climate change, radicalization and others - to invest in weapons for the wars of the past. Today's security threats simply cannot be bombed out of existence, yet the Trump Administration is pursuing a purely militaristic security policy.

The undeniable truth is that the Trump budget mortgages American security by throwing money at the Pentagon and their contractors and paying for this unjustified spending increase by slashing vital investments in the American people that provide far better security to our citizens and jobs for our economy.

Generals warn that Pentagon spending spree at the expense of America's diplomatic capacity undermines national security. A letter from 121 retired generals and admirals strongly criticized the Trump Administration's plans to cut the State Department and other foreign policy organizations to pay for a spending-spree at the Pentagon at the expense of our national security: “We know from our service in uniform that many of the crises our nation faces do not have military solutions alone – from confronting violent extremist groups like ISIS in the Middle East and North Africa to preventing pandemics like Ebola and stabilizing weak and fragile states that can lead to greater instability. There are 65 million displaced people today, the most since World War II, with consequences including refugee flows that are threatening America's strategic allies in Israel, Jordan, Turkey, and Europe. The State Department, USAID, Millennium Challenge Corporation, Peace Corps and other development agencies are critical to preventing conflict and reducing the need to put our men and women in uniform in harm's way. As Secretary James Mattis said while Commander of U.S. Central Command, ‘If you don't fully fund the State Department, then I need to buy more ammunition.’” [Officers' Letter, [2/27/17](#)]

There is no need to increase Pentagon spending -- which is already historically high with tens of billion in waste, sustains the worlds most powerful military, and gets huge boosts from the OCO slush fund.

- **Experts say the supposed crisis of readiness of the Armed Forces for combat is being overblown for playing politics for more Pentagon spending.** Most proponents of more Pentagon spending cite a crisis in readiness. But Former Department of Defense Comptroller,

Robert Hale, has responded to the current claims of a readiness crisis by saying, “I think we need to be a little skeptical.” “There's money available right now ... This is a time [leading up to budget requests] when the [military] services, if you will, want to put their worst foot forward and make clear all the problems that are there.” David Petraeus and Michael O’Hanlon explain that “America’s fighting forces remain ready for battle. They have extensive combat experience across multiple theaters since 9/11, a tremendous high-tech defense industry supplying advanced weaponry, and support from an extraordinary intelligence community.” While noting some problems with readiness, they add that “Army equipment has, on average, mission-capable rates today exceeding 90%—a historically high level” and “The Air Force is funding its training and readiness programs at 80%-98% of what it considers fully resourced levels.” [Military.com [2/22/17](#); WSJ, [8/19/16](#)]

- **Current Pentagon spending is already at historically high levels -- \$100 billion more than we spent on average during the Cold War.** In a recent report, Michael O’Hanlon explains that current Pentagon spending of about \$600 billion “is up considerably from the \$400 billion level at the turn of the century—and even from the \$500 billion average of the Cold War decades,” taking into account the costs of war and nuclear costs outside the Department of Defense’s budget. And unlike the Cold War, the United States faces no peer competitor on the world stage that pose potentially existential threats to the nation. [Michael O’Hanlon, [7/16](#)]
- **The Pentagon already receives tens of billions worth of funding that skirts the Budget Control Act Caps applied to security and non-security spending.** Unlike domestic spending, the Pentagon skirts the limits on its base budget by spending money in its Overseas Contingency Operations (OCO) budget on its programs that is supposed to be spent on combat. Todd Harrison of CSIS explains, “in recent years both Congress and the Obama administration have moved items from the base budget to the OCO budget as a way of circumventing the BCA budget caps. Roughly half of the OCO budget (\$30 billion) is now being used for programs and activities that were previously funded in the base budget.” [Todd Harrison, [1/17](#)]
- **The Pentagon doesn’t need a bigger budget to buy capabilities -- it has tens of billions in waste it could spend productively, instead.** The Pentagon’s Defense Business Board identifies that \$125 billion could be saved over five years through reducing overhead and reforming back-office business practices, such as contractor reform and making better use of information technology, and reducing unnecessary staff through attrition. That amount of money could fund 50 Army brigades or 10 deployments of carrier strike groups annually for 5 full years. [Defense Business Board, [1/22/15](#)]

Boosting-up Pentagon spending is a boon for defense industry executives but a raw deal for workers, where investment in domestic programs creates more job and growth. A study of the job-creating effects of different kinds of government spending by the University of Massachusetts found that: “military spending creates about 11,600 with \$1 billion in spending. By a significant amount, this is the fewest number of jobs of any of the alternative uses of funds that we present. Thus, household consumption [that could be given tax breaks] generates about 14,800 jobs, 28 percent more than military spending. Clean energy generates about 17,100 jobs, (48 percent more than military) and healthcare generates about 19,600 jobs (69 percent more than the military). Spending on education is the largest source of job creation by a substantial amount, generating about 29,100 jobs overall through \$1 billion in spending, which is 151 percent more than the number of jobs that are generated through \$1 billion in military spending.” [Pollin and Garrett-Peltier, [10/09](#)]