

# OMNI \$COSTS\$ OF WARS NEWSLETTER #3, June 30, 2011,

Compiled by Dick Bennett for a Culture of Peace. (Newsletter #1 January 14, 2011; #2 April 5, 2011).

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## Costs To Taxpayers

The US is building \$15 billion aircraft carriers that could be sunk with Chinese missiles that cost \$10 million, Time Magazine reports. As a result, the Navy's \$15 billion aircraft carriers could be useless in any future conflict over Taiwan. Aircraft carriers are increasingly obsolete platforms of war, Time says. Yet the Navy continues to churn them out as if it were still 1942.

While the U.S.'s military spending has jumped from \$1,500 per capita in 1998 to \$2,700 in 2008, its NATO allies have been spending \$500 per person over the same span, Time says. As long as the U.S. is overspending on its defense, it lets its allies skimp on theirs and instead pour the savings into infrastructure, education and health care. So even as U.S. taxpayers fret about their health care costs, their tax dollars are paying for a military that is subsidizing the health care of their European allies.

\$1 trillion in cuts would still leave the Pentagon fatter than it was before 9/11, *Time* notes.

**“Cost of War \$3.7 Trillion and Counting, 258,000 Dead”**

By Daniel Trotta, Reuters 30 June 11 <http://www.readersupportednews.org/news-section2/306->

## [10/6441-cost-of-war-37-trillion-and-counting-258000-dead](#)

When President Barack Obama cited cost as a reason to bring troops home from Afghanistan, he referred to a \$1 trillion price tag for America's wars.

Staggering as it is, that figure grossly underestimates the total cost of wars in Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan to the US Treasury and ignores more imposing costs yet to come, according to a study released on Wednesday.

The final bill will run at least \$3.7 trillion and could reach as high as \$4.4 trillion, according to the research project "Costs of War" by Brown University's Watson Institute for International Studies (<http://www.costsofwar.org>).

In the 10 years since US troops went into Afghanistan to root out the al Qaeda leaders behind the September 11, 2001, attacks, spending on the conflicts totaled \$2.3 trillion to \$2.7 trillion.

Those numbers will continue to soar when considering often overlooked costs such as long-term obligations to wounded veterans and projected war spending from 2012 through 2020. The estimates do not include at least \$1 trillion more in interest payments coming due and many billions more in expenses that cannot be counted, according to the study.

The White House says the total amount appropriated for war-related activities of the Department of Defense, intelligence and State Department since 2001 is about \$1.3 trillion, and that would rise to nearly \$1.4 trillion in 2012.

Researchers with the Watson Institute say that type of accounting is common but too narrow to measure the real costs.

In human terms, 224,000 to 258,000 people have died directly from warfare, including 125,000 civilians in Iraq. Many more have died indirectly, from the loss of clean drinking water, healthcare, and nutrition. An additional 365,000 have been wounded and 7.8 million people - equal to the combined population of Connecticut and Kentucky - have been displaced.

"Costs of War" brought together more than 20 academics to uncover the expense of war in lives and dollars, a daunting task given the inconsistent recording of lives lost and what the report called opaque and sloppy accounting by the US Congress and the Pentagon.

The report underlines the extent to which war will continue to stretch the US federal budget, which is already on an unsustainable course due to an aging American population and skyrocketing healthcare costs.

It also raises the question of what the United States gained from its multitrillion-dollar investment.

"I hope that when we look back, whenever this ends, something very good has come out of it," Senator Bob Corker, a Republican from Tennessee, told Reuters in Washington.

### **September 11, 2001: The Damage Continues**

**In one sense, the report measures the cost of 9/11, the American shorthand for the events of September 11, 2001. Nineteen hijackers plus other al Qaeda plotters spent an estimated \$400,000 to \$500,000 on the plane attacks that killed 2,995 people and caused \$50 billion to \$100 billion in economic damages.**

**What followed were three wars in which \$50 billion amounts to a rounding error. For every person killed on September 11, another 73 have been killed since.**

**Was it worth it? That is a question many people want answered, said Catherine Lutz, head of the anthropology department at Brown and co-director of the study.**

**"We decided we needed to do this kind of rigorous assessment of what it cost to make those choices to go to war," she said. "Politicians, we assumed, were not going to do that kind of assessment."**

**The report arrives as Congress debates how to cut a US deficit projected at \$1.4 trillion this year, roughly a 10th of which can be attributed to direct war spending.**

**What did the United States gain for its trillions?**

**Strategically, the results for the United States are mixed. Osama bin Laden and Saddam Hussein are dead, but Iraq and Afghanistan are far from stable democracies. Iran has gained influence in the Gulf and the Taliban, though ousted from government, remain a viable military force in Afghanistan.**

**"The United States has been extremely successful in protecting the homeland," said George Friedman, founder of STRATFOR, a US-based intelligence company.**

**"Al Qaeda in Afghanistan was capable of mounting very sophisticated, complex, operations on an intercontinental basis. That organization with that capability has not only been substantially reduced, it seems to have been shattered," Friedman said.**

**Economically, the results are also mixed. War spending may be adding half a percentage point a year to growth in the gross domestic product but that has been more than offset by the negative**

effects of deficit spending, the report concludes.

## “Endless War and Empire”

By Medea Benjamin and Charles Davis, Reader Supported News 14 April 11

<http://www.readersupportednews.org/opinion2/279-82/5621-endless-war-and-empire>

Death and taxes are the only certainties in life. And these days, they go hand in hand.

While our fiscal woes have led Congress to slash [food aid](#) this year to the world's poor - rest assured, fellow Americans - the US government will keep using your tax dollars to kill them. For while John Boehner and Barack Obama might disagree on some things, there's one area they can agree on: War. And the need for more of it.

"Money for bombs, not bread," might be a good bipartisan slogan.

And when it comes to dropping its citizens' tax dollars on flying killer robots and foreign military occupations, no country comes close to the United States. According to the [Stockholm International Peace Research Institute](#) (SIPRI), the cost of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq - more than \$150 billion in direct spending this year alone - exceeds what China, the US's closest military rival, spends altogether on its armed forces. Overall, the Obama administration will spend more than [\\$700 billion](#) next year on the military.

That's more than George W. Bush ever spent. And figures [released this week](#) by SIPRI show that since Obama took office, the US has been almost entirely responsible for the global rise in military spending: \$19.6 billion of \$20.6 billion since 2008. What a difference a Nobel laureate makes.

And the actual figure spent on war – the fighting of it, the preparation for it and the consequences of it – is substantially higher than acknowledged, with spending on military programs often buried in places like the Department of Energy, which oversees the US's massive stash of nuclear weapons. Counting those hidden costs, including veterans benefits, aid to foreign militaries and interest payments on defense-related debt, [economist Robert Higgs estimates](#) the US government spends more than \$1 trillion a year on empire.

But you wouldn't grasp the enormity of the US's commitment to militarism if you listened to its politicians. Remarking last week on the deal he struck that slashes \$38.5 billion in federal spending, [President Obama said](#) the agreement "between Democrats and Republicans, on behalf of all Americans, is on a budget that invests in our future while making the largest annual spending cut in our history."

Sounds lovely. But the reality, not the rhetoric, is that Obama and his allies in Congress aren't cutting Pentagon waste and investing in rainbows and unicorns – unless, perhaps, there's some way to harness their power for weapons. Rather, they're investing in war at the cost of community health centers, local development projects and Medicare. In Washington, you see, money for killing people is safe from the cutting board; it's the money that actually helps them [that's not](#).

"We will all need to make sacrifices," Obama reiterated in his speech on the national debt this week - just not the Pentagon, which is guaranteed more money every year under this president's watch. "I will never accept cuts that compromise our ability to defend our homeland or America's interests around the world," Obama said. As for cuts to domestic spending, including to "programs that I care deeply about"? Well, that's a different story.

And if you're a US taxpayer, forget welfare programs: bombing and occupying countries that pose no credible threat to America - Obama has so far authorized attacks in at least six countries since taking office, including Yemen, Somalia and the latest and greatest [\\$8.3-million-a-day](#) war for peace, Libya - is your single greatest expense as a citizen. Indeed, [over half of federal discretionary spending](#) - what Americans will pay for with their incomes taxes on April 18 - goes to the armed forces and their legion of private contractors.

Now imagine what that money could do if it went to something more productive. Imagine if, instead of paying for bombs to be dropped around the world, those tax dollars went toward fulfilling actual human needs - toward creating friends, not enemies.

For the cost of just one minute of war we could build 16 new schools in Afghanistan. For 60 seconds of peace, we could fund 36 elementary school teachers here at home. This year's funding for the endless wars in Iraq and Afghanistan - \$172.4 billion - could provide [health care for 88.4 million poor American children](#).

The obvious wastefulness of war has even some politicians beginning to talk of investing in America instead of arms manufacturers. Congressmen Barney Frank and Ron Paul recently convened a task force that produced a detailed report with specific recommendations for cutting Pentagon spending by approximately \$1 trillion over the next decade.

But lawmakers - all of whom have military contractors in their districts - rarely do anything good of their own volition. Rather, they have to be forced into action by those they purport to represent. At the local level, communities are doing just that by [pressuring mayors](#) to sign a resolution calling on Congress to redirect military spending to domestic priorities. A similar [resolution](#), spearheaded by Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa, will be considered at the June meeting of the US Conference of Mayors.

Pressuring politicians is not the only route to affect change, of course. The War Resisters League, for instance, suggests principled civil disobedience: [refusing to pay taxes to fund unjust wars](#). That route is fraught with risk, including the prospect of jail time, but it's one that would have made great Americans like Martin Luther King and [Henry David Thoreau](#) proud.

Not everyone can accept those risks, especially for those with families to worry about. But another option, living simply and reducing one's taxable income, has the added benefit of not just starving the warfare state, but curbing one's contribution to mindless consumerism and global climate change. And forgoing a new iPhone is a small price to pay to save a life.

Be it refusing to pay for war or speaking out against the injustice of bombing and killing poor people on the other side of the globe, the important thing is to recognize one's role in the war machine and commit to doing something about it - to quit complacently accepting the world as it is and to work toward making it what it should be. The greatest enabler of the military-industrial complex isn't really taxes: it's apathy.

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## NOT LEAVING AFGHANISTAN

**[Significant analysis of war in Afghanistan and President Obama's feeble plan for withdrawal. D]**

**“Bad News for a Country Tired of War “**

**By [Bill Boyarsky](#)**

Barack Obama's plan for a limited withdrawal from Afghanistan means tens of thousands of American troops will remain there, many of them fighting, for several years to come.

In his speech Wednesday night, the president announced he will reduce the U.S. fighting force in Afghanistan by 10,000 by the end of this year and a total of 33,000 by September 2012. After that, he said, "our troops will be coming home at a steady pace as Afghan security forces move into the lead. Our mission will change from combat to support. By 2014, this process of transition will be complete. ..."

Nowhere did he pledge that all the personnel would be brought home by that

2014 date.

Nor did he mention that 68,000 service personnel will remain in Afghanistan after September 2012. In addition, according to the Congressional Research Office, 18,919 "private security contractors" working for the Defense Department will also be serving in Afghanistan, performing duties seemingly indistinguishable from those done by American military personnel.

That means that after the pullout more than 86,000 personnel will remain engaged in fighting or the vague "support" duties cited by the president. They will add to the human and economic toll of a war that has killed, according to the website **iCasualties**, 1,632 American troops and wounded 11,191. The financial cost is now more than \$426 billion. With the Iraq War added in, the figure reaches \$1.2 trillion.

Although Obama's speech was no cause for celebration, there were some pluses. The troop reduction was more substantial than the much smaller cuts advocated by outgoing Defense Secretary Robert Gates and the military command. Obama said the United States would negotiate with the Taliban if they "break from al-Qaida, abandon violence and abide by the Afghan constitution." It's doubtful that these conditions can be met, especially given the Taliban's opposition to equal rights for women, part of the Afghan constitution. But at least we may be at the table with them.

Obama had a positive but not triumphal tone, saying the United States "is starting this drawdown from a position of strength."

Actually, he is starting it from a position of weakness.

Although the war has been pretty much ignored by cable news and much of the rest of the mainstream media, apparently the American people have a different view.

Read More

<http://readersupportednews.org/off-site-opinion-section/63-63/6405-bad-news-for-a-country-tired-of-war>

## REDUCE MILITARY SPENDING

Sen. Jon Tester, "End Outdated Military Spending, Not Medicare"

Reader Supported News 5-21-11

Senator Jon Tester begins: "Today, the same politicians in the House of Representatives who claimed that tax cuts for the wealthy would 'pay for themselves' are insisting we take them seriously as they try to balance the budget. Their plan? To end Medicare as we know it, and other gimmicks like cutting basic health care for women."

READ MORE <http://readersupportednews.org/opinion2/272-39/6016-end-outdated-military-spending-not-medicare>

## CONGRESSIONAL PROGRESSIVE CAUCUS BUDGET

From War Resisters League: "Yes to the People's Budget! Fund People, Not War! "

[wrl@warresisters.org](mailto:wrl@warresisters.org)

Take Action!

This is exciting!

We're in a very important moment. The budget plan for the next 10 years is being discussed and this will have huge implications for us all.

The Congressional Progressive Caucus has introduced a courageous and responsible budget plan called the People's Budget. By slashing military spending and taxing the rich, it would reduce the deficit by 4.7 trillion dollars in 10 years, provide resources for a jobs program and much needed infrastructure and protect medicare and social security. (See a great chart by the New Priorities Network comparing the People's Budget with those of Obama & GOP/Paul Ryan. You can also scroll to the bottom to take a one-question poll.)

At the same time, the House of Representatives will soon be voting on the Defense Appropriations Bill giving \$530 billion to the Department of Defense and allotting \$119 billion to continue the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

1.) Take Action Now by urging your representative to support the CPC's People's Budget and to vote NO on this bill:

2) This is the budget we've been waiting for! Forward this message to your friends and family and post a link to the action on Facebook. Spread the one-question poll far and wide!

3.) 2.) Make a phone call to your representative!

Congressional switchboard 877-762-8762 or 202-224-3121 You can use this simple script:

Please support the Congressional Progressive Caucus' People's Budget & vote against the 2012 Defense Appropriations Bill. We need to change our spending priorities. Help end the wars and bring needed funds back to our communities.

Let's work together to push for a budget that supports peace and economic growth for all!

To join WRL's efforts to change US spending priorities, contact Organizing Coordinator Kimber Heinz at [kimber@warresisters.org](mailto:kimber@warresisters.org) or call 212-228-0450

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