

OMNI \$COSTS\$ OF WARS NEWSLETTER #4, DECEMBER 6,
2011, Compiled by Dick Bennett for a Culture of Peace. (Newsletter #1 January 14, 2011;
#2 April 5, 2011; #3 June 30, 2011).

Here is the link to all OMNI newsletters: <http://www.omnicenter.org/newsletter-archive/> See
Newsletters on Consequences of US Wars

Contents of #2
Warfare or Health Care?
How Much You Paid for the Wars
5 Myths of Military \$\$
From Military-Industrial Complex to Permanent War
War Resisters League Pie Chart

Contents of #3
Costs Per Taxpayer
\$One Trillion President Obama? How About \$4 Trillion?
Medea Benjamin: Costs of Endless Wars
Leaving Afghanistan? No.
Senator Tester: Reduce Military Budget
Congressional Progressive Caucus Budget

Contents of #4 Afghan and Iraq Wars

\$11.6 Billion / Month
True Costs More
Vets' Health Costs
Costs Timeline
War Machine
Military \$\$ and Low Taxes for the Rich
Cut War Not Health
End Wars Save Jobs
Cut Military Spending
F-22 Waste
Profiteers' Pro-War Campaign

In yesterday's paper an article stated that the US is spending 11.6 billion dollars a month on the wars in Iraq & Afghanistan. thought you might be able to use that - Sunday, Oct 2, 2011, Arkansas Democrat-Gazette.

“ True Cost of US Wars Unknown “

Nancy A. Youssef, McClatchy Newspapers RSN August 16, 2011

Youssef writes: "Besides what Congress appropriated, the Pentagon spent an additional unknown amount from its \$5.2 trillion base budget over that same period. According to a recent Brown University study, the wars and their ripple effects have cost the United States \$3.7 trillion, or more than \$12,000 per American."

READ MORE <http://readersupportednews.org/news-section2/323-95/7054-focus-true-cost-of-us-wars-unknown>

McClatchy: **Iraq/Afghanistan veterans' health costs** on pace to rival Vietnam, Just Foreign Policy, 12-5-11

2.2 million have deployed; 6,300 have died; 46,000 have suffered non-fatal wounds; more than 600,000 have filed for VA disability benefits; more than 700,000 have been treated in the VA.

<http://www.mcclatchydc.com/2011/12/05/131870/as-iraq-and-afghan-wars-end-costs.html>

COSTS TIMELINE FOR IRAQ AND AFGHANISTAN

"The Human Face of War," *Quaker Action* (Fall 2011).

Money spent, people killed, and Quaker peace responses.

<http://afsc.org/sites/afsc.civicactions.net/files/documents/afsc-quaction%20fall%202011.pdf>

America's Costly War Machine

By Linda J. Bilmes and Joseph E. Stiglitz, *Los Angeles Times*

18 September 11

Fighting the war on terror compromises the economy now and threatens it in the future.

en years into the war on terror, the US has largely succeeded in its attempts to destabilize Al Qaeda and eliminate its leaders. But the cost has been enormous, and our decisions about how to finance it have profoundly damaged the US economy.

Many of these costs were **unnecessary**. We chose to fight in Iraq and Afghanistan with a small, all-volunteer force, and we supplemented the military presence with a heavy reliance on civilian contractors. These decisions not only placed enormous strain on the troops but dramatically pushed up costs. Recent congressional investigations have shown that roughly 1 of every 4 dollars spent on wartime contracting was wasted or misspent.

To date, the United States has spent more **than \$2.5 trillion on the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the Pentagon spending spree that accompanied it and a battery of new homeland security measures instituted after Sept. 11.**

How have we paid for this? Entirely through borrowing. Spending on the wars and on added security at home has accounted for more than one-quarter of the total increase in US government debt since 2001. And not only did we fail to pay as we went for the wars, the George W. Bush administration also successfully pushed to cut taxes in 2001 and again in 2003, which added further to the debt. This toxic combination of lower revenues and higher spending has brought the country to its current political stalemate.

There is only one other time in US history that a war was financed entirely through borrowing, without raising taxes: when the Colonies borrowed from France during the Revolutionary War.

Even if we were to leave Afghanistan and Iraq tomorrow, our war debt would continue to rise for decades. Future bills will include such things as caring for military veterans, replacing military equipment, rebuilding the armed forces and paying interest on all the money we have borrowed. And these costs won't be insignificant.

History has shown that the cost of caring for military veterans peaks decades after a conflict. Already, half of the returning troops have been treated in Veterans Administration medical centers, and more than 600,000 have qualified to receive disability compensation. At this point, the bill for future medical and disability benefits is estimated at \$600 billion to \$900 billion, but the number will almost surely grow as hundreds of thousands of troops still deployed abroad return home.

And it isn't just in some theoretical future that the wars will affect the nation's economy: They already have. The conditions that precipitated the financial crisis in 2008 were shaped in part by the war on terror. The invasion of Iraq and the resulting instability in the Persian Gulf were among the factors that pushed oil prices up from about \$30 a barrel in 2003 to historic highs five years later, peaking at \$140 a barrel in current dollars in 2008. Higher oil prices threatened to depress US economic activity, prompting the Federal Reserve to lower interest rates and loosen regulations. These policies were major contributors to the housing bubble and the financial collapse that followed.

Now, the war's huge deficits are shaping the economic debate, and they could keep Congress from enacting another round of needed stimulus spending to help the country climb out of its economic malaise. Many of these war debts are likely to continue to compromise America's investments in its future for decades.

For years, the public failed to adequately question how it was possible that we could spend and borrow so freely, with so few consequences. But now the painful legacy of these decisions has become clear. Throughout the past decade, Congress routinely approved huge "emergency" appropriations to pay for the wars. This process preempted the usual scrutiny and debate that accompanies large spending bills. In part, this is because the US lacks the basic accounting tools necessary for informed debate. Our future debts from the war are not listed anywhere in the federal government's budget. We don't even know for certain where the money has been spent. The Pentagon hasn't produced a clean financial audit in the 20 years since government auditing began, nor has it developed an accounting framework that would allow an assessment of the future costs of current decisions. This has almost certainly increased the overall cost of the war.

Our response to Sept. 11 has weakened both the current economy and our future economic prospects. And that legacy of economic weakness - combined with the erosion of the credibility of our military power and of our "soft power" - has undermined, rather than strengthened, our national security.

Nearly 10 years into the Afghanistan war, the violence in that country shows little sign of abating. August was the deadliest month of the war yet for US troops, and there were also multiple attacks on Afghan security forces, government officials and civilians. The surge in violence comes as NATO is drawing down and handing over security control to national forces. But tens of thousands of US military personnel are scheduled to remain in Afghanistan through the end of 2014.

The costs of fighting the war on terror have already been far higher than they needed to be. The US should not take on even greater war debt without understanding the true costs of continuing down that path.

Linda J. Bilmes is a faculty member at Harvard University. Joseph E. Stiglitz is a professor at Columbia University and the recipient of the Nobel Prize in economics. They are coauthors of "The Three Trillion Dollar War: The True Cost of the Iraq Conflict."

“Noam Chomsky: Military Spending and Low Taxes On the Rich Are Our Fundamental Problems,” Amy Goodman and Noam Chomsky, Video Report, *Democracy Now*, September 13, 2011, *NationOfChange*: “President Obama sent his new jobs proposal to Congress on Monday with a plan to pay for the \$447 billion package by raising taxes on the wealthy. Noam Chomsky says ‘huge military spending, a very low taxes by the rich [and corporations] ... those are problems, fundamental problems that have to be dealt with if there is going to be anything like successful economic and social development in the United States.’ As Republican presidential candidate, Texas Gov. Rick Perry, calls Social Security a ‘ponzi scheme,’ and Democrats buy into the narrative that the program is in crisis, Chomsky notes that, ‘To worry about a potential problem makes absolutely no sense unless you’re trying to destroy the program.’” READ | DISCUSS | SHARE
<http://www.nationofchange.org/noam-chomsky-us-economic-crisis-1315931746>

Action: Cut the War Budget Before Cutting Medicare Benefits

On Monday, President Obama announced his latest proposal for reducing future government deficits. The President proposed to cut Medicare spending by \$248 billion over ten years, but the President's proposal doesn't include one dollar of new cuts to the Pentagon's budget for war. Urge the President and your representatives in Congress to cut the war budget before any cuts to Medicare benefits.
<http://www.justforeignpolicy.org/act/cutwarnotmedicare>

RT interview: How to Save 400K Jobs By Ending the Wars

Just Foreign Policy explains to RT: if you move \$200 billion dollars from the war budget by ending the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan when we said we would, you save more than 400,000 jobs. On our homepage.

<http://justforeignpolicy.org/>

Cuts in Military Spending Are On the Table - If People Who Want Them Mobilize
Talk by Just Foreign Policy at the conference "The Military-Industrial Complex at 50" on the possibility for cuts in projected military spending under the Budget Control Act, and the effects that cuts in military spending would have on protecting domestic spending and saving jobs.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rSYSXm5k5uk&NR=1>

World's Most Costly Jet Still Grounded

Marian Wang, News Analysis, Nation of Change, August 18, 2011

: "The problem is just the latest in a series of snafus for the F-22, which has faced a number of hurdles in its three-decade-long development. In 2009, the Washington Post noted early structural deficiencies and computer flaws with the F-22s, as well as problems with the jet's radar-absorbent coating, which required costly and time-consuming maintenance. The United States has spent more than \$65 billion on developing the F-22s, which have never been used in combat. Air Force officials told the Los Angeles Times recently that the F-22 hasn't been used in conflicts yet because it's "designed for high-threat environments, not what we've seen in Iraq, Afghanistan and Libya."

<http://www.nationofchange.org/despite-65-billion-investment-worlds-most-costly-jet-still-grounded-1313676874>

Robert Greenwald: "War Budget Cuts Possible If We Counter Contractors' Multimillion-Dollar Campaign Spending"

From Just Foreign Policy News, August 12, 2011

Brave New Foundation is launching a campaign to expose war contractor lobbyists working to stop the Pentagon from being cut as part of debt reduction.

<http://warcosts.com/>

END OMNI COSTS OF WARS NEWSLETTER #4