

A World Overfunded in Weaponry, Both Small Arms and Defense Spending

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"Don't tell me what you value, show me your budget, and I'll tell you what you value." *Vice-President Joe Biden*

When UN Secretary General (UNSG) Moon remarked that, "the world is over-armed and peace is underfunded", he did so in the context of his address to the UN Security Council on the proliferation of small arms throughout the world. In his address, he specifically discussed weapons trafficking and the "uncontrolled availability of guns and bullets".(1) While the focus of his speech was to promote the signing of an arms treaty, his primary quote also cleanly applies to defense expenditures and the impact such defense spending has on world peace.

A clear-eyed evaluation of the budget of the world's lone superpower, using the Vice-President's criterion, is remarkably insightful as it evidences that peace is indeed underfunded. This evaluation specifically demonstrates that our Republic places a high priority on defense spending relative to those U.S. programs specifically intended to promote peace and education. As the leader of the world, both economically and diplomatically, it is axiomatic that profligate levels of U.S. defense spending encourages further defense spending by other nations. Such overspending on defense is counterproductive.

In 2013, the U.S. spent approximately \$640 billion on defense related programs, installations, and personnel.(2) Most Americans would likely agree that a secure and stable Republic does indeed require a strong military to protect its people and its borders. There is no reasonable justification, however, for the U.S. to spend more than the next eight nations who combined spent \$607 billion in 2013. Given the strong formal and informal partnerships that exist among modern nations (e.g., NATO), this level of defense spending is particularly puzzling for a nation that prides itself as being a model of representative government.(3)

Perhaps the most glaring example that peace is clearly underfunded in the world is the level of U.S. Defense spending relative to other U.S. Departments that focus instead on peace and education programs. More specifically, in 2014 the U.S. spent \$527 billion on defense, approximately 20% of the U.S. Budget, but only spent \$47.8 billion on both the U.S. Department of State (US DOS) and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), which focus on diplomacy and peaceful prevention efforts, respectively.(4) USAID and US DOS specifically work to support a wide spectrum of economic development and diplomatic programs, respectively. Even former Secretary of Defense Gates once called for a "dramatic increase" in diplomacy and foreign aid.(5) It is also concerning that the U.S. spent less than \$141 billion on education in 2014, approximately 26% of the amount of defense spending.(6)

The U.S., a UN Security Council Member, unfortunately reinforces UNSG Moon's position that the world is indeed "over-armed and peace is underfunded" with its excessive spending on the world's largest bureaucracy, the Department of Defense. Until the U.S. re-prioritizes its spending away from defense oriented programs and toward peace and education related spending, Americans should expect this trend to continue - not only in context of small arms.

Footnotes: 1) Secretary-General's remarks to Security Council meeting on Small Arms, September 26, 2013 Accessed on February 3, 2015 at: <http://www.un.org/sg/statements/index.asp?nid=7147>

2)Comptroller for US. Department of Defense Fiscal Year 2014 Budget Request Overview Document, US Government Publication, p. 3-2, April 2013, accessed on February 3, 2015 at http://comptroller.defense.gov/Portals/45/Documents/defbudget/fy2014/FY2014_Budget_Request_

Overview_Book.pdf)

3) Author Unknown, "The U.S. spends more on defense than the next eight countries combined, Peter Peterson Foundation," April 13, 2014, accessed on February 3, 2015 at http://pgpf.org/Chart-Archive/0053_defense-comparison .

4) Comptroller for US. Department of Defense Fiscal Year 2014 Budget Request Overview Document, US Government Publication, p. 3-2, April 2013, accessed on February 3, 2015 at http://comptroller.defense.gov/Portals/45/Documents/defbudget/fy2014/FY2014_Budget_Request_Overview_Book.pdf), and Unknown Author, U.S. Department of State Funding Highlights Document, accessed on February 3, 2015 at: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/omb/budget/fy2014/assets/state.pdf>

5) Tyson, Ann, "Gates Urges Increased Funding for Diplomacy," Washington Post, November 27, 2007, accessed on February 3, 2015 at <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wpdyn/content/article/2007/11/26/AR2007112601985.html> .

6) Boccia, Romina, Federal Spending by the Numbers, 2014: Government Spending Trends, The Heritage Foundation, December 8, 2014, accessed on February 3, 2015 at <http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2014/12/federal-spending-by-the-numbers-2014>