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Global military spending increases again, will NZ's in this year's Budget?

2 May 2018

According to figures released by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) today, during the Global Days of Action on Military Spending, world military expenditure in 2017 totalled an estimated \$(USD)1,739 billion, the highest level since the end of the cold war. After 13 consecutive years of increases from 1999 to 2011 and relatively unchanged spending from 2012 to 2016, total global expenditure rose by 1.1 per cent in real terms in 2017.^[1]

Every dollar of military expenditure is a dollar taken away from socially useful spending - a dollar that could be used to reduce and mitigate the impacts of climate change, and ensure to a decent standard of living for all: a dollar that could be used to save lives, rather than preparing for war.

Last year's global military spending averaged out to more than \$(USD)4.7 billion every day, while an average of more than 15,342 children under the age of five died every day from mainly preventable causes - lack of access to adequate food, clean water and basic medicines.^[2] That is one of the prices paid, the collateral damage that is seldom talked about, for maintaining armed forces in a state of combat readiness around the world.

Just twelve days of military expenditure would eradicate extreme poverty everywhere, and just five weeks of military expenditure would ensure that five of the key UN Sustainable Development Goals are met - eradicating extreme poverty, ending hunger, ensuring healthy lives, clean water, sanitation, and quality education for all.^[3]

The 15 countries with the highest military spending in 2017 were the same as those in 2016, but with a few notable changes in their ranking - these 15 countries accounted for \$(USD)1,396 billion, or 80 per cent, of total global spending.

There is a spending gap between the top five spenders - the USA, China, Saudi Arabia, Russia and India - and the rest of the top 15 countries. While these five all allocated over \$(USD)60 billion to their militaries in 2017, all but one of the other 10 countries spent less than \$(USD)50 billion (the exception being France which spent \$(USD)57.8 billion). Together, the top five accounted for 60 per cent of global military spending in 2017.

At \$(USD)610 billion, US military spending accounted for more than a third of the world total in 2017. The USA's spending was 2.7 times greater than the next highest spender, China; indeed, the USA spent more than the next seven highest spenders combined. While US military expenditure had fallen each year since 2010, in 2017 it was unchanged from 2016. However, the US military budget for 2018 has been set at a substantially higher level (\$(USD)700 billion). The higher spending is to support increases in military personnel and the modernization of conventional and nuclear weapons.^[1]

Regional trends: Total regional military spending fell in Africa (by 0.5 per cent) and in Europe (by 2.2 per cent) between 2016 and 2017. The decrease in Africa was its third consecutive annual fall in

military spending, while that in Europe was the first since 2013. Military expenditure in the Americas remained unchanged in 2017, but was 11 per cent lower than in 2008. By contrast, military spending in Asia and Oceania rose for the 29th successive year, this time by 3.6 per cent. Military expenditure for countries in the Middle East for which data is available also grew in 2017, by 6.2 per cent, and was 29 per cent higher than in 2008 for these countries.^[1]

Asia and Oceania: Military spending in Asia and Oceania reached \$(USD)477 billion in 2017, 3.6 per cent higher than in 2016 and 59 per cent higher than in 2008. It was the second largest region in terms of military spending in 2017, accounting for 27 per cent of global military expenditure. Five of the top 15 global spenders in 2017 are in this region: China (rank 2), India (rank 5), Japan (rank 8), South Korea (rank 10) and Australia (rank 13).^[1]

New Zealand's military spending: In last year's Budget, military spending increased to a record level of more than \$(NZD)3.67 billion - an average of almost \$(NZD)71 million every week. By way of contrast, 28% of children here live in a family with an income below the poverty line, and at least one in one hundred New Zealanders are homeless.^[3]

All public services - health, education and so on - desperately need increased spending, but as well as the outrageous level of annual military expenditure, an additional \$(NZD)20 billion "investment" (as the previous government referred to it) over the next 15 years was announced in 2016 for increased combat capability, new offensive weapons systems, two new warships and new cyber warfare capacity. That amount could build 40,000 new state houses..^[4]

'Welfare or Warfare?' pre-Budget lunchtime forum: To mark the 2018 Global Days of Action on Military Spending, a 'Welfare or Warfare?' pre-Budget lunchtime forum will be held in Wellington on Friday, 4 May - join us for a discussion on government spending priorities, with Paul Barber, Policy Advisor, New Zealand Council of Christian Social Services; Jacqui Southey, Children's Rights Advocacy, Strategy and Research Director, Save the Children; and Edwina Hughes, Coordinator, Peace Movement Aotearoa; from 1pm to 2pm, at St Andrew's on the Terrace. Your RSVP is essential because space is limited, please RSVP at <https://www.facebook.com/events/202797460335587> or email Peace Movement Aotearoa, pma@xtra.co.nz

Resources and references:

Aotearoa New Zealand Campaign on Military Spending - <http://www.converge.org.nz/pma/gdams.htm>

'Global military spending remains high at \$1.7 trillion', SIPRI media release, 2 May 2018 - <https://www.sipri.org/media/press-release/2018/global-military-spending-remains-high-17-trillion>

'Global military spending increases again, will NZ's in this year's Budget?' Peace Movement Aotearoa, 2 May 2018 - <https://www.facebook.com/notes/peace-movement-aotearoa/global-military-spending-increases-again-will-nzs-in-this-years-budget/1684351504945545>

^[1] Trends in world military expenditure 2017, SIPRI Fact Sheet, 2 May 2018 - <http://www.converge.org.nz/pma/milex18facts.pdf>

^[2] WHO fact sheet on child mortality - <http://www.who.int/en/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/children-reducing-mortality>

^[3] 'Time for action on military spending', Peace Movement Aotearoa - the updated poster and leaflet will be available at <http://www.converge.org.nz/pma/gdams.htm> later today

^[4] Government spending priorities, Peace Movement Aotearoa, 9 June 2016 - <https://www.facebook.com/PeaceMovementAotearoa/photos/a.116526771728034.9538.116517195062325/1050846581629377/?type=3>