**Militarization teach-in & AWARE on the Air [9/23/2017, 10/3/2017]**

**Acknowledgements:**

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**•Tom Engelhardt, Creator of Tomdispatch.com website, Follow of *The Nation* Institute.**

**I shall discuss the rationale for present U.S. spending associated with national security, a so-called militarized budget, and its inherent threats for *our* society and others. The figures I shall quote come from the Trump administration, and may change as the Trump budget sifts through Congress, likely for the worse.**

**[Money and its equivalents is the fuel for what the U.S. does around the world.]**

**The claim of adherents to this budget of course is that it preserves and improves our national security.**

**It is important to understand that the militarized budget allows all the consequences which other panel members have discussed. Without the funds spent on our military (for falsely-called “defense”), the U.S. could not be the hegemonic power it strives to be. Hence, curtailing that budget substantially—for example by half—could allow civil society to flourish, and the baleful U.S. interference into the affairs of other states could be avoided or reduced. True democracy here might then be able to regain a foothold from its currently debased condition.**

**Astonishingly, we shall claim that the militarized Trump budget will take up as much as 86 percent of our discretionary federal budget, that part of the federal budget which is available to Congress to determine. More commonly quoted figures, around fifty percent, have by now been corrected and superseded.**

# It is worthwhile reflecting on the fact that the security of the U.S., as promoted by recent administrations, does not extend uniformly to our population. The wellbeing of most us not only does not benefit from huge national security expenditures, but on the contrary, is undermined by them. The military budget currently proposed makes unattainable what most of our people desire and value.

# Reduced military expenditures would enable other needs, social and material, to be met: for health research, for public education (free through college?), for affordable and efficient universal health care, for national infrastructure (roads, railroads, bridges, urban renewal, national parks, monuments and wilderness areas…), for cultural pursuits (music, the arts, museums), for the environment, for ameliorating state debt, for improving the criminal justice system, —and, not least, for mitigating the effects of global warming and for managing our natural resources.

**As Wm. Hartung ) says: (Wm. Hartung, author and Director of Arms and Security Project at the Center for International Policy,]**

**…Preparations for, and the pursuit of war, will ensure that any future America is dirtier, sicker, poorer, more rickety, and less safe.”**

**“With all the military spending and the increase planned by the Trump administration, the danger is that we shall forever be looking for new conflicts to engage in, to finding new enemies to scare our people.”**

# There are fundamental moral issues to be considered. Our government’s policies, using its military and intelligence arms, have abandoned core human values in its wars and subversions, trampling on internationally recognized norms. Those policies have wreaked death, maiming, and destruction— in Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya, Syria, Yemen, Somalia and surreptitiously in Africa—while they are intent on destroying or destabilizing those governments not bending to our will (Russia, China, Iran, N. Korea, Venezuela). At the same time our government supports a warmongering theocracy like Saudi Arabia and the harshly repressive so-called, but phony, democracy, Israel.

# All this is made possible by the Trump 2018 military budget, which I’ll summarize using figures admirably elucidated by William Hartung. This budget, about 1 trillion dollars(!), is hardly ever scrutinized in mainstream U.S. media, and when it does it avoids comparing our military budget with those of other nations. Yet, it is enlightening to know that our military budget is greater than the combined sum of the military budgets of the next top nine nations, and is about ten times greater than Russia’s and three times greater than China’s. Yet, our military spending must increase, we’re told.

**As Tom Engelhardt [Tomdispatch.com, The Nation Institute] has written “Add it all up and, at a moment when the domestic order of the day is cutting the funding for the sort of domestic services… that actually do keep us secure, we the people are essentially throwing our money into the black hole of war and preparations for yet more of it.”**

**What follows is an account of the military budget proposed for fiscal year 2018 submitted by the Trump administration:**

**What the White House Budget office calls National Defense Spending includes**

#  *The Pentagon “base” budget: $575B.* [“Training, arming and operation of the military and its its massive civilian work force”]

# [Senate NDAA raises it to $640B!]

#  *The War budget; Overseas Contingency Operations(OCO)”: $64.6B*

# [NDAA, $60B] Iraq, Afghanistan and elsewhere.

#  *Department of Energy nuclear budget:*  >*$20B* [NNSA. Warheads, Nuclear laboratories, naval reactors, cleanup…]

#  *“Other Defense “catch-all” expenses ≈ $8B* (FBI, etc.)

#  This totals to 667.6B$ and would be about 54% of the total 2018 discretionary budget. It is a budget subject to waste, as one would expect from one which has never passed an audit!

# Yet, there are more components to be counted, adding up to ≈ $423B: These additional components are for

#  *Homeland Security* (DHS) $50B

#  *Military aid from the State Dept.* $7B (In 140 countries)

#  *Support of veterans*, the VA, $186B

#  *Military retirement*, ≈ $80B

#  The *Military share of interest on national debt* ≈ $100B

# The Grand Total Trump 2018 “militarized” budget then comes to $1090B = 1.09T$, an astounding 87% of the federal discretionary budget.

# Even if one leaves off the Defense share of interest on the debt and the Military Retirement items, the military budget comes to about 73% ($910B/$1244B ) of the total discretionary budget. [Total discretionary spending has also been quoted at 1132B$, increasing this percentage.]

# So, why do we have such a gross militarized budget? Do we need it? I list five predictable rationales for it.

# 1) Preventing attacks from adversaries —China, Russia, N. Korea, Iran, Venezuela(?).

#  Such attacks seem highly unlikely in view of what would be an inevitable U.S. (very possibly nuclear) response. Only Russia and China, considered to be our main adversaries, however, have the recognized capability, with their ICBM’s, sea and air power, to attack U.S. territories. N. Korea is repeatedly proclaimed as a threat, but is only a potential threat, and only then if we would attack, or threaten to attack it (as we are doing with military exercises around its borders). Even then, the effectiveness of N. Korean ballistic missiles and nuclear weaponry is considered doubtful by experts. There *is* danger lurking in N. Korea’s weaponry, but as has been stated by its leader, N. Korea wishes primarily to establish a credible deterrent to forestall possible U.S./S. Korean aggression, and has no intention of starting a war with the U.S.. It cites the bitter examples of Libya and Iraq in defense of its nuclear policies. Analogous remarks pertain to Iran, although it has no known nuclear weaponry or intercontinental ballistic missiles, despite U.S propaganda to the contrary. That Venezuala has been called a military threat is laughable.

#  Russia has been called a threat and aggressor for its support of the insurgents in Ukraine, and its accession of Crimea, but these actions were precipitated by U.S. and NATO forces moving towards Russia’s borders and the overthrow, with support from Washington, of the former elected government of Ukraine, and the placement of antiballistic missile installations close to Russia’s borders. What if Russia placed its missiles in Cuba, Mexico, or elsewhere in the western hemisphere? Can one doubt a violent U.S. reaction?

#  Meanwhile, U.S. bases accumulate around the peripheries of both Russia and China. Neither country seeks war with the U.S. or its allies, but both countries understand the threat posed at them by those bases.

# 2) Protecting our allies: NATO members, Japan, Israel, Saudi Arabia, S. Korea,

#  There is little indication that those nations are in danger, unless the US initiates or promotes attacks on their neighboring countries: For example, an attack by the U.S. on N. Korea might cause Japan and S. Korea to be attacked; a U.S. attack on Iran would possibly invoke retaliation against Saudi Arabia and Israel. Both N. Korea and Iran have been threatened by the U.S., as is clear from the ongoing hostile remarks of the Trump administration.

# 3) Protecting our “National interests”

 **What seems obvious is that the overwhelming U.S. military capability serves mainly to safeguard our broadly inflated “national interests”**.

 **What this entails is that the U.S. power structure, corporate and governmental, will not readily tolerate competitors to its perceived interests. The U.S. has to be in a position to demand that others provide resources that it needs, or craves, such as oil. Moreover, the U.S. wants to be in control of those resources. This is why we maintain ≈ 800 military bases around the globe and attempt to control sea and land routes for our commerce. Now, not only do we wish to extend our control on land, sea and air, but we wish to control outer space as well. Efforts to create what our government leaders call “global stability” means that we must be able to counter opposition to our interests: Thus, we cannot admit the sovereignty of nations which do not acquiesce to major U.S. policy objectives.**

# 4) Fighting terrorism

 **Here lies the justification for invading Afghanistan, attacking Syria and Somalia, establishing bases in Africa, and threatening Iran, although it is generally recognized that terrorists tend to emerge from, and are formed, in lands subjected to destructive and murderous actions; terrorism in the present global context is the terrible response of the weak against the ravages of the strong.**

**Paradoxically, in Syria, the U.S. (by means of its special forces and the CIA) has supplied weaponry and support to those labeled as terrorists even by the U.S., in particular among those (ISIS, Al Nusra, Al Quada) fighting President Assad’s Syrian government. In addition, we continue to back Saudi Arabia and Israel with weaponry and diplomatic support, both nations continuing to aid the terrorists in Syria we claim to be fighting.**

**Terrorism are a useful target: The trumpeting of our war against terrorists, just as with the demonization of Russians, Chinese, Iranians, and N. Koreans, has been essential in keeping our military economy humming after the demise of the USSR. Raytheon, Lockheed-Martin, General Dynamics, Boeing, and myriad subcontractors are the obvious beneficiaries of our war-prone foreign policies.**

# 5) Maintaining war-making superiority

#  We must maintain and enhance our already overwhelming military forces because China and Russia (among others) are improving theirs. Thus, an extra 54B$ in new military spending in the Trump budget and $1000B over 30 years to improve our nuclear weaponry is proposed—possibly for what used to be unthinkable, a first strike against Russia or China. Military experts have alerted us that with new nuclear warhead-armed missiles of much improved accuracy, we can now locate and destroy any adversary’s nuclear land based weaponry and intercept their retaliatory response with antiballistic missile installations. This terrifying possibility, a nuclear exchange, could destroy civilization and life on earth!

# The militarization of civil society:

# Military spending is a major element in the *increasing* militarization of our society, but there are other disturbing elements.

# • The glorification of military service

# • Jingoistic entertainment—sports, films, TV

# • The propaganda apparatus: Media promotion of warlike policies

# • Militarization of the police

# • Gun worship? (NRA)

# • In education (recruiting and ROTC)

# • Repression of dissidence, protests)

# Summary:

**My focus has been on military spending, because that determines what resources are available for our social and health needs, our nation’s internal strength, and whether we can have a truly democratic free and just society, one that fits peacefully into a world order. The world would be safer and more prosperous if the resources of the United States were used beneficently, not as at present to impose our hegemony.**

**I leave with a question: Is our present global and national situation inherent to the prevailing economic system, Capitalism? Does our economy need its wars? [~2000 words]**