

Six Facts No War Supporter Knows

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This coming week, the House of Representatives is expected to vote on \$33 billion for war. A majority of Americans opposes this, but a sizable minority of Americans supports it. No one who supports it can be aware of any of the following six facts.

1. **For many months, probably years, at least the second largest and probably the largest source of revenue for the Taliban has been U.S. taxpayers.** We are giving the Taliban our money instead of investing it in useful things at home or abroad. "**WARLORD, INC.: Extortion and Corruption Along the U.S. Supply Chain in Afghanistan**," is a report from the Majority Staff of the Subcommittee on National Security and Foreign Affairs in the U.S. House of Representatives.

(http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/congress/2010_rpt/warlord-inc_100622.htm) The report **documents** payoffs to the Taliban for safe passage of U.S. goods, payoffs **very likely greater** than the Taliban's profits from opium, its other big money maker. (<http://www.afterdowningstreet.org/node/53988>) And this is **neither new nor unknown** to top U.S. officials. (<http://www.afterdowningstreet.org/node/54151>) But it must be unknown to Americans supporting the war. You can't support a war where you're funding both sides unless you want both sides to lose. We **lock people away** for giving a pair of socks to the enemy, while our own government serves as chief financial sponsor.

2. **Our top consumer of oil is the U.S. military.** We don't just fight wars in areas of the globe that are coincidentally rich in oil, but fighting those wars is the **single biggest way** in which we burn oil. (<http://planetgreen.discovery.com/tech-transport/planet-biggest-gas-guzzler.html>) We pollute the air in the process of poisoning the earth with all variety of weaponry. According to the 2007 CIA World Fact Book, when oil consumption is broken down per capita, the U.S. military ranks fourth in the world, behind just three actual nations. There's no way to care about the environment while allowing the money that could create renewable energy to be spent instead on an operation whose destructiveness is rivaled only by BP. We could have 20 green energy jobs at \$50 K each for what it costs to send one soldier to Afghanistan. We're fighting wars for the fuel to fight wars, even though the process is eating up the funds we could use to try to survive its side-effects.

3. **Over half of every U.S. tax dollar is spent on wars, the military, and payments on debt for past wars and military spending.** Here's a **pie chart** (<http://www.warresisters.org/pages/piechart.htm>) that breaks it down for you. If you're concerned about government spending, you can't just be concerned with the minority of it that is carefully funded with taxes and off-setting cuts elsewhere. You have to also consider the single biggest item, the one that takes up a majority of the budget, large chunks of which are routinely funded off the books, borrowed from China, and passed with so-called "emergency supplemental" bills of the sort now before the House of Representatives, the sole purpose of which is to keep the money outside the budget. Numerous **economic studies** have shown that investing in the military, even at home, does less for the economy than tax cuts, which do less for the economy than investing in education, energy, infrastructure, and other areas. (http://www.nationalpriorities.org/Publications/NPP_Security_Spending_Primer.pdf) Its wars or jobs, we can't have both. The labor movement has mostly (with some good exceptions) been silent on war spending, in part because jobs spending has been packaged into the same bill. Now it's not. Now the House is confronted with a bill that spends on war the money that is needed for jobs, for housing, for schools, for green energy, for retirement. Will advocates of these raise their voices this week?

4. **A leading, and probably the leading, cause of death in the U.S. military is suicide.** U.S. troops are killing themselves in **record numbers**. (<http://www.afterdowningstreet.org/node/54004>) One central reason for this is likely that these troops have no idea what it is they are risking their lives, and taking others' lives, for. Can we expect them to know, when top officials in Washington don't? When the President's special representative to Afghanistan testified in the Senate recently, senators from both parties asked him repeatedly what the goal was, what success would look like, for what purpose the war went on. Richard Holbrooke had no answers. Senator Bob Corker (R-Tenn.) told the Los Angeles Times: "A lot of folks on both sides of the aisle think this effort is adrift. A lot of folks you'd consider the strongest hawks in the country are scratching their heads in concern." Corker complained that after listening for 90 minutes to Holbrooke he had "no earthly idea what our objectives are on the civilian front. So far, this has been an incredible waste of time."

5. **The \$33 billion about to be voted on cannot possibly be needed to continue the war in Afghanistan, because it is exclusively to be used for escalating that war.** The President was publicly pressured by his generals several months ago to begin an escalation, but Congress has yet to fund it. To the extent that it has been begun unfunded, it can be undone. CNN reports: "Defense Secretary Robert Gates warned senators in June that military operations will need to be reduced for the rest of the year unless Congress approves additional funding for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan." This is nonsense. If this escalation funding were blocked, the war would remain at the level it was at before. And that's if the Pentagon respects the authority of the Congress. The other alternative, openly indicated by Gates, is that the Pentagon will fund the escalation out of its standard budget. Congressman Alan Grayson has a bill called "The War Is Making You Poor Act" which would require that wars be funded out of the military budget, which would eliminate federal taxes on the first \$35,000 anyone earned and reduce the national debt. How horrible would that be?

6. **War would be the greatest evil on earth even if it were free.** Watch this **new video** of a man whose father was shot and killed while sleeping in bed. (<http://www.afterdowningstreet.org/node/54118>) More of our tax dollars at work. How many of these stories of what our military does can we write off? Our drones kill both civilians and "insurgents," as do our night raids and check points. Or, maybe not the check points. General Stanley McChrystal said that of the amazing number of people we've killed at check points, none of them have been any threat. And the damage lasts in the places we destroy. Look at this **new report** on the damage done to the children of Fallujah. (<http://www.afterdowningstreet.org/node/54173>) This is not because U.S. soldiers aren't brave or their parents didn't raise them well. It's because these wars don't involve pairs of armies on battlefields. We're occupying countries where the enemies look like everyone except us.

Well, maybe our representatives know all of this and still fund wars because people who fund them tell them to. But what can we do about it? We vote whenever there's an election, or at least some of us do. Isn't that our role? What does this have to do with elections? It should have everything to do with them. When we call our congress members this week we should not just ask them to vote No on war money, we should demand it, and we should let them know that we will work to unelect them, even replacing them with someone worse (since you can't get much worse), if they vote for this money. And we should spend August rewarding and punishing accordingly. Here are **88 candidates for Congress this year** who have committed to not voting a dime for these wars. (<http://caws.us/>) They are from every party and political inclination. They should be supported.

If this war funding can be blocked for another week it will be blocked until mid-September and perhaps for good. If we can get closer to doing that than we have before, we will have something to build on. Just holding a straightforward vote in which war opponents vote No and war supporters vote Yes, no matter how close or far we are from winning, will identify who needs to keep their job and who doesn't. If most of the Yes votes are Republican, we will be able to confront the President with the opposition of his own party. We're moving toward peace.

Get resources from <http://defundwar.org>
FCNL (<http://www.fcnl.org>) has a toll-free number to call your representative: 1-888-493-5443. Use it.