



General Assembly

Twelfth Session

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First Committee – Disarmament and International Security

This committee aims to create a more peaceful world. Talks in this committee center around reducing weapons in the world. It also identifies threats to peace and finds solutions to international security.

This committee believes the world can become stable through cooperation. Countries can protect their people better if they work together for peace. For example, this committee might discuss how to keep weapons from terrorists. Or, how less weapons can make the world safer. Also, countries talk about policing weapons and finding ways to reduce the weapons they have.

First Committee works closely with **United Nations Disarmament Commission** and **Conference on Disarmament**. They have passed resolutions on ammunition, military spending and missiles.

Agenda Item 89 – Reduction of military budgets

Background

US President Dwight Eisenhower once said: “Every gun that is made, every warship launched, every rocket fired signifies, in the final sense, a theft from those who hunger and are not fed, those who are cold and not clothed.” More than fifty years later the budgets of militaries around the world keep going up.

In 1973 the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (U.S.S.R) suggested the permanent members of the Security Council should all reduce their military budgets by 10%. The idea was to use the money saved to help developing countries. Most of the countries agreed this was a good idea. They created a committee to help countries using the money saved. This plan did not work out.

Seven years later, countries at the UN thought it would be a good idea if states reported how much they spent on the military every year. Every year, states can report to the Secretary-General how much they spend. The Secretary-General then reports on the situation. 126 states reported how much they spent. Some states report every year and some states report every few years. Some states have only reported once. Other states do not report at all. It is a choice to share this information.

There are many reasons that states spend money on the military. States want to be able to protect their people from attack. Companies make money from selling military equipment. However, what is the right balance between spending on the military and spending on other projects?

Every year in mid-April there is a **Global Day of Action on Military Spending**. It is estimated US\$1,700 billion is spent a year on the military around the world.

The Cold War occurred between 1947 and 1991. This was not a 'real' war but a time when countries were preparing for war. Western and Communist countries were scared of each other. They both spent billions of dollars on creating weapons. After the break-up of the Soviet Union there was less of a reason to spend money on the military. Countries felt the threat of war had passed. From 1991-2000 most states spent less on the military.

In 2001, terrorists attacked the United States. These were the September 11th attacks. The United States began a War on Terror. Many other countries joined the U.S. in fighting terrorism. However, this meant more money was being spent on the military. Since 2001, many countries have been spending more money on the military. In 2015 the worldwide total reached US\$1,700 billion. This is equal to the UN's budget for 700 years.

The US is the country that spends the most on its military. In 2015 it spent \$US596 billion on the military. The US spent the most money ever in 2010. However, after they pulled most troops out of Afghanistan and Iraq the amount they spend has gone down 21%. In November 2016, the US elected Donald Trump as President. He has said he will increase spending for the military.

China spent US\$214 billion in 2015. This is an estimate by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. This is an increase of 7.4% from the previous year. China said that it will continue to increase the budget of the military by 7-8% every year. China is not involved in any wars but claims the South China Sea. China has been building artificial islands in the area. Many countries believe China will turn these islands into military islands.

Saudi Arabia spent US\$87 billion in 2015. Its spending has doubled since 2006. Part of the reason it has gone up so much is because Saudi Arabia is involved in military action in Yemen. In 2009, Saudi Arabia attacked Yemeni rebels. In 2015 they were part of a group of countries trying to influence the Yemeni civil war. Saudi Arabia spends 10% of its GDP on the military.

Russia spent US\$66 billion in 2015. This is an increase of 7.5%. The amount has been increasing since 1998. Lower oil prices, however, might force Russian to spend less money in the future. The United Kingdom spent US\$55 billion. This is roughly the amount they have spent over the last 15 years.

Together, these five countries account for 61.5% of all money spent on the military.

Asia and Oceania

This area of the world has seen money spent on the military increased by 64% from 2006 and 2015. China spent almost 50% of the money in this area. India spent the second most amount of money: US\$51 billion. They plan to increase it by 8%. Most of the countries around the South China Sea spent more money on the military. Indonesia increased by 16%, Philippines by 25%, and Viet Nam 7.6%. Japan did not increase how much it spends on the military until 2015.

Europe

Europe increased how much they spend on the military by 5.4% since 2006. Eastern Europe increased how much they spent by 90% since 2006. The biggest increases were in countries close to Russia or the Ukraine.

Middle East

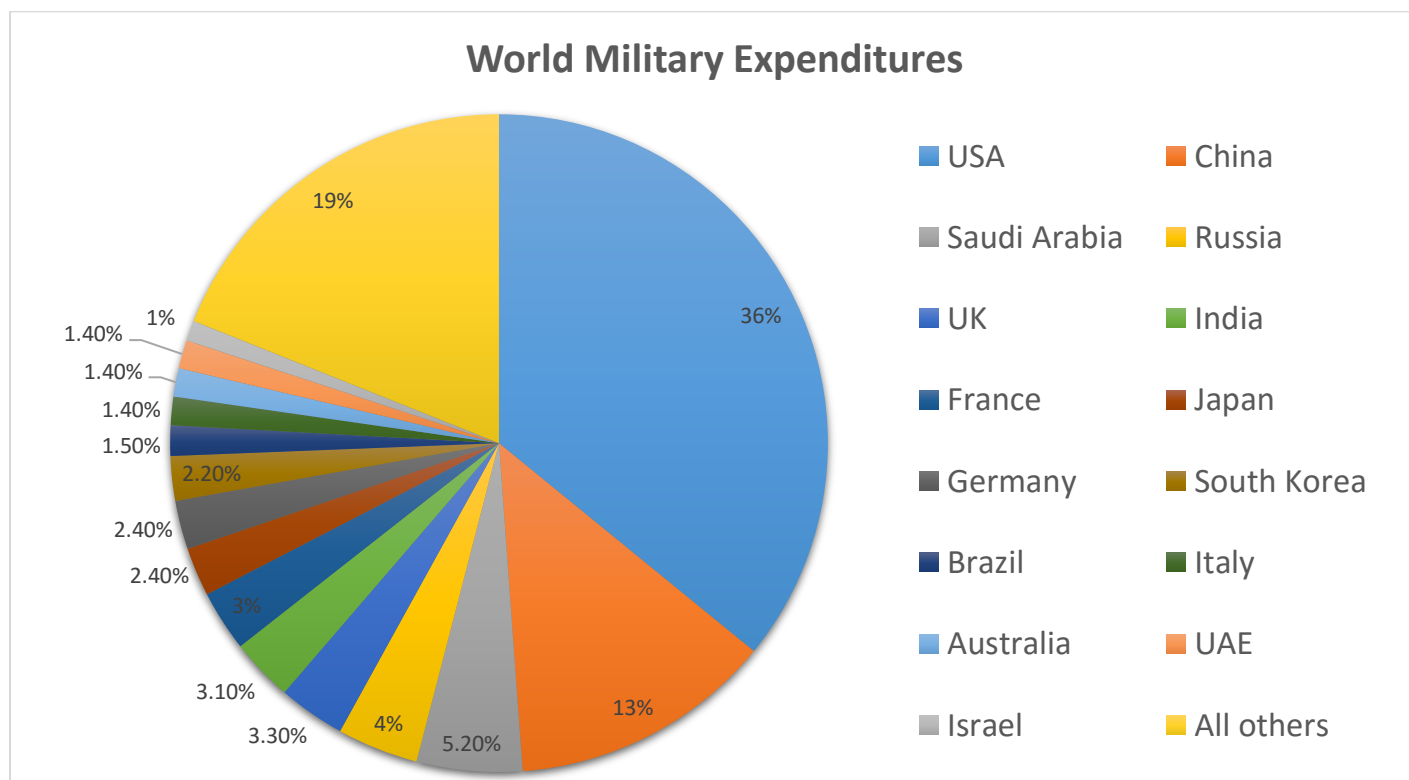
There is not enough reliable data to report on the Middle East as a whole. Most of the information is estimated. Saudi Arabia spends the most at US\$87 billion which is double what it spent in 2006. The next biggest spender is Iraq: US\$13 billion. This is an increase of 536% since 2006. This is understandable since they had to build their military after the US-led invasion and is now fighting the Islamic State. Iran spent US\$10 billion in 2015 and may increase how much they spend in the future.

Latin America and the Caribbean

This area of the world spent 2.9% less in 2015. Together, all the countries spend US\$67 billion. Venezuela, Ecuador and Brazil all had to reduce the amount they spend on the military because of the bad economy. Colombia, Guyana, Paraguay, Peru, and Uruguay all increased how much they spend. States in Central America increased how much they spend. Since 2006 Mexico has spent 92% more. Most of the money is used to fight criminals and drug gangs.

Africa

For the last 11 years, the states in Africa have been spending more and more on the military. In 2015, it dropped 5.3% percent. The whole continent spends US\$37 billion a year on the military. Most of the countries involved in conflict increased how much they spend on the military. Countries that rely on oil like Angola and Chad had to reduce the amount spent because of the low price of oil.

Top 15 Countries: Military Expenditures¹

¹ Perlo-Freeman, Sam, et al. "Trends in World Military Expenditure, 2015." *SIPRI Fact Sheet*. Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, April 2016, books.sipri.org/files/FS/SIPRIFS1604.pdf. Accessed 4 February 2017.

Guiding Questions

1. How much does your country spend on the military every year? What does your country spend most of its money on?
2. Does your country report how much they spend on the military to the UN? Why might a country want to share this information? Why might a country not want to share this information?
3. Do your neighbors report on how much they spend on the military? How would how much they spend influence you? Why?
4. More money is spent on the military during times of economic difficulty. Poverty often causes violence and then more money is spent on the military – money that could have been used to reduce poverty. How can this cycle be changed?
5. What are some positive outcomes of investing in the military?
6. Fifteen countries pay for 81% of the world's total military expenditures. Why might this be seen as a problem by the other 180 countries?
7. What would need to happen to encourage all countries in the world to reduce the amount they spend on the military?
8. Does the problem exist in your community?
9. Who is working on it? NGOs, not for profits, other groups or individuals?
10. Knowing about this problem, how does it impact your world view?
11. How could you make an impact on this issue through your life choices?

Resources

Title	Hyperlink	How is it helpful?
<i>United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs</i>	http://www.un.org/disarmament/	Provides broad information about disarmament.
<i>World Military Spending</i>	http://www.globalissues.org/article/75/world-military-spending	Overview of the issue and how much money is spent on the military.
<i>United Nations Report on Military Expenditures</i>	http://www.un-arm.org/Milex/home.aspx	Click on a country to see how much they have spent on the military.
<i>Global Campaign on Military Spending</i>	http://demilitarize.org/	An organization connected with International Peace Bureau that wants to reduce military spending.
<i>Trends in World Military Expenditures</i>	http://books.sipri.org/files/FS/SI-PRIFS1604.pdf	A fact sheet that summarizes how much is spent.
<i>Military Expenditure</i>	https://www.sipri.org/research/armament-and-disarmament/arms-transfers-and-military-spending/military-expenditure	Stockholm International Peace Research Institute's page on military expenditures around the world.
<i>UNODA Fact Sheet</i>	https://unoda-web.s3.amazonaws.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/Military-Spending-Fact-Sheet.pdf	United Nations fact sheet on the reporting of military expenditures.
<i>Disarmament Education</i>	http://www.un.org/disarmament/education/	Resources for young people studying disarmament. The UN produced it.
<i>Military Spending</i>	http://www.reachingcriticalwill.org/resources/fact-sheets/critical-issues/5441-military-spending	An overview of the problem according to the NGO Reaching Critical Will. It includes links.