



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. Many countries believe China spends more on the military than it says. 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.

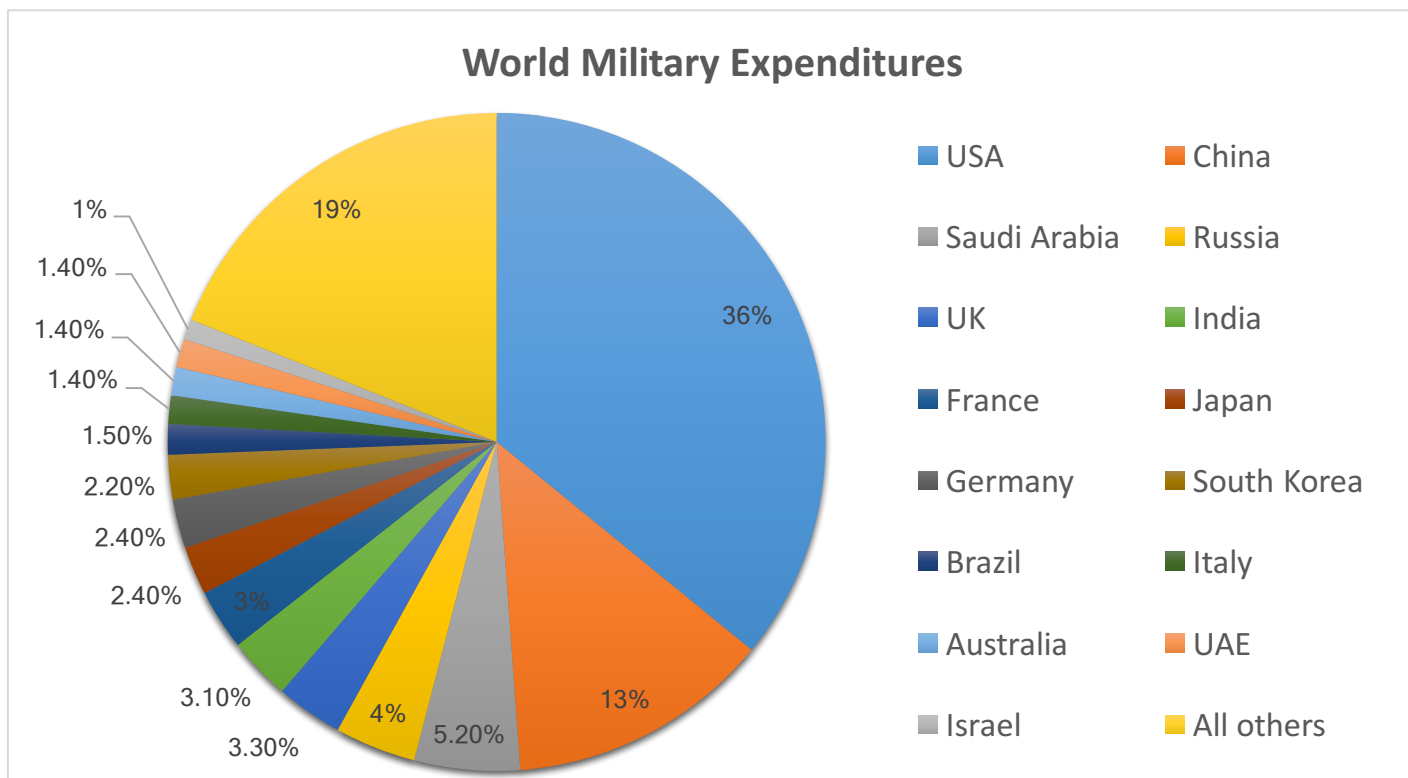
Latin America and the Caribbean

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.



General Assembly

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Seventieth session
Agenda item 88 (b)

Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 7 December 2015

[on the report of the First Committee (A/70/451)]

70/21. Objective information on military matters, including transparency of military expenditures

The General Assembly,

Recalling its resolutions 53/72 of 4 December 1998, 54/43 of 1 December 1999, 56/14 of 29 November 2001, 58/28 of 8 December 2003, 60/44 of 8 December 2005, 62/13 of 5 December 2007, 64/22 of 2 December 2009, 66/20 of 2 December 2011 and 68/23 of 5 December 2013 on objective information on military matters, including transparency of military expenditures,

Recalling also its resolution 35/142 B of 12 December 1980, which introduced the United Nations system for the standardized reporting of military expenditures, its resolutions 48/62 of 16 December 1993, 49/66 of 15 December 1994, 51/38 of 10 December 1996 and 52/32 of 9 December 1997, in which the General Assembly called upon all Member States to participate in the system, and its resolution 47/54 B of 9 December 1992, in which the Assembly endorsed the guidelines and recommendations for objective information on military matters and invited Member States to provide the Secretary-General with relevant information regarding their implementation,

Noting that, since then, national reports on military expenditures and on the guidelines and recommendations for objective information on military matters have been submitted by a number of Member States belonging to different geographical regions,

Convinced that the improvement of international relations forms a sound basis for promoting further openness and transparency in all military matters,

Convinced also that transparency in military matters is an essential element for building a climate of trust and confidence between States worldwide and that a better flow of objective information on military matters can help to relieve international tension and is therefore an important contribution to conflict prevention,

Noting the role of the standardized reporting system, as instituted through its resolution 35/142 B, as an important instrument to enhance transparency in military matters,



Conscious that the value of the standardized reporting system would be enhanced by a broader participation of Member States,

Noting that a periodic review of the United Nations Report on Military Expenditures could facilitate its further development and maintain its continued relevance and operation, and recalling that, in its resolution 66/20, the General Assembly recommended the establishment of a process for periodic reviews and that another review of the continuing relevance and operation of the Report be conducted in five years,

Welcoming the establishment of a group of governmental experts, on the basis of equitable geographical representation, to review the operation and further development of the Report on Military Expenditures, including the establishment of a process for periodic reviews in order to ensure the continued relevance and operation of the Report, commencing in 2016,

Recalling, in that regard, the report of the Secretary-General on ways and means to implement the guidelines and recommendations for objective information on military matters, including, in particular, on how to strengthen and broaden participation in the standardized reporting system,¹

Recalling also the report of the Group of Governmental Experts on the Operation and Further Development of the United Nations Standardized Instrument for Reporting Military Expenditures on further ways and means to implement the guidelines and recommendations for objective information on military matters, including, in particular, on how to strengthen and broaden participation in the standardized reporting system,²

Welcoming the work of the Secretariat on migrating data submitted on military expenditures to its new, interactive web platform, which includes an online reporting feature, thus increasing user-friendliness and facilitating the submission of reports, in accordance with resolution 66/20,

Noting the efforts of several regional organizations to promote transparency of military expenditures, including standardized annual exchanges of relevant information among their member States,

Emphasizing the continuing importance of the Report on Military Expenditures under the current political and economic circumstances,

Recalling that, in its resolution 66/20, the General Assembly recommended that, for the purpose of reporting by Member States of their national military expenditures in the framework of the Report on Military Expenditures, “military expenditures” be commonly understood to refer to all financial resources that a State spends on the uses and functions of its military forces and information on military expenditures represents an actual outlay in current prices and domestic currency,

Mindful of the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations, including its Article 26,

1. *Calls upon* Member States, with a view to achieving the broadest possible participation, to provide the Secretary-General, by 30 April annually, with a report on their military expenditures for the latest fiscal year for which data are

¹ A/54/298.

² A/66/89 and Corr.1–3.

available, using, preferably and to the extent possible, one of the online reporting forms, including a nil report if appropriate, or, as appropriate, any other format developed in the context of similar reporting on military expenditures to other international or regional organizations;

2. *Recommends* the guidelines and recommendations for objective information on military matters to all Member States for implementation, fully taking into account specific political, military and other conditions prevailing in a region, on the basis of initiatives and with the agreement of the States of the region concerned;

3. *Invites* Member States in a position to do so to supplement their reports, on a voluntary basis, with explanatory remarks regarding submitted data to explain or clarify the figures provided in the reporting forms, such as the total military expenditures as a share of gross domestic product, major changes from previous reports and any additional information reflecting their defence policy, military strategies and doctrines;

4. *Invites* Member States to provide, preferably with their annual report, their national points of contact;

5. *Encourages* relevant international bodies and regional organizations to promote transparency of military expenditures and to enhance complementarities among reporting systems, taking into account the particular characteristics of each region, and to consider the possibility of an exchange of information with the United Nations;

6. *Takes note* of the annual reports of the Secretary-General;³

7. *Requests* the Secretary-General, within available resources:

(a) To continue the practice of sending an annual note verbale to Member States requesting the submission of their report on military expenditures;

(b) To circulate annually a note verbale to Member States detailing which reports on military expenditures were submitted and are available online;

(c) To continue consultations with relevant international bodies, with a view to ascertaining requirements for adjusting the present instrument in order to encourage wider participation, and to make recommendations, based on the outcome of those consultations and taking into account the views of Member States, on necessary changes to the content and structure of the standardized reporting system;

(d) To encourage relevant international bodies and organizations to promote transparency of military expenditures and to consult with those bodies and organizations with emphasis on examining possibilities for enhancing complementarities among international and regional reporting systems and for exchanging related information between those bodies and the United Nations;

(e) To continue to foster further cooperation with relevant regional organizations, with a view to raising awareness of the United Nations Report on Military Expenditures and its role as a confidence-building measure;

³ [A/58/202](#) and Add.1–3, [A/59/192](#) and Add.1, [A/60/159](#) and Add.1–3, [A/61/133](#) and Add.1–3, [A/62/158](#) and Add.1–3, [A/63/97](#) and Add.1 and 2, [A/64/113](#) and Add.1 and 2, [A/65/118](#) and Corr.1 and Add.1 and 2, [A/66/117](#) and Add.1, [A/67/128](#) and Add.1, [A/68/131](#) and Add.1, [A/69/135](#) and Add.1 and [A/70/139](#) and Add.1.

(f) To encourage the United Nations regional centres for peace and disarmament in Africa, in Asia and the Pacific and in Latin America and the Caribbean to assist Member States in their regions in enhancing their knowledge of the standardized reporting system;

(g) To promote international and regional or subregional symposiums and training seminars and to support the development of an online training course by the Office for Disarmament Affairs of the Secretariat, with the financial and technical support of interested States, with a view to explaining the purpose of the standardized reporting system, facilitating the electronic filing of reports and providing relevant technical instructions;

(h) To report on experiences gained during such symposiums and training seminars;

(i) To provide, upon request, technical assistance to Member States lacking the capacity to report data and to encourage Member States to voluntarily provide bilateral assistance to other Member States;

8. *Encourages* Member States:

(a) To inform the Secretary-General about possible problems with the standardized reporting system and their reasons for not submitting the requested data;

(b) To continue to provide the Secretary-General with their views and suggestions on ways and means to improve the future functioning of and broadened participation in the standardized reporting system, including necessary changes to its content and structure, as well as recommendations to facilitate its further development;

9. *Decides* to include in the provisional agenda of its seventy-second session, under the item entitled "Reduction of military budgets", the sub-item entitled "Objective information on military matters, including transparency of military expenditures".

*67th plenary meeting
7 December 2015*