

Distribution of us budget in military and education

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Even though the Cold War era is a distant memory, encased in glass forever like some museum piece, our government is still spending as if the Soviet Union was in its prime. If the arms race is a forgotten memory, then why is the military still spending 86% of what it was spending during the Cold War. It's not that us Americans do not want a solid military, we just believe that our military is wasting billions of dollars at the expense of our children's education and well being.

50 years ago our country, and the entire world was in disparate need of a strong U. S. military. We inflated our military budget, and gave the government and private businesses an enormous appetite. Without a major threat to the United States since the collapse of the Soviet Union, our government seems to be in competition with itself. 50 years ago we sent tons and tons of troops overseas to fight in a foreign land, while we pumped private businesses up with the manufacturing of military equipment.

The need for such products and the need for an over-healthy military allowance is long gone. While we sunk billions after billions of taxpayer's money on wars that we were boisterously proud to spend (it gave us all the prestige we could ever ask for), our Allies were investing in their children's education and well being. The result now is that while we have the most elite military capabilities, our children's educational level is extremely under developed. European and Japanese children significantly outperform American children in math and upper-level reading.

This should not be too surprising, our children are studying history books that are from a decade ago. This creates difficult obstacles for our children to

keep up on current politics and other global events. Also the over crowding of classrooms makes it extremely difficult for your child to get that personalized learning which may determine his or her ability to learn at all. Every child learns at a different rate and possibly in different ways, this makes it virtually impossible for teachers to tap into every child" s full learning potential.

If your child needs that extra, personalized attention, but is not " defined" as handicapped their specific learning needs will most likely be overlooked and that may be the beginning of your child" s inability to learn. According to a study done by the state of Tennessee, reducing classroom size in early grades (K-3rd) can improve a child" s performance even after being placed back into their regular sized class.

Another major problem hindering our children" s education is the fact that the teachers with the priceless responsibility of developing our child" s mind are absolutely underpaid. Teachers barely make an honest living and are often subliminal role models to our young students. Although there are countless exceptionally dedicated teachers in America, a significantly higher salary would ensure the quality of almost all teachers. Remember what we were taught about incentives at a young age, the carrot in front of the rabbit, well that would definitely apply for these individuals we need to count on everyday.

So, where is all of the money going to come from to improve our children" s education, well, remember our friend with that uncontrollable appetite?

During the Cold War" s prime the U. S. was spending \$325 billion a year. And

today, with the Cold War boxed up and put on a shelf, the military is still spending \$290 billion a year (NCR, 1999). This is an alarming figure that we are spending on a military without any outside threat to contend with, in fact it seems to be their only real mission is to play servant to the United Nations, fighting little skirmishes in countries that don't want our help.

One would be hopeful that since we are in an era of peace time that we could enjoy "peace dividends." However, the military and those private sector businesses that created such an enormous appetite refuse to exercise a Post-Cold War diet. Maybe we need to e-mail the pentagon, they might be reading our children's decade old history books, in that case they wouldn't know that the Berlin Wall is down and the Soviet Union has collapsed.

Another astonishing fact is that our country has become the world's largest arms dealer, selling to almost any country with the money to do business. And if they can't afford them, our government will put them on a payment plan, acting much like a scene right out of The Godfather. Is this our government, or is this Don Corleone, striking deals with some pretty shady characters. One can't help wondering where all of this cold hard cash is going from these deals.

It is no mystery that our government budgets are in desperate need of reform, well, there are active groups lobbying to change the spending habits of our government. One of the most effective of these groups is the Business Leaders for Sensible Priorities, which is comprised of influential individuals like Ben Cohen, cofounder of Ben & Jerry's; and former assistant secretary of state, Lawrence Korb, along with a cabinet of ex-military and big business

leaders. The group is most certainly not an anti-military faction, however they are dedicated to refocusing the military's useless spending (NCR, 1999). They are not opposed to our military having the best equipment possible, that is if someone were to donate it to them. If the decision is for the military to have a great new ship, or for our children to have a better education, of course the military is going to have to make due.

Currently the federal government only participates in 7% of the funding for our schools, while the state and the local community split the rest. This raises enormous concerns due to the fact that poorer communities are at a significant disadvantage. Some communities can spend up to five times as much as less fortunate ones (NATIONAL PTA, 1996).

To achieve these goals for a better future for our kids and further more, our country, we need to make education our biggest priority. Adding up the military's inflated \$290 billion a year, and comparing it to what's left over for all other spending, including education, a meager \$246 billion (NCR, 1999). This is an insult to our children's development as growing intellectuals. 6% of the entire budget is allocated for our children's education, this states the true fact that their education is not important. The money is truly there, we simply need to redirect it and our governments priorities. Like stated by Business Leaders for Sensible Priorities, "The winners and losers are not going to be determined by the size of their gunboats, but by the level of their children's level of education."