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Global military spending rises again, will NZ's in this year's Budget?

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According to figures released by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) today, during the Global Days of Action on Military Spending, world military expenditure in 2018 totalled an estimated \$(USD)1,822 billion in 2018 - an increase of 2.6% from 2017, and a level 76% higher than the post-cold war low in 1998.^[1]



Every dollar of military expenditure is a dollar taken away from socially useful spending - a dollar that could be used to reduce and mitigate the impacts of climate change, and ensure to a decent standard of living for all: a dollar that could be used to save lives, rather than preparing for war.

Last year's global military spending averaged out to more than \$(USD)4.99 billion every day, while an average of more than 14,794 children under the age of five died every day from mainly preventable causes - lack of access to adequate food, clean water and basic medicines.^[2] That is one of the prices paid, the collateral damage that is seldom talked about, for maintaining armed forces in a state of combat readiness around the world.

Just twelve days of military expenditure would eradicate extreme poverty everywhere, and just five weeks of military expenditure would ensure that five of the key UN Sustainable Development Goals are met - eradicating extreme poverty, ending hunger, ensuring healthy lives, clean water, sanitation, and quality education for all.^[3]

The five biggest military spenders in 2018 were the United States, China, Saudi Arabia, India and France, which together accounted for 60 per cent of global military spending. Russia was the sixth-largest spender in 2018. US military spending rose for the first time in seven years, to \$649 billion in 2018. China increased its military expenditure by 5.0 per cent and India by 3.1 per cent. Saudi Arabia decreased its military spending by 6.5 per cent, France by 1.4 per cent and Russia by 3.5 per cent.

Military expenditure increased in Central America and the Caribbean, Central Europe, Central and South Asia, East Asia, North America, South America, and Western Europe.

Military spending decreased in Eastern Europe, North Africa, Oceania, South East Asia, and sub-Saharan Africa. The total military expenditure of the countries in the Middle East for which data is available also decreased.^[1]

New Zealand's military spending: Military spending here increased in the 2018 Budget to a record total of \$ (NZD)3,755,683,000 - on average, that's \$ (NZD)72,224,673 every week. The increase was across all three of the Budget Votes where most military expenditure is itemised: Vote Defence, Vote Defence Force and Vote Education. The amount taken from Vote Education and allocated to the armed forces was \$(NZD)1,029,000 - an increase of more than 4% over 2017. Overall, the difference between estimated actual military spending in the 2017 Financial Year and the 2018 Budget was more than 9%.^[4]

By way of contrast, an estimated 28% of children here live in a family with an income below the poverty line, and at least one in one hundred New Zealanders are homeless.^[3] Essential public services including health, education, support for persons with disabilities and housing desperately need increased spending, yet the government continues to prioritise military spending - in addition to the increase in last year's Budget, in July 2018 the government announced that it would spend \$(NZ)2.346 billion on four military aircraft.

At the end of May, the first 'well being' Budget will be released - will this year's Budget actually focus on the wellbeing of New Zealanders, or will we see yet another increase in military spending that does not meet our real human security needs?

Resources and references:

- Aotearoa New Zealand Campaign on Military Spending - <http://www.converge.org.nz/pma/gdams.htm>
- 'Global military spending rises again, will NZ's in this year's Budget?' Peace Movement Aotearoa, 29 April 2019 - <https://www.facebook.com/notes/peace-movement-aotearoa/global-military-spending-rises-again-will-nzs-in-this-years-budget/2180308212016536>

^[1] 'World military expenditure grows to \$1.8 trillion in 2018', SIPRI Media Release, 29 April 2019 and 'Trends in world military expenditure 2018', SIPRI Fact Sheet, 29 April 2019 are available at <http://www.converge.org.nz/pma/gdams.htm>

^[2] 'A child under 15 dies every 5 seconds around the world', WHO, 18 September 2018 - <https://www.who.int/news-room/detail/18-09-2018-a-child-under-15-dies-every-5-seconds-around-the-world->

^[3] 'Time for action on military spending', Peace Movement Aotearoa, 2018 - <http://www.converge.org.nz/pma/gdams.htm>

^[4] 'Military spending increases again, time for alternative thinking', Peace Movement Aotearoa, 17 May 2018 - <http://www.converge.org.nz/pma/gdams.htm>