

WIN WITHOUT WAR



Progressive Foreign Policy Debrief

Intel for Advocacy

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TOPLINE TAKEAWAYS

- *Trump's budget prioritizes war and militarism, kicks diplomacy and development to the curb.*
- *The South Koreans are moving ahead with talking to North Korea, with or without the U.S.*
- *As Team Trump contemplates fueling Syria's fire, Secretary Mattis says it's time for the U.S. to get out.*

TRUMP BUDGET EXPOSES WAR PRIORITIES

It might seem like several years ago, but earlier this week, the Trump administration released its FY2019 budget proposal. The document shows where **Donald Trump's priorities** are. With regard to foreign policy and national security, Trump wants to unnecessarily ([don't just take our word for it](#)) **shower the Pentagon with gobs of cash, while slashing everything from school safety to food aid.**

THE FACTS

Trump asked for [\\$716 billion](#) in total defense spending for fiscal year 2019, a **13 percent increase**, including funds to build [more nuclear weapons](#) we don't need.

At the same time, **Trump's budget slashes funding for diplomacy** and efforts to combat climate change: the State Department would see a [23 percent cut](#), while the EPA's budget is cut by [25 percent](#).

THE BUDGET 'DEAL'

While Trump's non-defense portion of the budget may be DOA, Congress recently reached a two year spending agreement that also throws tons of money at the Pentagon -- \$168 billion

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over the spending caps set by Congress back in 2011 to be exact. Over at Inkstick, our own Stephen Miles [breaks down](#) why this is a terrible idea.

MESSAGING

The Pentagon's budget is at historic highs.

- Today, the U.S. spends [\\$100 billion more](#) than it spent on average during the Cold War.
- The Pentagon doesn't need more money. Take it from Gen. David Petraeus who [said](#): "there is no crisis in military readiness."

The Pentagon budget is already bloated with wasteful spending. For example:

- A [recently exposed](#) internal DOD study found "\$125 billion in administrative waste in its business operations."
- The F-35 Joint Strike Fighter is estimated [\\$160 billion over-budget](#) and years behind schedule.
- The Pentagon has yet to complete a full financial audit, which means we don't fully understand where the Pentagon spends its money.

The State Department and USAID play pivotal roles in U.S. national security.

- More than [150 retired admirals and generals](#), as well as [1,215 veterans](#) from every branch of the military across the country, recently called on Congress to spend more on diplomacy.
- Trump's own Defense Secretary, James Mattis, [has infamously said](#): "If you cut the State Department's budget, then you need to buy me more bullets."

Climate change is a national security threat.

- The Department of Defense has [said](#) that climate change is a national security "[threat multiplier](#)" and military leaders have [urged](#) Trump to declare it as such.
- Trump's own Defense Secretary James Mattis [said](#) last year that "climate change is impacting stability in areas of the world where our troops are operating today."

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- The Republican-led House [passed](#) a defense policy bill in July that declared climate change a national security threat.

Federal spending on education, health care, and clean energy [creates more jobs](#) than Pentagon spending does.

- The primary beneficiaries of more Pentagon spending are [defense industry executives](#).

The Pentagon doesn't need any more money. The United States spends more on its military than anyone else in the world.

Read our statement on Trump's budget proposal [here](#), our rundown of waste and unaccountable spending at the Pentagon [here](#), and check out the National Priorities Project's [graph](#) illustrating the Pentagon's MASSIVE share of the discretionary budget.

[TEAM TRUMP CONFUSED ON NORTH KOREA AS DIPLOMACY WORKS](#)

The Olympic truce on the Korean peninsula has offered a welcome break from the usual warmongering from Donald Trump and Kim Jong-un. But with the Paralympics concluding on March 18 -- and U.S.-South Korea military exercises as well as North Korean missile or nuclear tests possibly resuming -- it's unclear which direction the [Trump induced](#) crisis will take.

One thing is clear, **diplomacy is working** and it's largely South Korean President Moon Jae-in leading the way.

At the same time -- aside from making zero effort at diplomacy and instead trying to sell war -- Team Trump's North Korea policy is all over the place. Consider the following:

- Mike Pence traveled to PyeongChang to poo-poo the Korean detente, but no one jumped on board. "As it turned out," the AP [reported](#), "with the two Koreas celebrating a moment of unity, **the United States was left outmaneuvered** by an adversary and out of step with an ally."
- Outmaneuvered indeed. At first Pence [called on](#) South Korea to cut off engagement with the North after the Olympics were over, but **he backpedaled a few days later**, [saying](#) the U.S. will pursue "maximum pressure and engagement at the same time."

AND DON'T FORGET:

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- Rex Tillerson, you know, our Secretary of State and chief diplomat, **is largely absent from the North Korea issue**. He tried to push unconditional diplomacy back in December but the White House [shot him down](#).
- **Yet Tillerson himself contradicted Pence's change of heart** on negotiations, [saying](#) the U.S. isn't quite ready yet.
- Trump's nominee for U.S. ambassador to South Korea was forced to withdraw [reportedly](#) because **he wasn't onboard with a preventive first strike on North Korea**.
- Three key Trump administration positions responsible for diplomacy and other issues related to North Korea **remain vacant**.
- The Trump administration and its [allies in Congress haven't been shy](#) about publicly **building a case for war against North Korea**.

TOPLINE TALKING POINT

War with North Korea would be “catastrophic,” in the words of Defense Secretary James Mattis.

- Hundreds of thousands [would die](#) in the first days of a conflict alone.
- The global economy could collapse. War and reconstruction would cost trillions.
- Fully eliminating North Korea's nuclear weapons program [would](#) require a ground invasion.
- So-called “limited strikes” could quickly spiral out of control, leading to “a [massive mobilization](#) of U.S. forces onto the Korean Peninsula, and high military casualty rates,” with total casualties estimated at least [one million dead](#) – and that's without the conflict going nuclear.

SHARE: Republican Rep. Thomas Massie recently [sat down](#) with Church & Society's Mark Harrison to chat about North Korea. “[U]pon any act of war, hundreds of thousands -- if not millions -- of civilians and military personnel will die,” he said. “We must do what we can to prevent that from happening.”

[AFTER ISIS, SYRIA'S WARS WIDEN AS TEAM TRUMP PONDERES FUELING THE FIRE](#)

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The situation in Syria continued to escalate this week serving as a stark reminder of the United States and the world's collective failure to end Syria's brutal and deadly civil war.

Over the past two weeks, a cycle of escalation between American troops, Syrian Kurds, and Syrian and Russian government forces [has erupted](#). This might be why Secretary of Defense Mattis [thinks](#) "it's best we leave Syria."

Meanwhile, **Assad** and **Russia** have significantly [escalated attacks](#) in Eastern Ghouta, one of the last remaining opposition strongholds that they've laid siege to for four years, killing over 200 people and injuring at least 700 civilians.

Meanwhile, **French President Emmanuel Macron** [drew a redline](#) on Syria, threatening to attack if there's proof that Assad has continued to use chemical weapons in the civil war.

Just last weekend, **Israel** [unleashed](#) its biggest attack yet on pro-Syrian government forces and its Iranian allies, sparking the first open, direct clash between **Iran** and Israel in Syria.

And as if the civil/regional war couldn't get any worse, the Israeli incursion prompted many in Washington to [call on the United States to enter the fray](#), and **attack Iranian assets inside Syria**.

And just as you thought the bloody Syrian quagmire couldn't widen further, Secretary of State Rex Tillerson [said today](#) that **U.S.-Turkish relations** are at a "crisis point" due to [escalating differences](#) over U.S. support for Syrian Kurds.

KEY POINTS TO REMEMBER:

- **The war in Syria is, first and foremost, a devastating crisis of human suffering** that will only be further fueled by the Trump administration's policy of [unconstitutional escalation](#).
- **President Trump is recklessly endangering America's security while potentially making the intractable Syrian civil war even worse.** The U.S. retaliation against pro-Syrian government forces highlight the quandary of leaving American troops on the ground in Syria with unclear objectives or exit strategies.
- **There is simply no military solution to the conflict**, despite the Trump administration's response doubling down on a [same old broken hawkish thinking](#) that every problem in the Middle East can be resolved with more American bullets and bombs.

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- Trump's military incursion last April has [already shown](#) that increased military escalation will not lead to accountability for Assad or other armed actors, nor will it end the endless spiral of atrocities committed in the war.
- The deepening quagmire shows [Secretary Mattis is right](#): a **political solution to the conflict in Syria is desperately needed** and "The Syrians and Staffan de Mistura's efforts by the U.N. to solve this in Geneva is the right way to go."

BURIED LEDES

The Foundation for the Defense of Democracies "[can complain all they want](#) about being painted as warmongers. But when they reflexively call for military action against Iran at every opportunity, **it's hard to see them as anything but.**"

ICYMI: A reporter **spent two years trying to fix the gender imbalance in his reporting**. This is what he learned and [why he did it](#).

The United States is [giving up](#) the high ground and **retreating on human rights**.

[\\$30 million](#): That's how much it will cost **to feed Donald Trump's ego**.

The nation's top intel officials [said this week](#) that Russia is already working to meddle in the 2018 midterms, and **Trump hasn't directed anyone to do anything about it**.

We've spent \$5.6 trillion on war since 2001 -- war that is still ongoing with no end in sight -- and [no one really cares](#).

And finally, [come on Facebook](#), **you can do better**.